**COLUMNS ON YALE’S VENTURE IN SINGAPORE; ON SINGAPORE’S REGIME; AND ON LIBERAL EDUCATION IN ILLIBERAL SOCIETIES**



**A visit to the U.S.S. Stennis: From Yale-National University of Singapore College Facebook page.**

These twenty-five columns, written between March, 2012 and October, 2013, show how business-corporatization and slow, subtle, inexorable abandonment of the liberal arts at some American universities has driven faculty resistance to the ventures to establish overseas campuses in collaboration with authoritarian regimes.

Among the arguments I make here that many people misunderstand or miss completely are these two:

1. We shouldn’t be moralistic about the real and alleged sins of Singapore, even though we must reckon with them and resist them. We need not “boycott” or otherwise discontinue reasonable academic exchanges with universities there. We need, rather, to devote our energies to strengthen liberal education in the U.S. which is facing crises that some of the misguided ventures abroad actually reflect and don’t resolve.
2. In the elaborate and fateful joint venture of Yale-NUS and other projects, which I do oppose and criticize with many arguments here, I *don’t* predict explosive conflicts or scandals, although they certainly may happen.

What I think should really worry us far more is an all-too smooth convergence, described by *The Economist* magazine, of Asian and American “state capitalism”: Asians liberalize a little, at least cosmetically; Americans tighten surveillance and suppression of academic freedom and workers’ rights, here in the U.S. as well as abroad, where they are learning to do it. Some Americans are even learning to call brutally authoritarian societies “authoritative,” because those societies seem more orderly and energetic than ours. American civil society is definitely in trouble, but not for reasons that can be corrected by emulating Singapore, I argue.

Twenty-one of the columns are by me, accompanied by a brief news report from the *Yale Alumni Magazine,* a *Yale Daily News* column by Prof. Seyla Benhabib that focused the controversy, a couple of items from Singapore websites about controversies that my columns ignited, and a column from the Boston Globe that ran in the New York Times.

These columns have appeared in several venues. Here I provide the Huffington Post versions, with links to the others, unless a column appeared only in other sites in which case it’s presented as it appeared there.

The columns trace an arc of flawed thinking and blundering leadership on the part of Yale’s trustees and president (Richard Levin, now retired), who arranged the Singapore deal without approval by Yale’s faculty and so compromised liberal education and Yale’s pedagogical mission. Again, the columns focus less on the “sins” of Singapore – a boutique police state with a glittering façade and facile apologists who gull or cow American investors and tourists – than on weaknesses that were already emerging in Yale’s own governance and pedagogy and that prompted it to collaborate with Singapore, as much out of weakness as strength.

For example, the *Washington Spectator* column below (it’s # 15) is a transcript of a talk I gave at Yale on September 20, 2012 about what I call a galloping culture of self-censorship in elite colleges. That culture is prompted not by fear of state power, as in Singapore, but by the allure of “access” to power and influence that students hope to gain by showing that they can be relied on never to divulge information or pose questions that suggest that an emperor has no clothes.

I argue that the self-censorship of fear in Singapore and the enthusiastic self-censorship of seduction at Yale reinforce each other, endangering liberal education and the training of American leaders. And in Yale’s collaboration with Singapore I foresee not conflict or scandal but an all-too-smooth convergence of illiberal premises and practices – a convergence in which Singapore and similar regimes “liberalize” a little, cosmetically, as Americans tighten their own emerging culture of corporatist governance, surveillance, and punishment, with its assiduously marketed, compensatory, but decadent after-hours “escapes”.

The Yale College Faculty expressed grave reservations about the administration’s arrangement with Singapore, in a resolution that it passed in President Richard Levin’s presence and over his objections on April 6, 2012, after two and one-half hours of discussion. Four months later, Levin announced that he would resign the presidency on July 1, 2013. His successor Peter Salovey and the Yale Corporation have proceeded with the Yale-Singapore venture, which received its first class of students in August, 2013 .

**1.** March 16, 2012

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/how-yales-singapore-ventu_b_1352729.html>

and at openDemocracy.net:

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/university-campuses-in-far-east-money-power-or-democracy>

[**[education](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/education/)  
[The Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/education/)**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/education/)

**How Yale's Singapore Venture Imperils Liberal Education**

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

[**Jim Sleeper**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

*Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University*

You could have heard a pin drop among the 150 professors -- three times more than usual -- in attendance at a closed-door, March 1 meeting of the Yale College Faculty as one of them told president Richard Levin [something he didn't want to hear.](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2011/may/18/benhabib-why-i-oppose-yale-singapore/) The message was that his administration shouldn't have collaborated with an authoritarian, corporate city-state to establish a new college -- "Yale-National University of Singapore" -- without most of the Yale faculty's knowing of it until the basic commitments had already been signed and sealed.

"You are this university's highest executive officer, and we're grateful for what you and the Yale Corporation do," the professor said. "But in political philosophy there's a living, unwritten constitution: Yale is really what we do --our research, teaching, and conferences. Without that, there is no Yale to take abroad or anywhere else. The faculty are the collegium" - a company of scholars that, to do its work well, has to stand somewhat apart from both markets and states.

Liberal education probably couldn't survive without markets and states, but Levin was being reminded, in effect, that in a liberal capitalist republic like ours, markets and states can't survive without liberal education because they have to rely on citizens' upholding certain public virtues and beliefs that, as you may have noticed lately, neither markets nor the state can do much to nourish or defend. A liberal state, after all, isn't supposed to judge between one way of life and another, which makes it hard to distinguish bold entrepreneurs from sleazy opportunists. And markets certainly can't draw that distinction, because their genius lies precisely in approaching consumers and investors only as narrowly self-interested actors.

That leaves only good journalists and good colleges to nourish our public prospects. Which is why, even though the Yale Corporation -- a small, self-perpetuating governing body, with only a few members elected by alumni -- can do whatever it wants, the professor was right about the "living" part of a university's constitution.

In 2006, for example, Harvard's governing corporation, which is like Yale's, understood that its faculty's loss of confidence in President Lawrence Summers made his administration untenable. Now Yale's faculty is challenging not Levin's presidency but one of his emblematic projects. A resolution demanding that Singapore respect, protect, and further political freedom, on-campus and off, will debated at the faculty's April 5 meeting.

This measure's proponents will surely be portrayed as leftist malcontents by conservative commentators who [said the same thing](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/03/31/opinion/main1461564.shtml) about Harvard's critics of Summers. But neither controversy fits the panicky caricatures of politically correct professors or deans who'd rather denounce capitalism and chase post-modernist moonbeams than prepare their students to serve markets and the state. Nor is the Yale dispute really only about the rush by American universities to emulate multi-national business corporations by expanding abroad.

The greatest danger in such ventures -- and in Harvard's recent embarrassing entanglements with some of its faculty members' dubious dealings in Russia or Libya -- is that no university can remain what the political philosopher Allan Bloom called "a publicly respectable place... for scholars and students to be unhindered in their use of reason" if those scholars are treated (and behave) as employees of a corporation -- or, in public universities, as political appointees. More properly, they're a "company" in the old-fashioned sense of a body whose principals determine and care for its mission.

The university as a business corporation helps them do that by keeping the lights on, as it were, and by defending their freedom where possible against market and political constraints. It shouldn't get involved in trying to export its university's "brand name" and expand its market share abroad, or in transforming the home college into a career-networking center and cultural galleria for a "diverse" global elite that answers to no polity or moral code.

Unfortunately, some members of Yale's corporation are doing even more than that. And, unfortunately, enough Yale faculty have come to depend on or aspire to administrative funding or preferments - or have become self-marketing free agents in their own right -- that even those who oppose the Singapore deal express their view only with arched eyebrows and significant silences.

But the packed faculty meeting this month reflected rising concern that Levin, a very nice man and an economist of the neoliberal, "world is flat" sort, has joined with corporation members to commit Yale's name and some hand-picked members of its faculty to a venture that sidelines the collegium from any real deliberation about its educational mission.

Too much more of this, and the company of scholars becomes a corporate team.

\* \* \*

It's not only faculty self-governance that's fading under market imperatives and seductions. So is liberal education, which, in American colleges, has often succeeded in inducting future citizen-leaders of the republic into what the conservative political philosopher Michael Oakeshott called the humanities' "great conversation" across the ages about eternal challenges to politics and the spirit. Markets and states skirt such challenges, but free people since Socrates have risked a lot to meet them, and they've always been a republic's greatest strength, not only in high places but in local communities.

The old colleges struggled to temper students' training for Wealth-making and Power-wielding with humanist Truth-seeking. Yes, students who took that effort seriously could become somewhat adversarial to conventional wisdom; Allan Bloom considered that the colleges' *raison d’etre* and their glory. Yet today's globalization of capital and culture, which Yale's Singapore venture reflects, makes it hard for the old colleges’ defenders to reconcile their yearning for American republican liberty with a knee-jerk, algorithmic obeisance to riptides of casino-financing that's dissolving American sovereignty.

Conservatives are trying to straddle this yawning contradiction between their patriotism and their "free market" ideology by developing ["grand-strategy" agendas](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/13/grand_strategic_failure?print=yes&hidecomments=yes&page=full%20conscripting%20liberal%20education%20into%20national-security%20and%20http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/08/13/what_politics_does_to_history/), in lavishly funded college programs that they think will rescue liberal education from the few feckless liberals and Marxists whom the noise machine blames for subverting what conservatives themselves are destroying.

Yale recently established a $50 million Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, along with the $17.5 million-endowed Brady-Johnson "Studies in Grand Strategy" program and, the Johnson Center for the Study of American Diplomacy. These have soft spots for "professor-practitioners" such as Stanley McChrystal (hired fresh off his firing by Obama), John Negroponte (the former Bush National Intelligence Director), and Tony Blair.

Even President Levin, who gave George W. Bush an honorary doctorate just before 9/11, later [served on Bush's commission](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2005_05/q_a.html) to evaluate 9/11 intelligence failures, bringing along several Yale students to produce a report that the New York Times called "a profile in timidity."

Whether or not the Times was right, Yale emerges from such accommodations looking less like a bulldog than like a kitten that purrs when stroked and that darts under a sofa when threatened. And you have to wonder: If this is how the university's leaders deal with the government in our "free" society, can we expect them to stand up to Singapore's?

In fairness, Levin and other neo-liberals, buffeted by conservative ranters, donors with agendas, and daunting market undertows, would really rather bring liberal education to Asia on somebody else's dime than be parties to its conscription and debasement at home. But in fact Yale is doing both, and for reasons that remain unclear.

The university's insistence that it's spending nothing on the Singapore venture only reinforces the perception that who pays the piper calls the tune, and certainly there's no consolation in the fact that three present or recent members of the Yale Corporation - among them the venture capitalist G. Leonard Baker, Jr., who recently led a 5-year "Yale Tomorrow" capital campaign that raised $3.881 billion, thereby placing the university's administration in his debt - are now or have also been directors, advisors, and investment officers of Singapore’s Government Investment Corporation Pte Ltd. (GIC), which is chaired by the country's prime minister and manages at least $100 billion of assets.

(The other two Yale Corporation members who've been involved in this are Charles Ellis, who is married to Linda Lorimar, the Secretary of Yale University, and Charles Waterhouse Goodyear, the former CEO of another Singaporean government investment company, Temasek, in 2009.)

Whether or not Yale-NUS is a business deal, it's an instance of the business corporatization of universities. ["Is Yale U. Starting to Run More Like Yale, Inc.?"](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/13/grand_strategic_failure?print=yes&hidecomments=yes&page=full) asked a 2009 story in the student-run, independent Yale Daily News, noting that university vice presidents who've been imported from business corporations were referring to students as "customers."

Some students and their lawyered-up parents readily accept that designation and demand the services they think they've paid for. That accelerates a superficially pleasing drift from civic-republican rigor to posh campus amenities, but it also leaves the colleges handling students' real intellectual and intimate crises with the soulless, self-protective legalism of corporations worried only about liability and market share.

Fortunately, some conscientious (and some [brilliantly irreverent](http://www.tnr.com/blog/jonathan-chait/93490/jeb-bushs-favorite-neoconservative-yale-class)) student reporters and editorial writers have kept the deeper questions alive on campus even when most faculty seemed too apathetic or intimidated to raise them. It was a Yale Daily News editorial last year, ["Keep Yale Out of Singapore,"](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2011/feb/11/keep-yale-out-of-singapore/) that awakened some faculty.

Sea changes in capital and in state efficacy have contributed to the recent loss of compass and ebbing of faith in liberal education. But there are other causes, too. In his forthcoming (and already much ballyhooed) [College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be,](http://www.amazon.com/College-What-Was-Should-Be/dp/0691130736) Columbia English professor Andrew Delbanco echoes Yale's former law school dean Anthony Kronman, whose Education's End blames the loss of faith less on markets or conservative grand strategists than on universities' much-older commitment to scientific (or, one might say, "scientistic") research.

The criticism here is not of science per se but of some liberal educators' pretensions to be scientific in their explorations of the eternal challenges to politics and the spirit mentioned earlier. "When political science is severed from its ancient rootage in the humanities and 'enriched' by the wisdom of sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists," warned [Reinhold Niebuhr](http://www.bookforum.com/inprint/018_02/7821) more than half a century ago, "the result is frequently a preoccupation with minutiae which obscures the grand and tragic outlines of contemporary history and offers vapid solutions to profound problems."

Neibuhr's solutions were Christian, and while Delbanco invokes America's Puritan wellsprings, he offers only a secular-humanist reliance on the humanities to shape citizens for a republic or an embryonic global public sphere. Kronman - who worked on the early stages of Yale's Singapore plan and also helped New York University develop its campus in Abu Dhabi -- takes justified swipes at "politically correct" dismissals of the works of dead white men. So does Delbanco, a survivor of culture wars in Columbia's English Department, but, as http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/university-diaries/soft" target=">Margaret Soltan shows hilariously in her "University Diaries" blog at Inside Higher Education, Delbanco is more than a little too cautious.

The challenge Delbanco and Kronman don't quite face is that, like Christianity and free markets, liberal education has many more noisy claimants and celebrants than it has true friends. The false friends are funding the lavish campus institutes and centers and even some student organizations and faux-populist movements, to save liberal education from the liberals by mining the classic texts for guidance in navigating riptides of global capital and of resistance to it abroad and at home: "You need a 360-degree perspective," Yale's Diplomat-in-Residence and Reagan State Department veteran Charles Hill told a student interviewer in 2003. "Your approach can't be just military and diplomatic, it also has to involve such things as economics, personnel, rhetoric, and morale. And you can't just look outward, because somewhere in some basement or in the Holland Tunnel, something is going wrong. You can't neglect anything."

Liberal education requires [a lot more adult grace and restraint than that](http://thepolitic.org/?p=59), as well a much deeper sort of conviction and inter-generational commitment. It would ask just who Hill’s “you” is; there is no 360-degree perspective, but 360 different perspectives. A liberal education would show why [Hill's is not the way](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/13/grand_strategic_failure?print=yes&hidecomments=yes&page=full) to persuade 18-years-olds, fresh off thousands of hours on the internet and in shopping malls, and that freedom isn't about the defense and promotion of consumer choice and self-marketing. Freedom relies on the mastery of public virtues -- the arts and disciplines of democratic deliberation -- that are grounded in mutual respect and rational dialogue. It disposes a student to keep words and deeds from parting company, the words becoming empty and the deeds becoming brutal, as indeed they're becoming in our investment banks and election campaigns.

Harried administrators such as Levin and other university presidents, struggling to balance what former Harvard College dean Harry Lewis calls "the retail-store university" in his [Education Without a Soul](http://www.boston.com/ae/books/articles/2006/05/28/examining_the_crimsons_civic_slide/), find themselves shorn of the authority and wisdom to distinguish one student's quiet civic passion from another's busy public emptiness, let alone address them. No wonder that some administrators are indulging or even conducting what leftists think is a coup d'etat against faculty self-governance. It's not quite that, but it's a consequence of the desperate effort to ride market and political currents and to open conservative the hearts and wallets of conservative alumni to provide more loyal crews and tighter rigging for their commercial and military cruises.

No wonder, too, that some professors have become part of the problem, behaving not as members of the collegium but as free-agent super-stars who leave the humanist conversation and its soul-sick student aspirants to the ministrations of university bureaucrats and health counselors.

No one warned against all this more [tellingly](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/04/books/review/04SLEEPER.html?ex=1126929600&en=17aedd17c5143126&ei=5070) than Bloom, whom conservatives often invoke. He urged the university to resist "whatever is most powerful" and "the worship of vulgar success." He especially disdained http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/henry-kissingers\_b\_1093835.html professors who try to become counselors to the king but forget that "the intellectual, who attempts to influence... ends up in the power of the would-be influenced."   
  
The ultimate irony, again, is that the conservatives' own market and nationalist strategies have begun to work against one another, with disastrous consequences that they finesse by shifting the blame to feckless liberals. In 1941, when TIME magazine co-founder Henry Luce (Yale Class of 1920), a son of American Protestant missionaries to China, proclaimed The American Century, the two horses of American national-security and of global capital pulled more or less together, in harness to the American republic. But by the time George W. Bush (Yale, 1968) and Dick Cheney (Yale drop-out, 1961), took that rig on a full gallop in 2003, they couldn't avoid crashing into what the conservative political scientist Samuel Huntington had seen coming in 1994: The hard reality is that the horse of global capital no longer pulls alongside the horse of American nationalism.

Huntington noticed that Aetna, Ford, and other conglomerates are no longer American companies. After 9/11, Cheney's own Halliburton moved its world headquarters from the Bushes' Houston to Abu Dhabi, and Post-America, a book by Fareed Zakaria (Yale, 1986, now a Yale Corporation member), announced that the global capitalist horse had broken loose from its old harness. This time, it's not Henry Luce's Yale that's paying for missions abroad; it's the government of Singapore, for a mission that Yale's own faculty has had little role in shaping.

The old colleges weren't always noble and independent. They produced herds of dray horses of the financial and legal establishments; legions of mountebanks, blowhards, and bounders at the Council on Foreign Relations; and the CIA, which was invented at Yale soon after Luce proclaimed the American Century. But they also produced or provoked a Dwight Macdonald (Yale, 1928), William Sloane Coffin, Jr.(1949), William F. Buckley, Jr.,(1950) John Lindsay (1944), Garry Trudeau (1970), John Kerry (1966), Howard Dean (1971), and thousands of other remonstrants and guardians of the republic, most unsung, whose works, including their inspiration of others, have been among Yale’s greatest contributions to America, and sometimes the world.

Today's neoliberal riders of national-security and global currents justify themselves morally by waving the pennants of "diversity," but its advances couldn't have been won without tough, old civic-republican virtues that sustained the early Civil Rights movement and, yes, the old colleges themselves: At its 1964 Commencement Yale presented an honorary doctorate to Martin Luther King, Jr., who, fresh out of jail, wasn't yet popular with most white Americans (including conservative Yale alumni of that time.). The college helped open the hearts of northern WASPs and Jews whose own Puritan and biblical ancestors had made history of the same Exodus myth that King was invoking in the South.   
  
If that myth has expired, except as a cartoon in the mind of a Rick Santorum, then conservatives and neoliberals like Levin, struggling to pilot our liberal arts colleges through the sea-changes sketched here, will have to find some other way to demonstrate the courage of liberal education's best convictions. Conservatives of Henry Luce's stripe, especially, will have to test the best of their old Puritan faith against what John Winthrop called the "carnall lures" of wealth.

There's a reason to hope that faculty critics can help them or their institutions to do that. It's precisely -- and ironically -- that the old colleges weren't so noble all the time but that they never stopped trying. At the dawn of the 18th century, Yale was founded to stop Harvard's diversion of the holy Puritan mission toward decadent wealth-making, in a world increasingly connected but flattened by commerce. The world isn't flat, Yale's founders insisted. It has abysses, and students need a faith that's powerful enough to plumb them, face the demons in them, and even defy the powers that be in the name of better ones.

Yale President A. Whitney Griswold, a descendant of Puritan governors of Connecticut, demonstrated that faith in 1951, when -- almost as if anticipating Yale-heavy intelligence and foreign-policy fiascos such as the Bay of Pigs and our grand-strategic blunders in Vietnam and Iraq -- he dismantled Yale's Institute of International for International Studies, a "Good Shepherd" predecessor of the dubious Jackson Institute and Grand Strategy programs at today's Yale.

Griswold's successor Kingman Brewster, Jr. a descendant of the minister on the Mayflower, sustained those reforms because, as he told my entering Class of 1969 on September 13, 1965, "To a remarkable extent, this place has detected and rejected the very few who wear the colors of high purpose falsely. This has not been done by administrative edict or official regulation. It has been done by a pervasive ethic of student and faculty loyalty and responsibility and mutual regard which lies deep in our origins and traditions."

It's tempting these days to dismiss an admonition like Brewster's as little more than a snob's boast about an in-crowd. But he really wanted Yale students to plumb the old depths in order to know true leaders from false. He may even have been channeling a spiritual forebear, the Puritan minister Richard Mather, who wrote in 1657 that, "Imposters have but seldom got in and set up among us, and when they have done so, they have made a short blaze and gone out in a snuff."

The old tensions between religious and humanist Truth-seeking, between authoritarian and republican Power-wielding, and between all of them and capitalist or Wealth-making run all the way back into the old colleges' taproots. When those Connecticut Puritans founded their college to counter Harvard's lapses, even they turned for funding and books to a governor of a multi-national corporation, the East India Company, Elihu Yale, and named their college after him.

That might give righteous critics of Levin's venture in Singapore some pause. Or maybe it gives them even more precedent for criticizing it. Conservatives, hot to rescue liberal education from liberals, might take pause, too, as they remember the old Puritan willingness to defy worldly power as well as to serve it. And neoliberals who still think the world flat had better start looking into its abysses with something more than accelerators and multiple-regression analyses.

For all of us, Truth emerges not from esoteric doctrines, radical-left pronouncements of Rousseau's General Will, nationalist grand strategies, or even the latest scientific paradigms, let alone from commercial and technological breakthroughs that raise the ante but don't end the game. Truth develops only provisionally from the trust-building process of deliberative democracy, and the point of this essay is that that requires a deep civic faith that's kindled or reinforced in college - or, fatefully, that isn't.   
  
"Anyone who is himself willing to listen deserves to be listened to," Brewster wrote. "If he is unwilling to open his mind to persuasion, he forfeits his claim on the audience of others." Universities can't demonstrate this in places like Singapore unless they're proving it daily in their own companies of scholars. If they try to harness liberal education to strategies driven by the lust for money, power, and public relations, they'll lose not only liberal education but the republic.

But let me give the last word to former student of mine, who, as a senior at Yale in 2004, wrote that "a set of practices, habits, customs and beliefs must be considered basic to a functioning democracy. .... Unlike the Constitution, though, such subtle understandings and habits cannot be codified. The ethos of a republic is at once its most inscrutable and important attribute." We have to hope that liberal arts colleges' faculty and students will vindicate their "living constitution" in the nick of time.

**2.** April 4, 2012

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/the-showdown-at-yale_b_1401122.html>

also at <http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2012/04/04/the_showdown_over_liberal_education_at_yale/>

[**[college](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)  
[The Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)[i](javascript:void(0);)d

# The Showdown on Liberal Education at Yale

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

**Jim Sleeper**

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale

The stampede (or is it a gold rush?) abroad by dozens of American universities to plant their flags, brand names and, some of them claim, the seeds of liberal education and democracy was starting to seem thoughtless and chaotic by any serious pedagogical or political measure, even before Yale made its own bizarre entry in 2010. But now I wonder if globe-trotting faculty and administrators at other universities are laughing or crying about Yale President Richard Levin's not-quite-public, not-quite online statement of last Sunday.

"A Yale lecturer raised questions in a recent commentary about Yale trustee involvement with the Government of Singapore," Levin's statement begins -- it was sent to only some faculty and is posted on a limited-access website -- and I, too, don't know whether to laugh or cry about the rest of his statement, for I am the man, if it be so, as 'tis, whose" recent commentary" (a version of which ran here) was Levin's pretext.

The rest of his message is a tortuous lawyer's account of the trustees' opportune recusements or timely resignations from Singapore's Government Investment Corporation or from the Yale Corporation, to avoid any appearance of personal and pedagogical conflicts of interest. But this is a venture that Yale should never have undertaken even if all its legal i's are dotted and t's crossed. Let other universities learn and beware.

My column also ran in [openDemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/university-campuses-in-far-east-money-power-or-democracy), a London-based website whose editors and readers know a thing or two about the former crown colony of Singapore and more still about universities -- the London School of Economics and Warwick University -- that have carried their "cosmopolitan" ambitions too far.

In 2005 Britain's prestigious Warwick [canceled plans](http://www.yawningbread.org/apdx_2005/imp-226.htm) to set up campus in Singapore after its faculty assessed the regime's restrictions on academic and other freedoms. Yale has rushed in where Warwick feared to tread, collaborating with the regime to establish the "Yale-National University of Singapore" College, an undergraduate residential institution emulating Yale College as well as bearing its name.

Yale assumes, and Singapore claims, that Warwick's pullout has prodded constructive change. That's worth investigating. Far less important was my column's first-time-in-public report that three Yale trustees, members of the governing Yale Corporation, have had extensive business ties to Singapore's authoritarian, corporate city-state, for whose $100-billion investment corporation they've actually worked as board members, investment officers, and advisers, even before and after Singapore was bonding with their Yale Corporation.

Levin referenced my column to get out in front of the New York Times, whose Tamar Lewin questioned him about those trustees only a few hours before he issued his statement. Her story is expected to run just before the Yale College Faculty meeting of Thursday, April 5, at which the Singapore project will be discussed.

Levin's statement is only one move in the full-court press Yale's administration is conducting to justify a venture that, like half a dozen Yale-heavy American foreign-policy escapades, was undertaken with noble claims and promises but ended up weakening "the fabric of democracy" and demoralizing liberal education, as editors of openDemocracy put it in introducing my column. Administration loyalists are working hard to charm, pacify, or intimidate the project's critics, and they're planning parliamentary shenanigans at Thursday's faculty meeting to neuter a proposed resolution (described by its author [here](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/04/benhabib-whats-stake-yale-nus/)) whose purpose is to put Yale on notice that many faculty question the venture on academic-freedom and civil-liberties grounds.  
  
Universities are cosmopolitan and global by definition, of course, but there are good and bad ways to be so, and the bad ones have become heartbreaking for many who love Yale. Notwithstanding popular caricatures and true stories of Yale's elitism and skullduggery, it has had an historic, bracing, often [beneficent influence on the American republic](http://www.jimsleeper.com/articles/signature-pieces/Yale%27s%20Purpose.pdf) and civil society and on its counterparts the world over.

That's a complex and intriguing story that goes to the heart of America's own contradictions, not to mention liberal democracy's. Suffice it to say here that Yale's past contributions to it are being parodied and sullied by this effort to establish a "Yale-National University of Singapore College" for undergraduates. If the project is irreversible, so is the folly of putting so many eggs in the basket of an illegitimate and unsustainable regime.

Columbia [has opened seven or eight centers](http://www.columbiaspectator.com/2012/03/30/global-centers-grow-concerns-remain) for undergraduates abroad, but each one has a light footprint and could be pulled out if political or economic circumstances require it. That's precisely how a university should do things. It's not how Yale is behaving in Singapore.

Yale's Singapore venture also over-commits it to global neoliberalism and its engines of state capitalism, including the very big engine whose fist and fangs the Supreme Court has been baring lately right here in America. Yale has too often functioned as that regime's velvet glove. That it's doing so again by trying to ride the new global riptides on the Singapore boat is a tragedy in the making for Levin.

A "regular guy" who, since assuming the presidency in 1993, has pulled the university back from the brink physically, fiscally, and reputationally in the American chattering classes and in New Haven's fraught town-gown relations, Levin has also gotten the right-wing noise machine to stop bashing "liberal" Yale. But he has done that only by making too many concessions to forces of national-securitization and corporatization that are making so many liberal arts colleges -- as Lewis Lapham, paraphrasing the Yale historian George Pierson, put it in [a terrifyingly poignant, prescient essay](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/01_03/lapham.html) in 2001 -- "like ships caught in the same current, some more obviously helpless than others, some steering across or against the wind, but all drifting toward certain destruction on the lee shore."

It's one thing for New York University Law School to set up a law center in Singapore, or Duke University a medical school and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology an engineering program there, all of these transmitting delimited skill sets to Singaporean graduate students. It's quite another to try to carry a college's deepest mission, liberal education, to another country's young people by collaborating with a regime as extensively and yet naively as Yale has done.

Such an undertaking should mobilize a lot more wisdom, expertise, and "soft power" than anyone on the Yale Corporation or among its selected faculty operatives has exhibited, outside of bromidic declarations about East-West syntheses. And Yale has ignored its own Southeast Asia experts, at least one of whom, James Scott, has been scathingly critical of the project and of how Yale has promoted it.

Worse, Singapore is paying all the costs of constructing and staffing the new college, and who pays the piper inevitably calls the tune. The new institution is expected to emulate Yale's residential collegiate character -- a new model in Asia -- as well as to bear the "Yale-NUS" name and even to integrate graduates right into the Association of Yale Alumni network (a nice fund-raising gambit), but all this without actually granting Yale degrees.

That last provision was the Yale Corporation's way of insulating itself from an obligation to ask its own faculty to deliberate or vote formally as a body on what will be viewed universally as an expression of Yale College's educational mission.

No wonder that, as the project has grown and begun to take up the time of hand-picked Yale faculty and factota, and as other Yale faculty have been tasked to assist the new Singapore hires during an orientation in New Haven, two-thirds of the 150 professors who showed up at a Yale College Faculty meeting last month forced the matter onto the agenda of this Thursday's meeting.

In the column that Levin is referring to, I tried to sketch [what's at risk](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/how-yales-singapore-ventu_b_1352729.html) to Yale College's larger mission. Here let me address some of Yale's latest moves to deflect onto its own faculty critics the disgrace it has risked bringing upon itself by succumbing to the siren songs of neoliberal cosmopolitanism.

Those songs have transfixed and run incessantly through the minds of the same American elites whose premises and practices nearly destroyed the American republic and economy in the decade following 9/11. The new globalism is their escape -- or so they imagine. Levin's effort to prove that his trustees broke no laws or conflict-of-interest regulations is escapist in itself: At its best, it can end up confirming only the journalist Michael Kinsley's observation that what's truly scandalous isn't always what's illegal but what's been made all-too-perfectly legal, for reasons no one ever discusses. Levin's statement is an effort to avoid that discussion, although perhaps the Times will discover that he has glossed some real conflicts of interest, too.

The real "scandal" is Yale Corporation members' blithe assurance that they can do good for the world while doing very well for themselves. When you think of Yale Corporation members G. Leonard Baker, Charles Ellis (who maintains an investment business in Singapore and is married to the Secretary of Yale, Linda Koch Lorimer), Charles Waterhouse Goodyear IV, and Levin, don't think of three greedy capitalists and a neoliberal-economist front man conspiring to drag Yale into enhancing their own investments. Think rather of four knights-errant of a commodious American capitalism, hale fellows well met, boyishly idealistic about bringing democracy to the world via free markets.

It's a lot like the vision of the former Yale political scientist (and later assistant secretary of defense and then World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz, and of George W. Bush (Yale Class of 1968), upon whom Levin and his Corporation bestowed an honorary doctorate at the 2001 Yale Commencement, a few months before 9/11.

So imagine these enthusiasts sitting in a room or on a conference call, all of them taking it for granted that they are Yale and getting excited about an opportunity to bestow Yale's gifts (for which Yale College alumni Baker, Ellis and Goodyear are personally grateful and almost weepily sentimental) upon an Asian society that's ripe for those gifts, and in which they happen to have extensive connections.

What a fine way to gain the world without losing one's soul, and never mind that a serious liberal arts education would have subjected these men's grand plans to an intimate, rigorous historically informed assessment of how such efforts usually end.   
  
Instead of subjecting itself to any such scrutiny, corporate Yale, clueless and flailing, has now wheeled in another trustee, the investment bankers' favorite journalist, Fareed Zakaria, to write a [column](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/03/zakaria-a-global-education-for-a-global-age/) in the Yale Daily News that comes across like a wind-up toy of Zakaria at his self-important worst.

Judged by The New Republic to be one of America's ["most-overrated thinkers,"](http://www.tnr.com/article/politics/96141/over-rated-thinkers?page=0,1) Zakaria, who will be Harvard's commencement speaker this spring, was interviewed about the state of the world last year by none other than Levin before a large audience at the kick-off off Yale's $50 million Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, the new home of "Professor" Stanley McChrystal and of what Lapham, writing of the Ivies in another context, called "the arts and sciences of career management," including mastery of "the exchange rate between an awkward truth and a user-friendly lie."

The [Columbia Journalism Review](http://www.cjr.org/feature/money_talks_marchapril2012.php?page=all) notes archly that Zakaria, who collects a standard speaking fee of $75,000, has spoken before Baker Capital, Catterton Partners, Driehaus Capital Management, ING, Merrill Lynch, Oak Investment Partners, Charles Schwab, and T. Rowe Price.

In his Yale Daily News column, after parsing the new college's prospective East-West syllabus with affectations of an erudition he doesn't possess, Zakaria, an elitist who's also a consummate player of the Third World card against Western critics of neo-liberalism, discovers in faculty opponents of the Singapore venture "a form of parochialism bordering on chauvinism -- on the part of supposedly liberal and open-minded intellectuals" who, he tells us, can't "see that we too, in America and at Yale, can learn something from Singapore. In fact, together, Yale and the National University of Singapore can teach the world a new way to think about education in a globalized world."

Maybe so, but Zakaria's habit of resorting to snarky put-downs only confirms his own closed-mindedness. Last summer, baring the same fangs he's using to defend the Singapore venture, Zakaria excused President Obama's dismal leadership failures in the debt-ceiling crisis by telling Charlie Rose, on a show with the insightful Obama critic, the academic psychologist and political consultant [Drew Westen](http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/08/18/fareed_zakaria_has_a_problem_1/), "I'm not going to get into the what-ifs of a professor, you know, who has never run for dogcatcher advising one of the most skillful politicians in the country on how he should have handled this."

Zakaria -- who hasn't run for dogcatcher, either, but doesn't hesitate to advise presidents -- can't help himself at such moments, and his column on the Singapore venture is a sad example of Yale's own transformation from crucible of civic-republican leadership to global career-networking center and cultural galleria for a new elite that answers to no polity or moral code.

As the Yale Daily News staged Zakaria's circus-dog performance, Levin's off-line statement about conflicts of interest was joined by another statement, an e-mail message to some faculty by the felicitously named Pericles Lewis, a Yale English professor who has been helping the Yale-NUS college with hiring and curricular design. Urging selected New Haven colleagues to attend this Thursday's meeting to endorse the venture, Lewis revealed that people in Singapore are actually human, that some of them are very bright, and that, contrary to the impression supposedly given by naïfs and moralists in New Haven who are distressed by Singapore's laws against homosexuality and free expression and its failures to sign major human-rights covenants, life goes on there rather normally for gays and dissidents who know how to conduct themselves.

This Pericles might want to ponder [Maureen Dowd's observation](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/20/opinion/20dowd.html?_r=1&ref=maureendowd&pagewanted=print) last year that, in parliamentary hearings on the scandals wracking the News Corporation, whose practices not only broke the law but perverted government and the liberal public sphere, Rupert Murdoch's "most revealing moment was when he volunteered his admiration of Singapore, calling it the most 'open and clear society in the world.' Its leaders are so lavishly paid, he said, that 'there's no temptation, and it is the cleanest society you'd find anywhere.'

"It was instructive that Murdoch chose to praise a polished, deeply authoritarian police state. Maybe that's how corporations would live if they didn't have to believe in people," Dowd concluded, leaving off just where the Yale Corporation's equally instructive account of its engagement with Singapore begins.

Yes, Singapore is a society in transition, but Yale has misunderstood *what kind of transition* it’s walking into, ill-prepared and prematurely, in the scathing assessment of Michael Montesano, a 1983 Yale graduate who has been living and working in Singapore.

<http://globalhighered.wordpress.com/2012/04/03/is-yale/>

Yale seems determined to miss what matters: It has been swept up by the logic of Davos, where movers and shakers like Zakaria confide to investors with stagey sighs that most other people still have to be ruled, and it has forgotten the logic of, say, Dante, who could remind the would-be rulers at Davos that they can barely rule themselves -- something many of the rest of us have been noticing since at least 2003.

The very survival of the new global economy and public sphere depend on colleges like Yale standing somewhat apart from these people and from "the arts and sciences of career management" that markets and states have insinuated increasingly into their training at places like Yale.

Liberal democracy -- including the promised liberal-democratic transformation of Singapore -- depends on American colleges' tempering their preparation of the young for wealth-making and power-wielding with rigorous, intimate humanist truth-seeking, not just with a humanist veneer like Zakaria's. That will require assiduous cultivation and courage, drawn from deep wellsprings. "Can-do" investment strategies and corporate administration won't be enough.

Some of the strongest warnings have come not only from what Pericles Lewis calls a "small group of active opponents," and what Zakaria calls the bearers of "a form of parochialism bordering on chauvinism," but from thinkers whom conservatives invoke, such as Allan Bloom, Michael Oakeshott, John Gray, Harvey Mansfield, and Samuel Huntington.

Warnings come also from Yale's own history. When the American Revolution was beginning, many people were still grateful to King George III, whose American officers, including George Washington, had defeated the nefarious French and their Indian allies. But as the monarchy's subsequent blunders and abuses accumulated, its Tory minions in the colonies began to cast lovers and patriots of a more democratic America as naïfs, malcontents, subversives, and even traitors. It was the colonial Tories who showed, as Zakaria does now, that they loved not the country they were living in but their own primacy as courtiers and operatives in a global empire that was becoming increasingly illegitimate and unsustainable.

Many at Yale had affection for the monarchy, or at least direct interests in it, but those interests became embarrassing when officers of the king hanged the 23-year-old Nathan Hale, Yale Class of 1773, as a traitor. Hale's last words were, "I regret that I have only one life to give for my country," for it was he who truly loved America, not what has become its occupying regime. Every day Yale undergraduates pass his statue, which bears his last words. Even if it's too late to undo the Yale-NUS deal, faculty and students can honor Hale by distancing the College from the Corporation's abuse of its name and true mission.

Academic empire builders, sailing under the flag of a civilizing mission to bring the arts and sciences of market and state management to undergraduates, are mis-educating them at precisely the time in their lives when they need most to engage a liberal education's lasting challenges to politics and the spirit.

Questions about whether trustees have broken laws or whether Yale has reckoned adequately with the Singapore regime's affronts to academic freedom, civil liberties, and human rights are important. But equally important is the question of whether Yale and other liberal arts colleges are being true to their own promise or whether they're trying to ride currents that will carry them toward certain destruction on the lee shore.

## 3.

## http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/04/benhabib-whats-stake-yale-nus/

## BENHABIB: What's at stake at Yale-NUS

By [Seyla Benhabib](http://www.yaledailynews.com/staff/seyla-benhabib/)

Wednesday, April 4, 2012

At its monthly meeting tomorrow, the Yale College faculty will debate and probably vote on a resolution that means a lot more for the future of Yale University than its wording alone suggests. I introduced the resolution concerning the planned Yale-NUS College in Singapore to express faculty dissatisfaction not only with Yale’s collaboration with a government that severely constricts human rights, civil liberties and academic freedom but also with the administration’s decision-making process about curricular and pedagogical matters that should have been decided by a vote of the Yale faculty — if indeed Yale’s name is to be attached to the college in Singapore at all.

While the body of a university must be administered by a corporation, its living constitution — some would say its soul — flourishes only in its scholars’ and students’ freedom to follow reason and open inquiry in directions that are not foreclosed by government or market pressures. Yet the Yale faculty has slowly awakened to the virtual *fait accomplit* of a new college that will be in part governed and fully funded by Singapore and its National University. Yale’s collaboration in this venture was conceived partly by some members of the Yale Corporation who have also served on the Government of Singapore’s investment corporation. While the new college will not technically grant Yale degrees, its graduates will be fully integrated into the Yale Alumni Association Network.

My resolution addresses explicitly only one dimension of these strange and troubling arrangements. It reads:

“We, the Yale College Faculty, express our concern regarding the recent history of lack of respect for civil and political rights in the state of Singapore, host of the proposed Yale-National University of Singapore College.

“We urge Yale-NUS to respect, protect and further principles of non-discrimination for all, including sexual minorities and migrant workers; to uphold civil liberty and political freedom on campus and in the broader society.

“These ideals lie at the heart of liberal arts education as well as of our civic sense as citizens, and they ought not to be compromised in any dealings or negotiations with the Singaporean authorities.”

At Thursday’s faculty meeting, amendments may be introduced with the intent to get the Yale faculty on record supporting the establishment of Yale-NUS, even though the faculty never formally debated or voted on the project before it was signed and sealed. But any such support would require a new resolution and cannot be adopted before the full terms of the agreement between the Yale Corporation, the Government of Singapore and the NUS administration are made public. How can we be asked to endorse an arrangement the terms of which have not been disclosed?

Furthermore, it is only in ad hoc fashion that the cooperation expected of the Yale-New Haven faculty with Yale-NUS comes to light: We are expected to host and train the new faculty members of Yale-NUS here in New Haven as early as this fall, the president of Yale-NUS writes that classrooms will be equipped for teleconferencing with classes that we teach in New Haven, and the first students admitted by Yale-NUS will come to New Haven in summer 2013 and attend our classes, where special focus will be placed on encouraging them to participate freely and learn to speak their minds. When have we been asked whether or not we agree with all this?

The argument by Yale-NUS defenders that puzzles me most is that we in New Haven live in departmental silos, while Yale-NUS will set a dazzling example of the interdisciplinary future of liberal arts for us here in the United States. Leaving aside this venture’s naïve missionary sentiment, one must ask: Do we need to go to Singapore to advance interdisciplinarity and a revival of the liberal arts?

I understand well the challenges of achieving a genuine interdisciplinarity. A University-wide conversation about such programs would be welcome. But where has that discussion been? What exactly have been the obstacles to holding it here in New Haven?

We, the faculty of Yale College, have the responsibility and obligation to deliberate and vote on these arrangements. Nothing less than our honor and judgment is at stake.

Seyla Benhabib is Eugene Meyer Professor of Political Science and Philosophy.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**5.** April 7, 2012

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/how-yales-faculty-rose-up_b_1408398.html>

also at: <http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2012/04/06/a_small_but_solid_victory_for_liberal_education_at/> and at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/yales-singaporean-adventure-victory-for-ideals-of-republic>

and at History News Network: <http://hnn.us/articles/small-solid-victory-liberal-education-yale>

## [[college](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/) [The Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

**Jim Sleeper** Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University

# A Small But Solid Victory for Liberal Education

Posted: 04/ 6/2012 4:44 pm

Just as the Tunisian vendor who sparked the Arab Spring was provoked not only by one bureaucratic or police affront but also by a long train of abuses that had alienated many Tunisians from the government, so the Yale professors who passed a resolution decisively (100 to 69) over their President Richard Levin's objection, in his presence, on April 5 were prompted by a lot more than the resolution's explicit concern for abuses of academic freedom, civil liberties and human rights by the government of Singapore, with whose National University Levin and the Yale Corporation are setting up a brand-new undergraduate college.

The faculty made clear that it was expressing larger concerns summarized two days before in a Yale Daily News [column](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/04/benhabib-whats-stake-yale-nus/) by Yale's Eugene Meyer Professor of Political Science and Philosophy, Seyla Benhabib, the resolution's author (and my wife; this is a blog commentary, not only a report; I provide the links to other accounts below).

The faculty's main concerns were reiterated so explicitly in the two-and-a-half-hour-long, closed-door meeting itself that everyone there understood the resolution's passage as a vote of "no confidence" in the growing corporatization and centralization of governance and liberal education at Yale.

Levin and administration loyalists left the room silently as dozens of people congratulated professors Christopher Miller, Michael Fischer, Jill Campbell, Joel Rosenbaum, Mimi Yiengpruksawan and others, including Victor Bers, the classicist who has really been the William Lloyd Garrison of this movement from the start.

Although the Yale-NUS project, signed and sealed two years ago without the Yale faculty deliberating or deciding on it, will proceed on schedule, things won't be the same at Yale itself now that its company of scholars, or collegium, has rebuked Levin and the Yale Corporation for usurping its pedagogical and civic independence. Let other universities' administrations and faculty take note.

Without such independence, liberal education would have merely the instrumental uses that Singapore's government seeks in its rush to become a global-capitalist entrepot. The professors were rebuking the administration not just for lending their name and pedagogical mission to something [concocted by the university's Davos men](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/the-showdown-at-yale_b_1401122.html), but, as I have described [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/how-yales-singapore-ventu_b_1352729.html), for instituting bureaucratic procedures and decrees right in New Haven that reduce the company of scholars to a roster of corporate employees, and (as I've argued [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/henry-kissingers_b_1093835.html) and elsewhere) for developing a network of lavishly funded institutes and centers -- nunneries for failed, aging neoconservatives and Vulcan warriors who contribute nothing to scholarship and overawe undergraduates by telling war stories and showing how to fight their last wars, complete with career-counseling and recruitment services.

Now that the resolution has passed, [the spin has begun](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/06/faculty-approve-yale-nus-resolution/). Yale's Tories -- who tried but failed to eviscerate the measure with amendments during the meeting -- are claiming that its passage indicates that faculty have accepted and even approved Yale's venture in Singapore simply by acknowledging its existence.

The new Yale-NUS college train has left the station, according to this spin, and while some dissidents may have hoped to derail it by dancing a self-righteous dance of protest, those who understand how the world really works will now get on with doing that work.

But one of the reasons for the Yale faculty's revolt is that those who claim to know how the world works have dragged us all through debacle after debacle, from Iraq through the 2008 meltdown and beyond, and then [trying to put a nice face on it.](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2005_05/q_a.html)

This has happened nowhere more often than at Levin's Yale, which bestowed an honorary doctorate on George W. Bush (Yale Class of '68) three months before he and Dick Cheney (Yale drop-out, 1961) took us on ventures supported by Levin and championed even more assiduously by faculty whom he favored, as I've described [here.](http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/08/13/what_politics_does_to_history/) Some of the same people at Yale envisioned the Singapore venture as a course correction -- less imperialistic, more collaborative -- but, in too many ways, it's more of the same.

[The Chronicle of Higher Education](http://chronicle.com/article/Yale-Faculty-Registers-Concern/131448/) and [*The Yale Daily News*](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/06/faculty-approve-yale-nus-resolution/) both report the outcome and the spin of yesterday's decorous rebuke to the Yale administration. [The New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/05/education/singapore-partnership-creates-dissension-at-yale.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=richard%20levin&st=cse) gave a balanced anticipation of the controversy just before the resolution was passed.

But, really, the best way to understand what has been sparked here [is to re-read Benhabib's short column](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/04/benhabib-whats-stake-yale-nus/) explaining to the Yale community the main point of the resolution that passed yesterday against Levin's objection.

The is a set-back for Levin's vision of Yale, not only because of some likely negative reaction from Singapore (actually, the Yale faculty acted in solidarity with critics there of Singapore's regime, with which Levin has so uncritically collaborated), and not only because some Yale Corporation members may have been in it for the money (I've argued [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/the-showdown-at-yale_b_1401122.html) that they were probably engaging in the old Yale practice of doing well by doing good, which is not the same thing).

Rather, this is set-back for Levin's vision of Yale for a softer, subtler, but in the long run more consequential reason: His policies and indulgences have abetted what The Economist magazine described at length a few weeks ago as a convergence of an Asian model of state capitalism with the one that's emerging in the U.S. What gets lost in that convergence are the American republic and civic-republican ideal, and this should worry honorable conservatives as well as liberals in America; but neither side is acknowledging or reckoning with it -- precisely the kind of reckoning a liberal education is for. The vote at Yale is the spark of something more promising.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
**4. YALE ALUMNI MAGAZINE**

April 6, 2012

<http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/blog/?p=14031>

**Faculty pass resolution on Singapore**

Posted by [Mark Alden Branch '86](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/blog/?author=2) on April 6, 2012, 1:18 pm



Faculty members find their seats before yesterday's meeting in Davies Auditorium. Photo: Mark Zurolo ’01MFA.

Over the objections of President Richard Levin ’74PhD, the Yale Faculty of Arts and Sciences passed a [resolution](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/blog/?p=14010) yesterday that criticizes Singapore’s human-rights record and calls on Yale’s new joint venture there with the National University of Singapore (NUS)  to “respect, protect and further principles of non-discrimination for all, including sexual minorities and migrant workers, and to uphold civil liberty and political freedom on campus and in the broader society.” (See the bottom of this post for the full text.)

The resolution has no statutory weight, and it’s hard to say if it will have any impact on the development of Yale-NUS College, which is scheduled to open in the fall of 2013 in Singapore. But it is seen by its supporters not just as a statement on Singapore, but as a kind of awakening of the faculty to what they see are issues of governance at the university. Jim Sleeper ’69, a lecturer in political science whose wife, poli sci professor Seyla Benhabib ’77PhD, proposed the Singapore resolution, [wrote on the website Talking Points Memo that](http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2012/04/06/a_small_but_solid_victory_for_liberal_education_at/)

Those concerns were reiterated so explicitly in the two-and-a-half-hour-long, closed-door meeting itself that everyone there understood the resolution’s passage as a vote of “no confidence” in the growing corporatization and centralization of governance and liberal education at Yale. Let other universities’ administrations and faculties take note.

Faculty had the opportunity to weigh in at town-hall style meetings two years ago when the Yale administration [announced plans for Yale-NUS College,](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2010_11/singapore327.html) a liberal arts college on the NUS campus. But the matter was never put to a faculty vote, and faculty response of any kind was minimal. Since then, growing faculty dissatisfaction over a number of issues—[the allocation of support staff](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/feb/24/king-faculty-conflict-over-shared-services/) and the [administration of the Graduate School](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/mar/19/faculty-seek-greater-role-grad-school/) among them—has led some professors to look at Yale-NUS again. Questions about academic freedom and free expression were raised anew.

More than 200 professors —an unusually large number —attended the faculty meeting, which was moved from its usual venue in Linsly-Chittenden Hall to Davies Auditorium to accommodate the anticipated crowd. Although the university will not release the official vote, faculty who were present say it was about 100 to 70 in favor of the resolution, which was amended slightly to soften its language.

“This is a great day for Yale,” Christopher Miller ’83PhD, who has [voiced his objections](http://chronicle.com/article/Yale-in-Singapore-Lost-in/127277/) to the criminalization of homosexuality in Singapore, [told Bloomberg News](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-04-06/yale-s-faculty-approves-rights-resolution-for-singapore-campus.html).

President Levin, who was present at the meeting and spoke out against the resolution, was disappointed with the result. “I felt that the tone of the resolution, especially the first sentence, carried a sense of moral superiority that I found unbecoming,” he [told the *Yale Daily News*](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/06/faculty-approve-yale-nus-resolution/). In a statement to the media, Levin said:

“I value the engagement of my colleagues and their commitment to important principles, even though I opposed the resolution because it did not capture the mutual respect that has characterized the Yale-NUS collaboration from the beginning.”

FULL TEXT OF THE RESOLUTION:

“We, the Yale College Faculty, express our concern regarding the history of lack of respect for civil and political rights in the state of Singapore, host of Yale-National University of Singapore College,” the resolution reads.

“We urge Yale-NUS to respect, protect and further principles of non-discrimination for all, including sexual minorities and migrant workers, and to uphold civil liberty and political freedom on campus and in the broader society.

“These ideals lie at the heart of liberal arts education as well as our civic sense as citizens, and they ought not to be compromised.”

**6.** April 11, 2012

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/will-yales-alumni-rescue-\_b\_1417888.html  
  
April 11, 2012

## [[college](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/) [The Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)

# Will Yale's Alumni Rescue Liberal Education at Yale?

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

# Jim Sleeper      Lecturer in Political Science, Yale

Hoping to head off alumni resistance to the brand-new "Yale-National University of Singapore" college that the Yale Corporation has created somewhat stealthily in collaboration with the government of [that authoritarian city-state](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/09/tan-truth-is-arrogant/), Association of Yale Alumni chairman Michael Madison has inadvertently demonstrated one of the ways Yale College is being transformed from a crucible of civic-republican leadership, grounded in liberal education, into a global career-networking center and cultural galleria for a new elite that answers to no polity or moral code:

STATEMENT OF THE OFFICERS OF THE AYA BOARD OF GOVERNORS, Michael Madison, Chair of the Board

"All Yale-NUS College graduates will be warmly welcomed as a part of the Yale alumni community. They will also be invited to participate in general alumni events and programs. They will not, however, be voting in the elections for Alumni Fellows to the Yale Corporation since the University by-laws limit voting to those with Yale degrees."

All that counts here is that Yale-NUS graduates will get a "warm" welcome when they impress their business clients over dinner at the elegant Yale Club of New York and when, grateful for this access of grace, they respond to Yale's fundraising appeals.

This sad gambit hastens the Yale Corporation's selling of Yale's name and pedagogical talents to Singapore without the Yale faculty's actually deciding on it, owing to the provision that the new venture's graduates won't actually get bona fide Yale degrees. What they will get is Yale's name and aura on their resumes and even diplomas. And like the regime in Singapore, this will infect and inflect the university's nature and mission.

On its face, the strategy seems consonant with neoliberalism's noble promise to transcend narrow nationalism and war with commerce and, through commerce, with global democracy -- an old, fond hope of "enlightened" global elites since long before there was a Davos. Unfortunately, [as I've argued a bit heatedly,](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/the-showdown-at-yale_b_1401122.html) it subordinates liberal education to corporatism in ways that doom the latter.

It also ignores the warnings not only of leftist and liberal thinkers and a few right-wing isolationists, as defenders of Yale's Singapore folly keep trying to suggest, but, even more so, of thinkers whom honorable conservatives invoke ([Allan Bloom](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/04/books/review/04SLEEPER.html?scp=1&sq=%22jim%20sleeper%22%20and%20%22allan%20bloom%22&st=cse), Samuel Huntington, John Gray, Harvey Mansfield). They've insisted that universities stand farther apart from both markets and states than the Yale Corporation or Yale President Richard Levin, a neoliberal economist, show any sign of understanding.

Just how blind they've been in blundering into Singapore is sketched by [a young Singaporean, Shaun Tan](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/09/tan-truth-is-arrogant/), a graduate student in New Haven, and, devastatingly, [by Michael Montesano](http://globalhighered.wordpress.com/2012/04/03/is-yale/), Yale '83, who lives and works in Singapore and knows the moves in this game.

It would not be xenophobic or moralistic to call the game off. Yale is already commendably cosmopolitan, its undergraduates increasingly diverse in national as well as ethno-racial and religious terms, though not yet adequately in socio-economic ones -- a problem that's side-stepped, and indeed almost denied, by putting so much energy into Singapore. Alumni of liberal arts colleges would be well-justified to remind their alma maters' new pharoahs that diversity wouldn't have been achieved at all had not the old colleges nurtured the tough, civic-republican (and, yes, American) virtues that aided the civil rights movement.

That nurturing is being eviscerated subtly but palpably by administrators' neo-liberal grand strategies, which presume that the world is flat and "connected," not that [it has abysses which only a liberal education can plumb.](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/university-campuses-in-far-east-money-power-or-democracy)

Yale alumni can make this shallowness an issue in [the current election for an alumni fellow](http://www.aya.yale.edu/corpelection) of the Yale Corporation to replace the retiring Margaret Warner '71. Will the candidates criticize and oppose the Singapore venture? Protests against the facile networking of NUS graduates into the alumni association should also be [lodged](mailto:michael.j.madison@gmail.com) with AYA chair Madison and [governing board members.](http://www.aya.yale.edu/content/bog-members_2052) The Yale administration may listen to alumni more carefully than it did [to the faculty last week.](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/blog/?p=14031)

It would also help if a dozen eminent professors and emeriti who oppose this drift in their university's mission would say so. Life is short, and certain moments in history are fateful enough to demand voice and courage at the expense of protocol and convention. A letter or column signed by such keepers of a university's conscience and soul might have a profound effect on others' reckonings with the prospects of liberal education.

Finally, the Yale faculty's resolution expressing concern about Singapore's inhospitality to true liberal education was only a signal, of [what is required.](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/04/benhabib-whats-stake-yale-nus/) New resolutions, and perhaps a strong faculty Senate, may be necessary to restore the independent collegium, or company of scholars, to its rightful role in the governance of universities that shelter and nourish the kind of liberal education that prepares citizens to keep their republics.

**7.** <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-has-gone-to-singapor_b_1476532.html>

May 24, 2012

## [[college](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/) [The Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)

## Yale Has Gone to Singapore, But Can It Come Back?

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

## [Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University

Yale's president and trustees think they've found in Singapore a new haven for a liberal arts college and the kind of civil society a liberal education nourishes and needs. Their university sustained such a college for more than 300 years and, through it, the American republic, and for much of the time the republic inspired the world. But now Yale's captains have bound it contractually to an authoritarian corporate city state by building a "Yale-National University of Singapore College” that, while bearing Yale's name, will be wholly funded, constructed and ultimately controlled by Singapore's omnipresent government from behind the façade of a joint board.

Yale's captains know that they're taking a big gamble. So did Puritans who crossed another stormy sea to found Harvard and Yale on the models of Cambridge and, later, Oxford, to which they remained loyal officially, though not so much in their hearts.

Unlike their predecessors, who built their own City Upon a Hill, today's adventurers aren't so much in control of the venture, and they've kept most of its risks hidden from the crew and passengers and, I think, even from themselves: They can't have anticipated that freedom of expression would be waterlogged so soon at Yale itself. But it has been, and thereby hangs our sorry tale.

To Yale's 21st Century pilgrims, Singapore seemed shimmering proof of the doctrines of Yale Corporation trustee Fareed Zakaria, whose The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad and The Post-American World prophesied the transubstantiation of untrustworthy democratic distempers into prosperity and ordered liberty through capitalist discipline of the market and the public debt.

But while Singapore, reputedly a sterling example of such order, was celebrated by the BBC in the early 1990s as "The Intelligent Island," it was derided by others as "Disneyland with the Death Penalty," and now it's encountering some knotty problems that it hopes Yale can help solve, defer, or disguise.

Whether that happens will depend on the interests and "values" of Singapore's tight ruling Han Chinese elite, whose future leaders might be invigorated by liberal education if their elders weren't taking such an instrumental, commercial view of it and if their would-be mentors from Yale hadn't sailed into Singapore so clueless about the country and even about what they're bringing to it.

The result could be a collision, not a confluence, of Singapore's increasingly frenetic, hollow ascent in the world and America's heavy, messy descent into the violence and vapidity of its own politics, streets, and gladiatorial entertainments. Seeking a Leviathan, American leaders could even wind up asking Singapore's to come over and show them how to take charge before the Beijing Chinese do.

More likely, though, Yale-NUS will become a laboratory where white-coated scientists and priests try to synthesize Singaporean state capitalism with American state capitalism in a convergence that will seem harmonious only to its architects and apologists.

"Singapore has always regarded as one of its strengths its ability to move fast, adopt policies quickly, implement hard policies which are unpopular but deemed necessary to put the country in a competitive position," [explained](http://www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/News_&_Events/Singaporeambassadortalk.pdf) its ambassador to the United States, Chan Heng Chee, to a Yale Law School audience in March.

In other words, it has been successful partly because it's been a lot less democratic than its ruling People's Action Party likes to pretend. But now, the ambassador explains, "The governing party... has become even more responsive" to a vocal and politicized electorate, mooting the old doctrine that democracy and freedom must wait upon order and prosperity.

There's more than a little ambiguity in the word "responsive" here, for Singapore's government "responds" with alacrity and energy to any hint of public protest. Its deft balancing of surveillance and seduction makes the doughty little city-state look, on the surface, like the United Colors of Benetton bubble that Yale's campus in New Haven would love to be if only the Yale Corporation could grace the surrounding neighborhoods with more work, income, and safety in exchange for more obedience, self-censorship and, failing that, surveillance, and suppression. But we don't do that in America, because too many of us are too libertarian for such governmentality.

Or are we? Perhaps Yale has gone to Singapore partly to figure out how to adapt what they do there to something we might be persuaded or otherwise induced to accept here.

President Richard Levin and the university's governing Yale Corporation didn't give their own collegium, or company of scholars, any deliberative role in this venturing of the institution's hallowed name, culture, and pedagogical mission. One hundred professors [asserted](http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2012/04/06/a_small_but_solid_victory_for_liberal_education_at/) their rightful share of responsibility in a vote of no-confidence last month, but the Yale-NUS contract had already been signed and sealed.

And what's in the contract? The administration has kept that sealed, too. It hasn't revealed why it accepted Singapore's refusal to exempt the new campus from state prosecutors' and favored plaintiffs' infamously sinuous enforcements of laws against defaming anyone who governs -- laws that, if applied in the United States, would lead to the expulsion, imprisonment, and/or ostracism of a professor who argues in public that Barack Obama or Antonin Scalia is irresponsible and duplicitous.

Nor has Yale explained why it accepts Singapore's right to expel any professor, without cause, simply by refusing to renew his or her yearly work permit. Are these practices legitimate cultural differences to be respected, or just realities to be accepted?

The Yale-NUS non-binding memorandum and prospectus assure readers that academic freedom is secure because of the prospective faculty's scholarly excellence, as determined by weights and measures that leave too much wiggle room to a regime like Singapore's, and too little wiggle room for a college of Yale's influence and, one might have thought, its dignity. What would the university have to pay to get out of its junior partnership here? Yale isn't saying. One rumor has it at $30 million, another at $300 million.

Yale's only substantive response to such questions has been to deflect them by reminding inquirers of its stipulation that Yale-NUS graduates won't actually receive bona fide Yale degrees. But that only raises more questions than it answers: Why will Yale's name and logo [still be on the diplomas](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/will-yales-alumni-rescue-_b_1417888.html) of an entity it cannot ultimately control, and why has it been announced that "Yale-NUS" alumni will be integrated into the Association of Yale Alumni network, unless as a nifty fundraising gambit that further cheapens the university's name by marking the first time in its history that non-degree holders will become its alumni?

**A Standard Is Lowered**

The opacity of this strange, new "openness" is the other side of Yale's strange, new closedness to what truly counts: A university isn't a university unless it stands for the openness of inquiry into the unknown through experimentation and free exchange of ideas. During the Cold War, Yale President A. Whitney Griswold, descended from a line of Puritan, colonial Connecticut governors, found the courage to crusade for liberal education nationally against Communism and McCarthyism, both of them imminent and intimate threats to liberal education at the time, on campus and off.

[Yale's statement on Freedom of Expression](http://www.yale.edu/printer/bulletin/htmlfiles/grad/policies-and-regulations.html#personal_conduct), developed in 1975 by a committee chaired by the distinguished American historian C. Vann Woodward, affirms that if liberal education isn't merely an ornament but a wellspring of human striving, the free exchange of ideas "is necessary not only within [the university's] walls but with the world beyond as well" and that "the university must do everything possible to ensure within it... the right to think the unthinkable, discuss the unmentionable, and challenge the unchallengeable.

"To curtail free expression strikes twice at intellectual freedom," the statement continues, "for whoever deprives another of the right to state unpopular views necessarily deprives another of the right to listen to those views..... Every official of the university, moreover, has a special obligation to foster free expression and to ensure that it is not obstructed."

Students and faculty at Yale-NUS will have no such freedom beyond the university's walls, and Singapore refuses to exempt the campus itself from its energetic ban on criticism of government policies and public figures. "Understanding that norms are different is part of the value of this experiment," [Levin rationalizes,](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2012_03/levin.html), adding pointedly that "In Singapore, it is illegal to express racist or intolerant positions publicly. Here in the United States, some of our university peers have speech codes." The implication here is that Singapore's codes shouldn't shock a student at a leafy, liberal arts campus in America that has one of these codes.

But the "hate speech" that's punished by some American colleges is only one variety of what's silenced by Singapore's codes and creative enforcements. Yale's Freedom of Expression statement acknowledges that some speech really does hurt: "Shock, hurt, and anger are serious consequences of untrammeled expression," it cautions, and "No member of the community with a decent respect for others should use, or encourage others to use, slurs and epithets...." But the statement insists that "It may sometimes be necessary in a university for civility and mutual respect to be superseded by the need to guarantee free expression."

The statement adds that its committee weighed carefully the argument that uncivil and disrespectful behavior "should be made subject to formal sanctions and the argument that such behavior entitles others to prevent speech they might regard as offensive." But it concluded that "Our conviction that the central purpose of the university is to foster the free access of knowledge compels us to reject .... The assumption that speech can be suppressed by anyone who deems it false or offensive."

The perverse irony about Singapore's strict laws against racist speech is that they keep the lid on a hierarchy of color and caste that's presented to Western liberals as "multiculturalism" wrapped in "Confucian" traditions that are also invoked to justify subordinating Malay and Indian minorities, and impoverished Chinese migrant workers, to the country's Han Chinese majority.

This cruel duplicity is persistently overlooked by Americans who, because they're penitential about their own country's racism toward Chinese, find it hard to imagine that some of Singapore's Chinese might consider themselves superior to other peoples in the region and deserving of prerogatives like those of the old American WASP establishment (which was often dumber and more decadent). Another reason why Americans accept this nonsense is that they wouldn't be able to question it without unsettling the "harmony" its progenitors claim they're ensuring in Singapore no less than Beijing.

And what if we want to examine not Singapore's laws against racist speech but its broader economic and political restraints on two million migrants and other non-citizens who labor without minimum-wage laws or any other public standing, in a country of six million? Don't try it, even online. "When asked whether the government's close surveillance of political blogs was antithetical to Yale's values, President Levin declined to comment," notes Shaun Tan, a Yale graduate student in international relations, in [a recent, devastating account](http://thepolitic.org/?p=1374) of several Western universities' collaborations with authoritarian regimes.

"When debating [the faculty resolution mentioned above] urging the Yale-NUS College to respect civil liberties on campus," Tan notes, "Levin opposed a clause expressing concern at Singapore's 'lack of respect for civil and political rights', objecting that it 'carried a sense of moral superiority.' As the project comes to fruition, the Yale administration has grown increasingly reluctant to make any kind of value judgment with regard to Singapore."

"[Singaporeans] take demonstrations in a kind of different way," explains Yale astronomer Charles Bailyn, the "inaugural dean" of Yale-NUS. "What we think of as freedom, they think of as an affront to public order, and I think the two societies differ in that respect."

They certainly do. Or at least, they once did: Yale's Woodward committee and its statement on Freedom of Expression are now eviscerated by the agreement with Singapore, whose "anti-defamation" laws are enforced without jury trials in courts wholly subservient to the ruling People's Action Party, which has held power uninterruptedly since Singapore gained independence in 1965.

For example, the first opposition politician to win a seat in parliament, Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam, was soon charged with defamation in a suit that bankrupted him and forced him out of public life. His was only the first prominent case in a relentless tide of prosecutions that shuttle countless dissenters, including NUS faculty, out of their jobs and homes and into unemployment, prison, or exile.

Dr. Chee Soon Juan (PhD, U of Georgia) was fired by NUS from his position as a lecturer in neuropsychology in 1993 after he joined an opposition party; when he attempted to contest his dismissal, he, too, was sued for defamation, imprisoned, bankrupted, barred from leaving the country.

"Supremely confident of the reliability of his judiciary, the prime minister uses the courts ... to intimidate, bankrupt, or cripple the political opposition while ventilating his political agenda. Distinguishing himself in a caseful of legal suits commenced against dissidents and detractors for alleged defamation in Singapore courts, he has won them all," [writes Francis T. Seow](http://www.singapore-window.org/1028judi.htm), a former solicitor general of the country.

"In the past couple of years," wrote a Yale student in a paper for a seminar I teach on Global Journalism, National Identities, "British author Alan Shadrake was sentenced on defamation charges for criticizing the country's use of capital punishment; and the New York Times group was forced to apologize to Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew after being threatened with a substantial fine for printing an article about political dynasty of the Singaporean prime minister. These recent cases further substantiate the claim that Singapore's judiciary is simply a political instrument in the hands of the ruling party.

"The government's grip on media is even tighter and more obvious," the paper continues: "Nearly all print and broadcast media outlets, internet service providers, and cable television services are either owned or controlled by the state or by companies with close ties to the PAP. International organizations monitoring human rights and freedom of the press consistently criticize Singapore's harsh crackdowns on journalists, writers, or anyone disagreeing with the government's official standpoint. [Reporters without Borders,](http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2011-2012,1043.html) ranked Singapore 135th out of 179 surveyed countries in terms of freedom of the press in 2011."

**The Shame of American Self-Censorship**

Even more consequential for freedom than censorship via unjust prosecution has been the self-censorship it generates in Singaporean society. "The defamation law is a line in the sand. Never knowing where it will be drawn, we live in perpetual fear of crossing it," [writes](http://www.wired.com/opinion/2012/04/opinion-jeyaretnam-disneyland-death-penalty/all/1) Kenneth Jeyaretnam, son of the persecuted parliamentarian, in an essay that WIRED magazine published on April 19, the same day that a strange panel discussion at Yale, organized by Singaporean students under the beguiling title, "Singapore UnCensored," tried to counter what they characterized as false and offensive stereotypes about their country. By implying that irresponsible faculty critics had "censored" fair appraisals of Singapore, the event introduced an Orwellian whiff of self-censorship to Yale itself, as I'll show below.

Levin's and Bailyn's most common response to critics has been that anyone who truly means to "engage the world" - the phrase is a mantra for Yale-NUS apologists - must be willing to bend principles such as those in Yale's Freedom of Expression statement, out of sensitivity to our Singaporean partners' values.

What values? Asian values. Order and harmony. So what if, in Singapore, Asians dare not share their ideas publicly? It's their culture! "Close the door and I'll tell you what I think" is the sentence "Singapore UnCensored" panelists used several times to normalize American listeners' understandings of a "different" culture.

Americans say "Close the door...." that way in their workplaces all the time, too, of course, but they don't like hearing it said in public arenas. Yale's leaders present their hesitation to open the doors that Singaporeans close as a token of their cosmopolitan way of engaging other societies.

Somewhat ironically, they're also continuing a Yale obsession with China and East Asia that was a lot less humble and that peaked in Protestant missionary work there in the 19th Century and, later, in anti-Communism: Henry R. Luce, Yale Class of 1920, co-founder of TIME and LIFE magazines and author of the 1941 manifesto "The American Century," which declared that the world must and would become more like America, was born in China to Yale Protestant missionaries.

Levin has gone to China often on behalf of Yale, which has many small centers and projects there, but probably the Chinese were less receptive than Singapore has made itself seem to something as grandly ambitious as Yale-NUS.

"I am afraid there is an apparent tendency to believe what one wants to believe," warned William (Bo) Tedards, a 1991 Yale alumnus and the Coordinator of the World Forum for Democratizaton in Asia, in a 2010 letter to Levin that wasn't answered. "[Your] conclusion that faculty and students from overseas will need to 'understand those differences,' i.e. accept that human rights violations are occurring around them, .... offers no hope at all to Singaporean faculty and students, who apparently will feel no more free than they currently do at the National University of Singapore...

"And make no mistake, they do not feel free.... Singapore is governed by a political system that is the antithesis of the ideals of liberal education. Human Rights Watch recently described Singapore as 'a textbook example of a repressive state.'

"One must not fall into the trap of feeling guilty for 'imposing Western values' or 'failing to respect local cultures,'" Tedards added. "The very idea that basic human rights are anything but universal is a racist one (and the fact that it was so eloquently articulated by Lee Kuan Yew indicates the depth of his personal racism.)"

Yet so much "respect" have Yale's planners for the "local culture" of Singapore's Sino-centric rulers that, for now, at least, they've planned no serious work on Japan or Korea in the Yale-NUS curriculum; nor are they hiring faculty for it from Japan or Korea, according to the felicitously named Pericles Lewis, a Yale professor of comparative literature (!) who thinks he's engaging the world and advancing the liberal arts in this way.

In a message he sent on April 10 to an applicant who is a Yale alumnus teaching at a Korean university and is the author of a best-selling book in South Korea, Lewis wrote that while the "application is good, and I am sure you would be a great asset, .... we decided that the fields of Korean and Japanese would not be high priorities in our initial hiring group. (As compared to Chinese, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and European). That may well change in the future, so I hope you will consider re-applying when the college expands in coming years."

Fair enough, perhaps, but every time that Yale has hired a senior professor of Chinese in New Haven in the past ten years, the newcomer has been invited to affiliate with Lewis' Comparative Literature department, while senior faculty in Japanese have never been invited to affiliate with it. As for Korea, Lewis concluded his note by saying, "I am afraid I don't think I should sign on for the interviews regarding Korea, as I would simply be displaying my ignorance!"

Yale's incapacity or reluctance to live up to its own Statement on Freedom of Expression, even when prodded by Tedards and the evidence that supports him, was on sorry display in 2006, when Chinese Premier Hu Jintao spoke at Yale. As Shaun Tan notes, "Hu was not subject to questions from the audience like a normal speaker at Yale. Instead, he was given two softball questions pre-selected by the Yale administration." Hundreds of students protesting the visit "were restricted to the enclosed area of Old Campus, where they could not upset Hu and cause him to rethink his recent decision to allow Yale to be the first foreign university to trade on China's heavily regulated stock market.

In a prophetic irony, the Singapore edition of [The Christian Post](http://sg.christianpost.com/dbase/society/1238/section/1.htm) noted that "A CNN reporter was reportedly thrown out after asking the Chinese president if he saw protestors gathered outside. A Yale spokesperson later said that the man was escorted out because he had been invited to 'cover an event, not hold a press conference.'" Whether or not Singapore's government noticed that Post story, it's unlikely to have punished the paper for doing what the regime itself is always quick to do: point the finger at others' human-rights violations.

Now that the Chinese human rights activist Chen Guancheng, after being forced out of his refuge in the US Embassy, will be allowed to come to the United States "to study," Yale has an opportunity to defend academic freedom and "engage the world" in a way that's "becoming" of a great university. It can do what it did after the Tiananmen demonstrations of 1989, when it appointed the heroic dissident Kang Zhengguo a Senior Lector. Will Yale be as brave now, and offer to bring Chen Guancheng to New Haven? Will the Yale Law School, which maintains a China Law Center to advance the rule of law in China and welcomes visiting scholars from all over that country, invite Guancheng, a human-rights lawyer? Singapore, ever eager to point the finger at China, might even give Yale its permission.

When the Yale Alumni Magazine invited comments on the Singapore plan in 2010, Peter Conn, a 1969 Yale graduate who teaches at the University of Pennsylvania, [wrote](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2010_11/singapore/conn.html) that "in dealing with the protection of academic freedom, the current Yale administration has quite recently demonstrated neither good judgment nor a deep commitment to fundamental academic values."

Conn recalled that in 2009 Yale University Press, anxious to avoid Muslim rage with a decision that was "surely taken with the assent and presumably under the direction of senior administrators" but that was "appropriately condemned across the scholarly community," removed from Jytte Klausen's The Cartoons That Shook the World the very cartoons, disrespectful of the prophet Muhammed, that were the subject of her scholarly book. Although the cartoons had been published and posted often without incident, Yale chose fear over freedom.

In Conn's judgment "this censorship subordinated the requirements of truth-seeking and truth-telling to the hypothetical behavior of an angry mob. In short, the Press and its overseers chose to abandon the central principles of the university.... It may be that the administrators of some universities possess the stamina and proven moral courage that will be needed to withstand the attacks on freedom of inquiry, speech, and assembly that collaboration with Singapore's government will inevitably provoke. Yale's administrators manifestly do not."

This year Levin did condemn a New York police intelligence unit's spying on Muslim students at Yale as part of the NYPD's over-ambitious (and remarkably stupid) anti-terrorism operations. But his statement risked offending no one besides a municipal bureaucracy that plays no role in Yale's life. In Singapore, on the other hand, Levin has bound himself to a city-state that spies on its Muslim population and may now even keep a wary eye on Yale's.

Maybe Levin's Yale wasn't veering so far off course, then, after all, when it sailed into Singapore and collaborated in the theft of its own identity. It did so partly, I think, because the Levin administration was already re-fashioning Yale's identity without quite knowing what it was doing, and it was bewitched by the mirage of the golden web that Singapore's smiling, cosmopolitan elites are weaving from the iron filings of authoritarian instincts that they insinuate into the whole country's little daily regimens of ingratiation and insinuation.

Superficially pleasant and smooth, these mannered regimens take awhile to decode. Levin and his colleagues have had little reason to try. Step off a plane into Singapore's striking Changi airport, tour the country's clean, state-of-the art public works and transit systems and its city scapes, towers, parks, restaurants, nightclubs, and cultural amenities, and you'll understand why "many international businesses find Singapore a congenial place to establish regional offices or operations, and many expatriates find it a congenial place to reside," as Tedards wrote to Levin. "However, these businesses do not consider freedom of expression or conscience among their concerns; expatriates are not citizens, and they are aware that they must keep their mouths shut about anything they observe in Singaporean public life."

Nor are executives doing business with Singapore likely to credit Kenneth Jeyaretnam's [observation](http://www.wired.com/opinion/2012/04/opinion-jeyaretnam-disneyland-death-penalty/) in WIRED that "our streets are clean because an army of [sub-minimum-wage, tightly policed] immigrant labor sweeps up behind us" or that "We are mostly law abiding because we are afraid and repressed and we have no choice, not because we are inherently well behaved or 'good.'"

Jeyaretnam acknowledges that Singapore may not be the "Disneyland with a Death Penalty" that William Gibson called it in another WIRED article in 1993, but he thinks "it is probably true to say that if George Orwell and Philip Dick had an illegitimate child of a theme park, then this would be it."

**Hail and Farewell**

Three current or recent members of Yale's small governing corporation have participated directly in Singapore's golden weaving by managing, advising, and/or investing in its sovereign wealth and investment funds long before the Yale-NUS deal was done. But until a tip-off from a Yale faculty member prompted my report [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/how-yales-singapore-ventu_b_1352729.html) in the Huffington Post, which in turn prompted The New York Times to ask Levin about it, the university hadn't disclosed its trustees' employment by Singapore's Government Investment Corporation and its Temasek fund.

Yale Vice President Linda Koch Lorimer, Levin's alter ego and top administrator, who fiercely pressed some senior Yale faculty to get on board the S.S. Yale-NUS long before it entered dry dock in Singapore, and who will now sit on the new college's governing board, is married to Charles Ellis, a Yale Corporation member until 2008 and an investment adviser to Singapore's government until June, 2009, when the Yale-NUS deal was under discussion, and Ellis maintains a business in Singapore now.

Also in 2009, Charles Waterhouse Goodyear IV, who would become a Yale trustee in 2011, replaced the wife of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, as CEO-designate of Temasek, the sovereign wealth fund, which is wholly owned by the Singapore Minister for Finance. As Yale explored partnership with the National University, Singapore's cabinet discussed the Temasek Board's nomination of Mr. Goodyear and, according to its minutes:

decided that the Government should have no objection to Temasek appointing a foreigner as CEO if he was assessed by the Board to be suitable and the best candidate available. Cabinet, therefore, endorsed Mr Goodyear's nomination, but also reaffirmed the need for the Board of Temasek to remain in the effective control of Singaporeans. [Emphasis added].

Within a few months Goodyear was out of Temasek, reportedly after disagreements on investment strategy. Might that be a sign of things to come? "Foreigners" such as Lorimer and Levin will compose half of Yale-NUS' 10-member board, an entity within the National University, which is "wholly owned" by Singapore's government. For now, the Cabinet has no objection. But as Michael Kinsley said of deals done in Washington, the true scandals don't involve what's illegal as often as they involve what's all too meticulously legal.

The most important reason Yale lost course in Singapore is that Levin & Co. actually think they've found it there. What they've discovered is that they've been trying to weave something very like Singapore's golden web themselves, right at home in America, by transforming their old college from the civic-republican crucible of citizen-leaders it was for three centuries into a career-networking center and cultural galleria for a global elite that will answer to no particular polity or moral code.

Levin has appointed professor-practitioners such as Charles Hill, Stanley McChrystal, John Negroponte, and even Tony Blair to teach American and international students the arts of strategy making and self-censorship in service to swirling new configurations of power that are becoming less democratic and more intolerable to hundreds of millions of people.

**Taking Some Bearings**

A liberal education should test such configurations rather than contract itself out to them. Yale's abandonment of that principle and of the standards of freedom of expression that sustain it seems almost fantastical until one remembers that Yale was the birthplace of the CIA and its "Good Shepherd and Skull & Bones appurtenances and that the college is named for Elihu Yale, a governor of one of the world's first multinational corporations, the East India Company, which later acquired what was then called Singapura for the British Empire.

Yale does still honor the memory of someone who tried to subvert a state-capitalist regime corrupted by multinational corporations: Nathan Hale of the Class of 1773, was caught spying on British troop movements and was hanged by officers of the empire after saying, "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country." When he was hanged the Boston Tea Party had already dumped the East India Tea Company's heavily subsidized, government-protected product into the harbor.

It's a sign of the exquisite perversity of Yale's civic-republican patriotism that a replica of Hale's statue on the college's Old Campus stands at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. Hale may have been one of the first American intelligence agents, but it's worth remembering that he was spying against an entity very similar to what America itself has become.

Levin & Co. may still be trying to reconcile the statue of Hale that stands at the CIA with the one I pondered as a freshman on Old Campus many years ago. But Yale faculty have taken a stand with the Hale who was hanged, not the one who has been spun posthumously by the Office of Public Affairs and Communications. When Levin tried last month to dismiss, as "unbecoming" of Yale, the faculty resolution against Singapore that 100 professors passed over his objection and in his presence, he may have commenced his own "unbecoming" the president of Hale's Yale.

**Singapore, UnCensored?**

Administration loyalists mutter that critics of Yale-NUS are parochial elitists or leftist ideologues. But actually they include computer scientists, neo-conservatives, and distinguished alumni, so this controversy can't be parsed through the old binary, left-vs.-right lenses. Hale's civic-republican intuitions would serve us better, but Singapore's elite doesn't share them, and some future members of that elite who are studying in New Haven became defensive and prickly this spring when faculty voiced their criticisms of the government that has sent them to Yale on full scholarship to test and build the partnership.

Most of these emissaries are earnest, engaging, impressive. But some use American freedoms of speech to lob red herrings at critics of Singapore. That's fair game, at least in this country but so is my assessment of the gist of their message that Singapore's evident prosperity and apparent harmony reflect emphases in its political culture that are far preferable to the paralysis and hostility that pass for political freedom and democracy in America.

Some young Singaporeans in New Haven are well-practiced at lightening that message with humor even as they lace it with barbs: "The Yale College faculty meant well when they passed Thursday's resolution championing American-style political freedoms in Singapore. But -- I hate to break it to you -- our value systems aren't quite the same as Yalies'. It's hard for Singaporeans to imagine wanting the right to bear arms if it would mean worrying about getting home safely at night," wrote E-Ching Ng, 33, a graduate of Yale 2001, and now a 5th-year graduate student in linguistics whose education has been paid by her government in return for services rendered as a teacher and, perhaps, an operative, in a Yale Daily News column entitled ["Show Singaporeans Some Respect."](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/09/ng-show-singaporeans-some-respect/)

Actually, it's just as hard for me and most other Americans as it is for E-Ching to imagine "wanting to bear arms in order to get home at night," but I feel that way even without being able to rely on a police force as ubiquitous and "responsive" as Singapore's. It's fine to remind us that this country has ills and sins that are equally grievous, and that Singapore's ethos of "soft" repression and self-censorship are "realities" that won't bend to mere moralism. It's not so fine to suggest that Singaporean disciplines and restraints express genuine cultural differences and that therefore Americans would be insensitive, not to mention imperialistic, to criticize such things. To say that in a debate about Yale-NUS is to duck the truth that Americans who criticize Singapore also criticize their own government and society in ways Singapore's defenders cannot do without great risk.

E-Ching, an energetic, tightly wound woman who readily flashes what I can only describe as an iron grin, parried that truth by lobbing a criticism of Americans when she began her YDN column by citing a young writer in Singapore, Koh Choon Hwee, who's bewildered by the "careless, generalized stereotypes being traded not only by students, but also by Yale faculty members -- which seem to betray the very ethos of good scholarship." Twisting Hwee's puzzlement a bit, E-Ching added, "I believe Yalies can think, but I can see why my fellow Singaporeans might suspect otherwise."

"Criticizing a partner publicly during this crucial trust-building phase is a last-resort negotiating tactic used just prior to walking away from the deal," she added -- while doing precisely that. She's a virtuoso at hoisting Americans on their own petard: "We prioritize our values differently, and different doesn't mean they're right or wrong. At least, that's what I learned from a Yale liberal arts education."

That sounds a lot like Singapore ambassador Chan's comment to the Yale Law School audience in March: "Are some Yale professors saying that unless the countries and societies look like the US or function exactly like the US, they will not have anything to do with them? I would have thought it is important to share teaching skills and values in education."

E-Ching became the star of the April 19 "Singapore UnCensored" panel that brought censorship to Yale with witting and unwitting complicity by some Americans in the audience of 60 students and faculty.

A poster for the meeting in print and online read, "Yale Faculty and Students Welcome," not "Open to the Public," and E-Ching made clear, in response to a faculty member's request to listen in and participate via Skype or conference call, that "we would certainly welcome the virtual presence of faculty at our session, if it is understood that there will be no recording of any kind, and no quoting from what is said during the session. This is because we expect it to be a lively debate and are concerned about quotes out of context."

What "context"? The answer would emerge only slowly, later in the meeting and afterward. Moderator Tse Yang Lim, a 2011 Yale College alum and a graduate student at Yale in Forestry and Environmental Science, opened the meeting with the delicately sardonic observation that as the panelists were preparing "to bring some more lux and veritas" to the debate about Yale-NUS that had erupted in the preceding month and half, they'd been "awed and humbled by your interest and your research into our history and society."

Everyone knew perfectly well that few of us critics who weren't already experts in Asian Studies had done research that was awesome or humbling enough to deflect complaints that we were criticizing a country we'd never visited. (To that incontrovertible truth I responded, [here](http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2012/04/06/a_small_but_solid_victory_for_liberal_education_at/) in Huffington Post and in online comments to students in Singapore, that for some of us Yale's Singapore venture matters most for what it has revealed about the Yale administration's strategy and vision for our university and our republic.)

Lim repeated the evening's ground rules: First, reasonably enough, the panelists, who are Yale students or new alumni, not affiliates of the new Yale-NUS project, would not discuss "how Yale University makes its decisions" or the wisdom of the venture itself: "We are not here to debate Yale-NUS." Rather, they would try to clear up misunderstandings about Singapore by presenting "a diversity of views."

Lim then played the "cultural difference" card, explaining that this was a "closed door" meeting because "In Singapore we are always willing to close the door and tell you what we really think." Behind the doors of Yale's Luce auditorium (yes, that Luce), Singaporean Yalies could talk to other Yalies: "To everyone here, including reporters, do not record or quote from the session, it's off the record."

With that, we were off on a crash course in how to appear to criticize your government while minimizing and contextualizing its wrongs, and in how to displace attention from those wrongs onto the flaws of your interlocutors.

Although one panelist told the audience that other Yale professors and some reporters were listening in via hookups, that wasn't quite so. Although the organizers had succeeded in Skying in E-Ching's brother, the gay activist Y-Sheng, all the way from Singapore as a panelist, they couldn't, despite much promising and fussing, secure the promised "virtual presence" of some others who'd asked to listen in and perhaps pose questions from New York and Washington: Karin Fischer of The Chronicle of Higher Education, who is covering the developments in New Haven, told me that after 15 minutes she had "to give up trying" to listen on a connection that was unintelligible. It was hard not to suspect that the organizers wanted it that way. If other reporters were able to listen in, they weren't identified, and I haven't seen their reports.

I think that they were worried not mainly because they feared the authorities in Singapore (the panel's organizers were recording the session, without telling the audience they were doing it) but because, to some extent, they shared the government's worry about losing control of public discourse in Singapore. (Only when I rose toward the end of the session and asked if they were indeed recording the discussion and if the government might receive a report did they acknowledge that they were and that it might.)  
  
Mixed though their feelings were about their athletically repressive state, they had good reason to want to spare it embarrassment. After all, they are highly intelligent, engaging graduates of their country's most exclusive high school. They're secure enough near the top of their society to acknowledge some of its ills and sins, which they felt licensed to air a bit more at the meeting (behind "closed doors," of course) in order to win over a skeptical but polite Yale audience that's highly interested in Singapore's freedoms and that wouldn't be credit anything too sweet. A professional reporter or anyone else at the meeting can quote their public comments without restriction, although he or she ought not to if the speakers are claiming that they'd be endangered if quoted. Obviously these panelists made no such claim.

What I think worried the panelists was that our questions and their answers might "go viral" on websites the government doesn't in some measure control. For all their gripes about the regime's excesses, they have more than a little faith in it, and they contrast its "mentoring" and control with our comparative chaos and decay. In a burst of candor, a recent Yale graduate on the panel lamented that that websites and books are banned but that "we never know which are on the list unless we go to look for them and can't find them." But much of what they'd like to change in Singapore is changing, and they hope that Yale's presence will help.

Skyping from Singapore, Yi Sheng claimed, "You can say anything you want on campus," if only because "the government doesn't care what most academics say," but then he modulated that claim by telling of a gay friend whose teaching contracts were suddenly terminated with no explanation, by administrator who said at one point, "I'm telling you all that I'm not allowed to tell you."

But Yi Sheng also said he wasn't sure his friend's being gay was the main reason for his dismissal; it have been something more political or more strictly academic, because other gay faculty weren't being dismissed. In fact, there's been "a rapid rise in acceptance" of gays in recent years, in part because "the government has realized that the country can make a lot of money from having more gays."

That put a new light on E-Ching's claim in her YDN column that "The police have never bothered my openly gay brother,... despite his public gender-bending antics and book of coming-out stories with real names and faces... [U]sually, where freedom of speech and sexuality are concerned, written laws and enforcement are very different things. It's a bit cognitively complicated, but if we can handle that, so can you.

"E Ching may have been spreading a little cognitive dissonance herself to give the impression that Singapore is becoming as free as America. Singapore's police had stopped bothering gays not because her brother's antics had spurred the political organizing that wins civil-rights victories but because a shrewd ruling party had figured out that gays are good for the economy. She may have hoped to spin Yale critics' concern for gay rights into recognition that Singapore is already changing, without pressure from arrogant American moralists.

Meanwhile, other constraints on other freedoms, prompted more directly by corporate priorities, haven't been changing for the better. E-Ching ignored her brother's warning that academic freedom will be freed from the specters of surveillance and summary dismissal "only if Yale NUS faculty are really willing to exercise their freedom and advocate for it outside of classroom." Here was a genuine plea for help that I don't expect Richard Levin, Charles Bailyn, or Pericles Lewis to answer in ways that will matter.

When a professor asked how Singapore can reconcile a recent announcement that at least half of NUS' seats must go to Singaporeans with Levin's claim that the 80 % of Yale-NUS students will come from all over Asia and the world, Yale's director of admissions for Yale-NUS replied that Singapore's 50% restriction applies to the university as a whole but that the new college will have some wiggle room. But panelists seemed less than enthusiastic about the prospect of more diversity and more understanding of the government's reluctance to open the floodgates to students from abroad.

Panelist Rayner Teo worried that if everyone who wanted to come to Singapore could, its population would triple. Noting the government's "deep support for Yale-NUS at every level,' he tried to temper the questioner's implicit push for a more cosmopolitan admissions process by suggesting that it might pit diversity against democracy: Singaporean voters want their tax dollars to pay for Singaporean students, not foreigners, and as the ruling party struggles "to take better account of public opinion" after experiencing a modest but unprecedented and jarring setback in recent elections., it will have trouble resisting populist demands to curb immigration. To champion diversity, in other words, one would have to stand with the government against too much democracy.

All but unnoticed was the likelihood that almost all the panelists were Han Chinese, members of the socioeconomically elite. Only in a comment posted online after the panel did an audience member note that "we, the 'educated elite' English-educated 'scholar-class' -- I use the term 'scholar' loosely, as opposed our rigid stereotype of near-eternal bondage to the funding agency -- do not represent the country in its entirety....

"[T]he bulk of our country is actually made up of a class of people who think very differently from you and I," the commenter continued. "I'm... referring to ... the non-English-speaking working class guys who just don't make it into university, much less to Yale or Columbia. They have a very different value-system to you and I, and a whole different take on ethics, morality and even pragmatism."

It was the only time in the Yale-Singapore discussion that I heard the working-class part of Singapore's population described. The treatment of migrants and foreigners is a very touchy issue because many Singaporeans are xenophobic. Trying to dispel that unpleasant scent as it rose with the panel's discomfort over the question about diversity at Yale-NUS, E-Ching slipped a bit: "We want foreigners to come here and work for us!" she exclaimed. If "for" had been "with," she might have gotten away with this disclaimer of xenophobia.

Although she'd written in her YDN column that criticism of the Yale-NUS deal "annoys the Singaporean in the street who had already thought Yale was getting a sweetheart deal - free campus, free staff, free rein to run pedagogical experiments on free subjects, even the risk of putting the Yale name on a diploma," E Ching probably knows less about "the Singaporean in the street" than she does about Yale faculty after nine years at the university. Her very deftness (and relentlessness) in filleting American moralism to expose its hypocrisies and insecurities suggested to me that it takes one to know one.

And it was discomfiting to imagine what she actually knows about repression. People who write and talk as she does seem to have anticipated and internalized it even without having been arrested or fired. "I don't want to trivialize the heroism of political dissidents like Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam, who was sued into bankruptcy by the ruling party," she wrote somewhat breezily, "but disliking it doesn't make our political culture any less real, and to change it, you have to start from reality." Another obligatory feint toward Singapore's critics in a dance of put-downs.

This reference to Jeyaretnam -- who wasn't Han Chinese, by the way -- trivializes of a truism that is almost a non-sequitur. Jeyaretnam ended up selling his books near subway stations, "a bizarre spectacle, this old gentleman barrister on our uneventful streets, with his sandwich board," as his son put it in WIRED days after E Ching's YDN column appeared. The list of others treated similarly or worse in Singapore has only grown.

Shaun Tan, the author of the essay on Western universities' collaborations with authoritarian regimes and the only young dissident who addressed the panelists that evening, asked what benefits they thought would accrue to Yale from coming to Singapore.

E-Ching answered with a characteristically hard spin: "Yale is replaceable. Singapore wanted a liberal arts college for ten years before talking to Yale," she said, omitting that in 2005 Britain's prestigious Warwick University canceled plans set up campus in Singapore after its faculty assessed the regime's restrictions on academic and other freedoms. If Yale is replaceable, that's only because it has rushed in where Warwick rightly feared to tread.

In Singapore, E-Ching also said, Yale could overcome its elitism. Another benefit! When she'd been accepted to Yale in 1997, she claimed, Singaporeans who'd never heard of Yale assumed it was a second-rate university that she'd have to attend because she didn't get into the National University or Singapore Management University. "Without this deal, Yale would never get to show its merit." That sounded awkward and implausible, a kind of mind-game. She took a different tack: "See, it's great: Yale gets a gigantic pedagogical laboratory to do its experiments."

Zhipeng "Nick" Huang, a recent Yale graduate who'd been a student member of Yale's Course of Study committee, wondered if "Singapore is taking too much of a risk on Yale: If Yale bails, Singapore looks foolish. There has been little effort by Yale NUS to explain the situation. Yale should have been more cautious about affixing its name, but although I have these reservations I want to make sure it succeeds."

Dana Miller, a blonde American woman whose parents are permanent residents of Singapore and raised her there, saw "two benefits to Yale: An opportunity to develop best practices and standards and foster the spirit of what Yale says education is all about. Also it will show that Yale knows about Asia," at least as Asia is known outside China, where Yale has other engagements, none remotely on the scale of Yale-NUS. She didn't note, or perhaps know, that Yale rebuffed its own experts on Southeast Asia, such as James Scott, who opposed the NUS deal.

When William Whobrey, dean of the Yale Summer Session asked, "What do you think of the liberal arts?" answers ranged from noting that the liberal arts are more than just the performing arts to nothing that they're more than just "liberal" politics, as someone said a Chinese paper had asserted by equating "liberal arts" with "freedom."

Dana Miller noted that New York University already has a Tisch School of the Visual Arts in Singapore and that the government has had "very long term policy goal of engaging with performing arts."

What the liberal arts are really about, one panelist opined, is "inter-disciplinarity that helps people to solve real problems." Another said that when he'd arrived at Yale as an undergraduate, the "liberal arts" had impressed him, and still do, as "a vast store of resources full of people who would teach you whatever you were interested in."

Another got closer to a better answer, I think, by announcing that liberal arts "stretch the mind for the sake of stretching the mind" and that "Singapore has a tradition of elites that start from fundamentals and rethink everything."

That edges still closer to recognizing that the liberal arts stand in some in tension with markets and states and with elites who are engaged in commerce and policy-making. The liberal arts may be indispensable to such decision makers, but often by requiring that they step back and take look at their prospects that's long enough and hard enough to help them contemplate a complete change of course. Most of the panelists seemed no more or less close to understanding this than most other students at Yale.

An American who'll teach at Yale-NUS told me that Singapore students "are better educated" and more disciplined than Americans and that they can be evaluated more honestly than at Yale because "there'll be no grade inflation" in Singapore. Besides, this professor opined, teaching the liberal arts there probably won't be any more subversive than it is in America, where "most of it isn't subversive at all."

Unlike the panelist who understood that the liberal arts should help people to "start from fundamentals and rethink everything," most of us accept the misconception of the liberal arts that was expressed [in a Yale Alumni Magazine interview,](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/blog/?p12260=) by Kay Kuok, chair of Yale-NUS' governing board and a Singaporean businesswoman whose family runs "one of Asia's most diversified and dynamic multinational conglomerates."

Asked what the liberal arts are, Kuok replied, "We must look at 'liberal' in the sense of broad, rather than free. It's freedom of thought; I'm not necessarily saying freedom of expression." Asked what the difference is between freedom of thought and freedom of expression, she replied, "Well, freedom of expression can be taken in many ways. Everyone has a right to express himself. It's a question of expression in the right way, within certain norms in society, so to speak."

Whose norms? A liberal education helps us to ask that question well. That every society has "certain norms" is a truism, an inevitability, but it also needs more than a few citizens who are wise enough to know when push the envelope, and in what direction - in, or out.

**Calling Home**  
Although I enjoyed listening to the young Singaporeans, from the start of the discussion I'd been feeling uneasy, and when my turn to ask a question came, I said, "Thank you for your presentations. I think that we all understand that Singapore is a country in transition. This has been a very interesting discussion, and I assume that you've made a recording of it?" Two panelists nodded in confirmation.

"But that poses my question, about the ground-rules of this meeting," I said. "The moderator said at the outset that there would be no recordings allowed and no quoting of anyone's comments. Yet you have recorded the session yourselves.

"In discussing academic freedom tonight," I continued, "one of you [it was Yi Sheng, via Skype] said that in Singapore 'You can say anything you want on campus,' partly because the government doesn't even care what most academics say on campus. Well, we are on an American campus, and I'm wondering why you feel that here you must take this 'closed door' approach and, since you are doing that, how you can call this 'Singapore UnCensored.'"

Dark clouds crossed the countenances of some Yale-NUS faculty in the room, but the panelists were energetic in response. The gist of it was what the moderator had said at the outset: They were here to speak with others at Yale about concerns that had been raised about Singapore, and they were concerned that if comments appeared in Singapore they would be misunderstood.

I asked if the recording they were making was basically a report to the government, and one of them acknowledged that the government wanted to be informed. Responding to my query about the session's title, a panelist said, "I think we knew we were gonna get shot in the foot with that title." (She didn't suggest that they'd shot themselves in the foot.). Again we were told that "Singaporeans tend to self-censor" and that the organizers knew that "some members would be more comfortable" with the ground-rules against reporting and quoting.

But another panelist said that in establishing the rules, the organizers had to recognize "the reality of Singapore." That suggested something rather different. "Professor Sleeper, we're not saying that there's no censorship in Singapore!" E-Ching exclaimed, to a big laugh in the audience that was prompted, I think, by her coming right out and saying it.

As the session ended, moderator Lim and other panelists invited the audience to come down front to meet speakers individually and make pose any comments or questions they wished. But I saw only the half-dozen Yale-NUS faculty chat with and congratulate the panelists. Something hadn't "set right" with a lot of people in the audience, as I learned from undergraduates I spoke with the next day.

I would have thought that, when ground-rules were announced in e-mail message days before the meeting, Bailyn, Lewis, and other Yale-NUS personnel would have met their "obligation to foster free expression and to ensure that it is not obstructed," as Yale's Freedom of Expression statement puts it by suggesting that the ground-rules be changed.

"To look at it from both sides," a professor who sat near me during the session wrote me later, "this attempt to control reporting might reasonably be taken as an attempt to allow some participants to express more critical and oppositional views than would be possible otherwise--yet this premise, like much else, couldn't be explicitly said. It had instead to be expressed in terms of issues of "being comfortable" and of cultural generalizations--which occurred frequently during the event, despite the objections that panelists had lodged against the supposed "stereotyping" Singaporean"

"According to the organizers," wrote Yale English Prof. Jill Campbell [in a striking analysis](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/Jill%20Campbell:%20https:/www.mail.yale.edu/services/go.php?url=https%3A%2F%2Fclassesv2.yale.edu%2Faccess%2Fcontent%2Fgroup%2F180df2d7-7751-492b-bcbe-333088ff3da2%2Ffreedom%2520of%2520speech%2520in%2520Singapore%2FSingapore%2520Uncensored%2520and%2520Censorship.doc) of the event that's been posted on a campus discussion site,"the contents of the session could be conveyed to the Singaporean government but not, via press reports or citations in opinion pieces, to readers in New Haven or elsewhere." What those attending "learned at the session by hearing students from Singapore speak -- which was considerable -- could be held in their minds, would perhaps alter [their views] of Singapore and of Yale's venture there, but could not be conveyed by them to the public arena of the debate about Yale-NUS By these terms, a new space for 'closed doors' knowledge was formalized in listeners minds; a space for things of public import... not to be referred to publicly without a sense of peril and the violation of trust."

Another professor wrote me that, "At one level, by their choice of what to say and what not to say, they were telling us what is out of bounds and what is not. On another level, they were giving the official party line, including statements about Singapore being 'in transition', and things being different now than they were in the past. I also thought the statement [by E-Ching] about Singapore being committed to a liberal arts college long before Yale came on the scene was a coded warning that they don't really need Yale, so if Yale steps out of bounds, they will simply pull out and Yale will lose whatever it is that Levin negotiated for.

"On yet another level, I think they were trying to tell us that yes, our concerns about censorship and lack of freedom are well founded. They almost seemed to go out of their way to make sure we understood that censorship is real and pervasive. Of course, they were quick to add that it was okay, with the excuses we have heard many times before."

"For me," yet another faculty member wrote, "the event was the most compelling demonstration yet of what self-censorship requires -- and this was palpable at the panel, even as it was tripped over again and again in a discussion that wasn't smooth and successful."

Still another noted that "However eager some of the participants were to serve as apologists for the government, the overall impression given was that the idea of Yale-NUS was pretty ill-considered, and now the best has to be made of it. "

**A Telling Default**

One of the most dispiriting consequences of the "Singapore UnCensored" discussion was what I can describe only as the sudden, brazen self-censorship of Yale Daily News after two months in which its editors and reporters had published a commendably broad range of news reportage and commentaries by all interested parties.

As the session was adjourning, one of the two YDN reporters who were covering it and had watched me and others pose questions and panelists respond came up to me as the meeting adjourned and, instead of asking me any question, informed me that there were "many precedents at Yale" for the ground rules I'd challenged, including their use at a talk Karl Rove had given to hundreds of undergraduates in the Yale Law School auditorium.

Doubting that Rove, who has defamed many people, deserved ground rules like that, I replied that even if there were such precedents, they weren't right, for there is also a Constitution, and this was a public meeting. I asked if the YDN would report the question I had asked and the responses it had received.

"We're still working out how we're going to deal with the ground rules," the reporter replied unflappably, and that night I received some anodyne questions, such as "Were there issues raised which you think had not been touched on previously?"

I replied by asking again if the YDN would report what had actually happened in the meeting. Receiving no answer, I didn't reply to the questions, and, the next morning the paper ran [an account of the session](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/20/yale-nus-discussed-at-singaporean-student-panel/) so Orwellian it left many of us who'd been there breathless, and messaging one another in amazement.

The story opened with the organizers' claim that they were bringing "some nuance to the debate" on Yale-NUS in a discussion "exclusively meant for the Yale community," and it quoted not a single criticism of Singapore by any panelist, only what panelists had said in defense of the country.

The story neither named nor quoted any of the five faculty members who'd asked questions, astonishing because if anyone in the room could have been quoted without risk of reprisal from Singapore or the Yale administration, we could have been. Nor did the story ever mention my question about why the organizers had imposed ground rules they hadn't observed. It didn't report their acknowledgement that they were recording the session and that Singapore authorities would get a report.

The story didn't even report the "licensed" criticisms of E-Ching's brother Yi-Sheng. It didn't mention either his descriptions of limits on academic expression outside the classroom or his claim that change would only be brought about if Yale NUS faculty were willing to exercise academic freedom and advocacy.

As one faculty member wrote to several us, the story "confined all its quotations to uncontroversial statements" and, although it listed some of the topics discussed, omitted all reference to any part of the discussion that might be construed as critical of the Singaporean government or of Singapore as a site for the Yale campus." The student journalist bowed to the organizers' "ground rules" against recording or quoting from the discussion, defaulting on their journalistic obligation to report questions asked by some others Yale faculty and answered or dodged in varying ways by the panelists.

E-Ching answering inadvertently acknowledged that the YDN report on "Singapore UnCensored" went so far to accommodate the evening's ground rules that it omitted all of the panelists' own criticisms of Singapore and almost all of the challenging questions from the audience. Eager to rebut a comment posted under the YDN account suggesting that the panelists had censored themselves, E-Ching let slip what the YDN and, a day later, the government controlled Straits Times had omitted:

"One of the panelists gave a long opening statement that was nothing but fundamental criticisms of the Yale-NUS agreement," she wrote in rebuttal. "Two other opening statements brought up our touchiness about the strong foreign presence in Singapore. During Q&A, two panelists told disturbing stories about foreign academics being denied work permits for unknown reasons. Another described how Catherine Lim got told off. We wanted Yale-NUS critics to back up their arguments with accurate facts that matter to Singaporeans."

I suspect that E Ching really wanted the meeting to have presented a simulacrum of robust debate, credible enough to sow doubt about critics' charges that Singapore is repressive. She certainly didn't want the YDN's seemingly contrived portrait of harmony, which would only drive critics' suspicions in directions she and most other panelists didn't want to take.

I got a clearer answer to my questions about the ground-rules the next day, when Singapore's government-controlled Straits Times [reported](http://yalenusblog.com/2012/04/23/singaporeans-at-yale-clear-air-on-freedom-a-re-post-of-the-april-21st-piece-in-the-straits-times/) on the meeting as selectively and inadequately as Yale Daily News had done. The Straits Times' omissions are all the more striking now that a panelist has informed me that the paper was indeed able to follow the whole session, from Singapore, via Skype. In fact, sadly, what you're reading here is the only serious posted or published account so far of what actually went on at the meeting. (This section has been updated to reflect new information from a panelist who was present.)

A journalist's foremost obligation is to report what he or she has witnessed that readers relying on that report wouldn't otherwise know. Yet this disinclination to report what everyone in the room had seen and heard reflected constraints far broader than the panel discussion's ground rules.

Two days earlier, in [a long, fulsome profile](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/18/behind-the-levin-presidency/) of Yale Vice President Lorimer, the same reporter listed Yale NUS among the projects she works on but not that she will sit on the Yale-NUS board or that her husband had been a member of both the Yale Corporation and Singapore's Government Investment Corporation.

A few days later, a story "Corporation Discusses Budget, Student Life," mentioned half a dozen topics taken up at the Yale Corporation's bi-monthly meeting. Although the reporter was briefed by Lorimer, Yale President Richard Levin, and the Yale College Council president, not once does the story suggest that the Corporation discussed the Yale-NUS controversy, surely one of the most pressing developments since its previous meeting, if only because the New York Times and Yale's faculty had called into question the corporation's own judgment.

At least the reporter should have asked about it and written something like this: "Asked whether the corporation had discussed the Yale-NUS controversy, a spokesman declined comment, noting that some of the body's discussions are private."

**But Is It Good for the Jews?**

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that these Singaporeans' mix of sober realism, prickly humor, spunky defiance reminded me of some people I'd known in another small country. In 2009, when I knew nothing about Yale's planning with Singapore, I remarked to my wife as we watched office parks and eight-lane expressways gliding by my window on a Tel Aviv-to-Haifa train that Israel is the Singapore of the Middle East.

I didn't know that many others had had the same thought, or that Singapore has long been much closer being the Israel of Southeast Asia than I had ever imagined. This has been true not only economically and geo-politically, as a glance at a couple of maps and statistical tables will make clear, but militarily, and with all intimacy of what the Israeli daily newspaper Haaretz called ["A Deep, Dark, Secret Love Affair"](http://www.haaretz.com/a-deep-dark-secret-love-affair-1.128671) nearly 50 years old.

The similarities of these two little engines that could (and did) become models of state capitalism with high per capita incomes and growth rates need little elaboration here. Nor need we dwell on the fact that both have been governed and stamped by the British or that both have populations of 5 or 6 million, including 2 or 3 million second-class citizens and non-citizens, some of them migrants, some of them openly despised.

It is worth noting that both are non-Muslim and face much larger, less-than-friendly Muslim neighbors -- in Singapore's case, Indonesia and Malaysia, the latter of which expelled Singapore in 1965 (or lost it, depending on who's telling), amid high racial tensions.

Yet another striking analogy involves the fact that the politically dominant majority of Singapore's population consists not of indigenous natives but of "overseas" Han Chinese," whose literary and commercial strengths long ago earned them the sobriquet "the Jews of Southeast Asia" and the envy and resentment due a wealthy, elitist, and supple minority.

Like Jews who live outside Israel, the Han Chinese are minorities in most countries outside China, but here a real difference dogs the similarity. The similarity is that in Singapore, the Chinese are 75% of the population, and Malays are 15%, Indians 8%' in Israel, Jews are 76%, with the rest mostly Palestinian Arabs, most of them Muslim some of them Christian. In Singapore the Chinese have a status, power, and reputation that will sound familiar to Palestinians and others who regard Israel's Jews as arrogant interlopers.

The difference is that Israel's Jews, unlike Singapore's Chinese, have never been the rooted, dominant majority in any other country besides ancient Israel itself, where Hebrew was spoken 700 years before Arabic. And there are other differences of consequence: Singapore is an island, a micro-state smaller in area and population than New York City's five boroughs. Israel is 30 times larger, geographically, and in some ways more dangerous and endangered.

That said, Singapore's and Israel's situations at international crossroads of trade and power at opposite ends of the Asian continent incline them both to serve as investment and cultural entrepots and as political mediators. Without oil, water, or minerals to speak of, both live mainly by their wits, which is to say by trade. But both are compelled to militarize, and both have formidable armed forces, with defense budgets that consume 5 or 6% of GDP, a proportion much higher than that of all but a few other nations, including even China.

[The International Political Review](http://www.theinternationalpoliticalreview.com/singapores-burgeoning-armed-forces-a-steadying-force/) calls Singapore's armed forces "the most technologically advanced military in Southeast Asia" and notes that while everyone in the region fears China and no one could prevail against a Chinese onslaught, China fears that any such onslaught would bring a very painful Singapore Sting.

The punch line to all this, not very funny but very, very true, is that no sooner had Singapore gained its independence in August 1965 than its British-educated founder and first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, now the nation's "Minister Mentor" (his eldest son is the prime minister), invited Israel to organize his armed forces, because he saw all the parallels between the two young nations that I've just noted.

On Christmas Eve, 1965, six Israel Defense Force officers and their families moved to Singapore, followed by waves of consulting teams that established the country's "Total Defense" combat doctrines, its recruitment and training regimens, its intelligence services, and its state-of-art arms procurement.

"We are not going to turn Singapore into an Israeli colony," chief of staff and future prime minister Yitzhak Rabin admonished these teams. He needn't have worried. Singapore's highly intelligent, eloquent, [ruthlessly](http://yoursdp.org/index.php/news/singapore/4213-chee-soon-juan-writes-to-lee-kuan-yew) energetic dictator knew how to collaborate without being colonized, something one couldn't say about some of the Americans he's been collaborating with most recently. He was as deft and determined as the Han Chinese in other countries who, even as minorities, dominate major industries, banks, and even English-language media in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

The Israelis militarized Singaporean society, even with Israeli military songs, to which Lee's soldiers marched in one of Singapore's first real Independence Day parades. Less symbolically, they showed Singapore how to establish military conscription in a hitherto un-militaristic populace that, according to at least one survey, ranked the profession of soldier far below that of thief, while placing artists, teachers and merchants on top.

So determined was Lee to adjust this that when Israel won the Six-Day War in 1967, vindicating his decision to work with it and boosting Singaporeans' confidence in their Jewish military mentors, Singapore's UN delegation surprised other Third World nations by abstaining on a resolution condemning Israel.

Israelis persuaded Lee to make conscription universal to tap well-educated, prosperous Han Chinese as well as the Malay, Indian, and other minorities. That produced an intelligent, dynamic army and a disciplined male student population: Singaporean university students receive substantial tuition subsidies after military service but must accept what the National University of Singapore calls "a service bond under the terms of the tuition grant to work for a Singapore-registered company for three years upon completion of their degrees so as to discharge some of their obligations to the Singapore public." In some professions, the mandatory service is to government agencies, for up to six years. The whole regimen, as most Israelis would recognize, produces more than a little griping, but little softness or self-indulgence.

All this has posed an exquisitely discomfiting dilemma for Yale's neoconservatives. They never hesitate to ridicule leftists who've collaborated with authoritarian "Third World" regimes, but now they find themselves looking into a mirror and falling spookily silent about Yale's collaboration with Singapore.

As American nationalists and self-styled champions of academic freedom, neoconservatives would have to condemn the Yale Corporation's arrangement with Singapore, some of it borne of business relationships that, in the neo-cons' perfervid imaginations, resemble certain other Yale investors' extensive relationships with certain regimes the 1930s.

Sure enough, when Shaun Tan published [his damning essay](http://thepolitic.org/?p=1374) about Yale's and other Western universities' collaborations with such regimes, Michael Rubin of the neoconservative flagship Commentary Magazine commented , rightly enough, that:

"Foreigners flock to American universities because of their freedom and opportunity. How sad it is then, as Tan describes, that so many American university presidents are willing to compromise basic values in order to make a quick buck, often padding endowments which already reach billions of dollars. That will not bring progress; it is simply intellectual prostitution."

One big difference between Yale's gamble in Singapore and Israel's investment there is that Israel, unlike its neo-con cheerleaders, was smart enough to keep its name out of the public eye, eager though it was to advance its national interests and prestige. The Yale Corporation hasn't been that smart, and now it is watching Singaporeans' triumphal display of its own stolen name, in exchange for what?

Some neoconservatives may yet be induced by the Yale administration to utter hollow endorsements of the deal: A regime like Singapore's can't be that bad, they'll rationalize, if it serves American interests in the struggle against Communism or terrorism.

That was the logic of the neoconservative heroine Jeanne Kirkpatrick in "Dictatorships and Double Standards," a Commentary Magazine essay that enchanted Ronald Reagan, who made her his ambassador to the U.N. Kirkpatrick excused even Argentina's murderous junta, at least until the generals tortured the Jewish journalist Jacobo Timmerman - and even then, Commentary [leapt to the junta's defense at his expense.](http://www.jimsleeper.com/articles/signature-pieces/Neo-cons,%20imperialism,%20and%20Latin%20America,%20Bennington%20Review,%201982.pdf)

So it's noteworthy that last month Commentary blogger Rubin condemned Yale and other universities for accommodating authoritarian regimes, even the one that has worked so closely with Israelis as well as Americans.

At least this should teach other neoconservatives what Yitzhak Rabin and Lee Kuan Yew always understood and what I learned after my epiphany on the road to Haifa: matters like these cannot be viewed clearly through binary, left-vs.-right lenses: Leftists who supported "people's liberation struggles" by helping to harvest sugar cane in Cuba or crops in early Israeli socialist kibbutzim believed that nation-building requires disciplined struggle and sacrifice to lay the groundwork for prosperity and, with it, national pride, often at cost to individual freedom.

But so does Singapore's Ambassador Chan, who cites Fareed Zakaria's arguments for illiberal democracies, observing that "Our first generation political leaders in Singapore began by wanting to construct a political system that would help not hinder economic growth and development of the unlikely nation. It was a matter of survival."

But that was then. Now, she says, the government's new "responsiveness" has mooted Zakaria's doctrine. But even in the 1960's, when Singapore was getting underway, Israel's nation-building was less authoritarian - among Jews themselves, of course, though also among the Arabs who became citizens of Israel -- perhaps because Jews, fleeing recent destruction and facing new/ancient enemies with Western Enlightenment traditions, some of them as socialists, bonded in relatively more democratic, egalitarian ways. The reason I found out about Israel's long-secret collaboration with Singapore is that Israeli journalists have been much freer to report and interpret such developments than their counterparts in Singapore -- and even in the United States, where self-censorship involving Israel and many other subjects has been insinuated into American news organizations, political institutions, and workplaces, even while receding in more personal matters.

Although Singaporean society hasn't had to be on military alert as much as Israel, neither has it become the Switzerland of Southeast Asia, a region that is bristling with huge armies. Singapore does have enough economic and military power to take another bit of advice that the Israelis gave it and should take more seriously themselves: Keep your vast military under the radar, if possible while strengthening and showcasing your diplomatic, cultural, and educational offerings. Singapore is trying to become the education center of Southeast Asia by setting up a liberal arts college that bears Yale's imprimatur, while controlling the showcase as tightly as it does the military. "Increasingly we are noted for taking up the knowledge industries and doing cutting edge stuff," says Ambassador Chan.

Note, though, that, in this official view, education is an "industry," perhaps even a "cutting edge" weapon of sorts. And gay rights is a profit-center. But can liberal education flourish while pacing a gilded cage?

**Guns and Books**

The culture of surveillance and seduction is far more polished in Singapore than it is here. The state-capitalist regime, flush with cash, licenses media corporations that depend on public contracts; it doesn't have to censor them, because they censor themselves. Nor need it enforce its draconian laws against freedom of expression very often, because one or two exemplary punishments and a few subtle warnings to others that their law-breaking has been noted will chill most dissent.

So can the cooptation of dissidents who haven't taken too strong a stand against the regime: "They're really good at telling you that you can do great things and giving you apparent opportunities that leave you in their power," a writer who frequently visits Singapore told me. With some books and internet sites blocked or monitored, and legal associations tamed, everyone is extremely civil. No one has any alternative, if the state is omnipresent, even in private corporations and universities.

Only those familiar locutions - "Close the door, and I'll tell you what I really think" - remind one of the possibility of being brought in after a knock in the night or of the sudden, unexplained termination of a work permit. You thought you were free, but one night you find that you'd been led up a garden path away from your rights and your public voice. What the "Singapore UnCensored" panelists didn't want to admit but couldn't deny is that Singapore is like this. E-Ching was less reluctant to remind her audience that America is becoming like it, too.

It is "tempting to see in this sequence of events a kind of 'Singaporification' of American free speech via linking Yale with NUS," Jill Campbell writes, adding, however, that "The manner of Yale's instituting of Yale-NUS- - the declaration by our President... that Yale College Faculty have no say in its establishment, the failures of consultation with faculty knowledgeable about Southeast Asia, the many forces assembled to discourage real debate about the wisdom of pursuing the venture, the characterization of critics of the venture as outrageous, parochial, and engaging in 'unbecoming' speech -- have dramatized American-style constraints on free inquiry and debate at the native core of Yale itself."

Singapore isn't to blame for this, but "the fit between Singaporean governmental authority and American institutional authority has been all too smooth. What the two kinds of power have in common is a dislike for the counter-force of free inquiry and open debate."

There will always be trade-offs between ordered safety and prosperity, on the one hand, and personal freedom and political democracy, on the other -- between civilization and its discontents. Up to a point, Yale's engagement with Singapore reminds us of that - or teaches it to us. But the actions of America's own increasingly absentee elites remind us that the trade-offs aren't as inevitable, legitimate, or humane as Zakaria claims and as much of Yale therefore believes.

More than decade of embarrassments and outrages perpetrated by American elites have led many of us to a slow and for some of us exceedingly painful realization that many of the people running much this country aren't as different from those running Singapore as some of us have spent a lot our lives trying dearly to believe. Whether foolishly or malevolently, American leaders have been servicing and gilding a global wrecking ball that's dispossessing too many people who are more decent than they are.

And when these leaders begin chanting that there could be a lot less repression and a lot more reward if only the people they've betrayed and degraded would show the discipline, hard work and self-restraint of Yale students climbing the ladder of global meritocracy, it's time to ignore the dithering that passes for commentary in the mouths of Zakaria and David Brooks and to take our recent experiences to touchstone of nature and of reason, by whose lights even nice guys like Levin and certain justices of the Supreme Court seem duplicitous or naïve.

Yale faculty [are organizing](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/03/28/yale-faculty-raise-governance-questions-about-decision-open-branch-singapore) to win the share in governance that some other university faculties enjoy. The whole Yale community will be better for their having it. We might hope that they'll curb some of the university's official duplicity by demanding full disclosure of the terms of the Yale-NUS contract, a full reaffirmation of the Woodward statement on Freedom of Expression, and a withdrawal of Yale's name from the new college in Singapore.

Toward that last end I commend a column, ["Yale-NUS is not Yale,"](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/mar/23/fischer-yale-nus-is-not-yale/) by Yale Computer Science Professor Michael Fischer. He has urged that Yale's name be withdrawn from a college that won't be governed by the Yale Corporation; whose faculty appointments won't be subject to critical examination by Yale faculty; whose students won't have competed with actual Yale students for admission; whose curriculum won't be subject to review by the Yale faculty; and that won't be able to offer a liberal education in an environment of free expression in and out of the classroom, that Yale's own principles so clearly demand. Fischer concludes that since the college meets none of these conditions and was never approved by a vote of Yale's faculty, "the presence of the word 'Yale' in its name is innately deceptive."

A lengthening train of abuses and affronts by American public and private leaders has turned a once-promising (or at least possible) republic into a slippery web of premises and practices that are no longer legitimate or sustainable. At pivotal moments in American history, the civic-republican Yale of Nathan Hale, Dwight Macdonald, John Lindsay, Kingman Brewster, William Sloane Coffin, Jr., Cyrus Vance, Garry Trudeau, Howard Dean, and countless others has found enough civic savvy, courage, and grace to correct the Yale that made Levin, Zakaria, and other political nullities the croupiers of our democratic dignity and hope.

Correction: An earlier version of this post quoted an inaccurate report, from The Politic, that Yale Economics Department Chairman Ben Polak opposed a faculty resolution criticizing Singapore. In fact, Polak supported the resolution.

In response to several comments, a few minor corrections and clarifications of the original text were made on May 7.

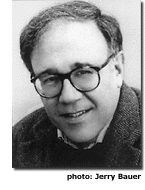
**8.** <http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/05/16/what-facebook-co-founder-saverin-and-yale-have-in-common/>

# [TR EMERITUS](http://www.tremeritus.com/)

The Voice of Singaporeans for Singapore

## [What Facebook co-founder Saverin and Yale have in common](http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/05/16/what-facebook-co-founder-saverin-and-yale-have-in-common/)

May 16th, 2012 |



Jim Sleeper

Surely the worst way to characterize Yale administrators’ intentions in establishing an undergraduate liberal-arts college within the National University of Singapore would be to liken them to the intentions of Eduardo Saverin, a Harvard graduate and Facebook’s co-creator. But I’m going to try.

These two “Ivy Leaguers” (Saverin, and Yale itself) have ventured beyond the U.S. to Singapore partly to escape problems at home and partly to find new opportunities and pleasures. But they may find that in trying to win the world this way, they’ll lose their souls and corrupt the city-state that is hosting them.

I know that this sounds like what some have called Yale’s “taint me not” moralism and snobbery. But actually it reflects genuine worries about what’s happening to the dignity of republican citizenship and to the liberal education that is supposed to nurture republican citizenship. Saverin is emblematic of what’s happening. Yale’s venture may be emblematic of it, too, despite its professions to the contrary.

Republican citizenship matters – and flourishes – when it doesn’t only advance personal interests through self-discipline and smart reckonings but also contributes to certain larger, deeper, “public” interests that a liberal education should stimulate in future leaders and ordinary citizens.

A republic’s survival really depends on this. A liberal-capitalist republic, especially, depends on its citizens’ upholding certain public virtues and beliefs that aren’t rewarded by markets – whose genius comes from approaching people as narrowly self-interested consumers and investors – or by liberal states – which don’t judge among different ways of life, or, when they do judge, tend to do it with too much authoritarian surveillance and suppression..

That leaves only liberal education, or, in some societies, certain kinds of religion, to nourish public virtues such as:  
a) a commitment to advance a whole society’s justice, not just your own gain;  
b) an ability and inclination to deliberate openly and fairly with others about that justice, sometimes by mastering the arts and disciplines of honest journalism and literature; and  
c) a willingness to sacrifice some of your own personal prerogatives to achieve this kind of public trust, which none of us can achieve on his own.

These virtues don’t require saintly self-sacrifice. Nor should they require submission to an authoritarian state. But they do need to be cultivated – not by the state or markets but by other institutions, in civil society – to be strong enough to resist the allure of [rewards such as those Saverin has been going for](http://techcrunch.com/2012/05/11/eduardo-saverin-facebook-ipo-us-citizenshi/?icid=maing-grid7%7Cmain5%7C%20dl1%7Csec1_lnk2%26pLid%3D160120).

This real Saverin doesn’t resemble the character in the movie “The Social Network” who is played by Andrew Garfield, whose physiognomy and earnest good faith suggest an “old Ivy League” character that some of us wouldn’t mind reviving, albeit without its old racist, sexist context. The real-life Saverin moved to Singapore a few years ago to escape the ugly notoriety and bad faith he’d reaped in battles with his Harvard business partner Mark Zuckerberg; and Saverin recently renounced his U.S. citizenship to escape taxes on the $3.84 billion he’s expected to gain from Facebook’s first public offering on the stock market. No civic-republican virtue there!

Reportedly he’s been “living the high life” in Singapore, driving supermodels around in a Bentley while investing in Asia and South America and designing games for Facebook. In short, he’s been reproducing the breadth and shallowness of Facebook’s and globalization’s imperative to “connect” everyone and everything until – as the writer [Zadie Smith showed unforgettably](http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/nov/25/generation-why/?pagination=false) in an essay about Facebook – the “connecting” drains all humane depth from everything being connected.

What can this have to do with Yale, which is a venerable institution, not a roving young investor? And what can it have to do with Singapore, which is not just a commercial hub and resort but a nation and society in which people grow up and to whose well-being many of them want to contribute creatively, not just tactically and obediently?

The answer, I fear, is that both Yale and Singapore are becoming a bit more like Saverin and that’s really why Yale and Singapore are undertaking the Yale-NUS partnership.

Of course, Yale didn’t come to Singapore to escape controversy or taxes back home. Indeed, it remains anchored in New Haven, and, as a non-profit institution, it doesn’t pay U.S. taxes or make business investments, at home or abroad. Or does it? And is the shallowness of Saverin’s mode of connection infecting and inflecting Ivy Leaguers and Singaporeans alike?

Even in New Haven, liberal education hasn’t always nourished the public virtues I’ve mentioned. It’s often just an ornament or lineament for a college education that supplies mainly top-flight career training for a global elite that’s no longer responsive to any actual polity or moral code.

True enough, the Yale-NUS venture isn’t the missionary sort that Yale’s Protestant evangelists brought to China and Korea a century ago. Nor is it the capitalist empire-building that crushed or over-awed indigenous peoples. Nor is it the Cold War ideological crusading for “democracy” of Henry R. Luce, Yale Class of 1920, a son of Yale missionaries in China and the founder of TIME, whose 1941 manifesto “The American Century” carried a dark underside of “The Quiet American,” whose grand strategies led to folly in Vietnam and Iraq. Yale’s latest venture may have remnants and echoes of all these, but, really, it’s something new.

In its promotional rhetoric, the new college claims that liberal education will help leading Singaporeans and others to reflect deeply on complex challenges facing the world. It also promises to broaden the old Yale’s own traditional, elite-Western variant of liberal education into something more inter-disciplinary, worldly, and serviceable to globalization and its graduates’ best interests as grand strategists and problem solvers.

I’m in no position to assess Singapore’s side of this dubious equation. [But here is a rather severe assessment of it](http://www.jimsleeper.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/luka-kalandarishvili-final-paper.pdf) by a student from Georgia who took my course at Yale on “Global Journalism, National Identities.”

Whenever I’ve gestured in the direction of such an assessment, as I did in [this Huffington Post essay in March](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/how-yales-singapore-ventu_b_1352729.html), some Singaporeans, quite understandably, have become defensive. A very few have slid into nastiness and a whiff of Occidentalism that almost welcomes Western decadence. Thus a commenter at the Kent Ridge Common identifying herself as Kaddy Mutu [wrote](http://kentridgecommon.com/?p=14372):

“I don’t see why we need to have a partnership with an institution that has produced the talents who along with their fellow Ivy League compatriots have morally and financially bankrupted their once great nation. Your nation’s economy is in a depression as your central bank robs the general population with its easy money policies transferring more wealth to the bankers. Your political parties are both bought and paid for. Your men and women are sent to die in senseless wars to protect the reserve currency status of the petrodollar. Before this decade is through the Treasury market will be in free fall and so will the dollar along with your living standards.

“Call us authoritarian all you want but we are a prudent state while yours is a once great nation that is a banana republic on its way to fascism. And your nation owes us and other authoritarian regimes A LOT of money. All made possible in part by the notables graduates of Yale and other Ivies.

“I suggest that debt slaves adopt a more courteous attitude toward their creditors instead of name calling and stereotyping. Btw Feel free to come grovel for a job once this comes to pass.”

Two contradictory tensions here are worth noting.

First, when Americans, who are relatively free to criticize their own government, criticize Singapore’s government, we generate such excruciating discomfort among some well-educated Singaporeans that they hurl invective at us for doing precisely what they cannot do (or at least have not done) in Singapore.

Second, however, almost all of Mutu’s account of what American and global capitalism are doing to republican virtues and prospects is true. But therefore the American moralism she derides isn’t really a reflection of “taint me not” arrogance and hypocrisy; it’s a reflection of genuine worries about [what we ourselves are indeed becoming](http://www.jimsleeper.com/articles/signature-pieces/Orwell%27s%20Orthodoxies,%20and%20Ours,%20%28book%20chapter%202004%29.pdf).

Any Singaporeans who think that their tidy, tightly governed city-state is immune to this may find that liberal education urges them to think again. No regime is likely to keep the lid on the greed and decadence that anomic, algorithmically accelerated investment and disinvestment are generating, not only in many Westerners like Saverin but in many Asians, as well.

So it needn’t really matter that, for some of us Americans, controversy over the Yale-NUS experiment is less about what it portends for a Singapore that’s in transition toward liberalism than about what it portends for an America that’s in transition toward disorder and, perhaps, in response, repression.

Both societies are converging in troubling ways, prompting some of their leaders to join to recalibrate state-capitalist governance. How they balance economic and social liberalism and seduction, on the one hand, with selective state surveillance and suppression, on the other, may be somewhat looser in Singapore than – with some of the undesirable consequences that Mutu attributes to the U.S. – and somewhat tighter in America, with many of the undesirable consequences that my student’s paper describes in Singapore.

Missing from either country’s new “balance” will be the voluntaristic, self-disciplined republican spirit I’ve mentioned. Neoliberal apostles of the new elite dispensation such as Yale Corporation member and global journalist Fareed Zakaria insist that order and prosperity in illiberal regimes like Singapore’s lead eventually to fuller democracy and public virtue. And they want the Yale-NUS partnership to vindicate that thesis and that noble progression.

But some of us doubt that either society will achieve a healthy, humane balance between order and prosperity, on the one hand, and true creativity and conscience, on the other. Neither will do it if Yale and Singapore collude in making [Eduardo Saverin’s way of life](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/13/opinion/sunday/fables-of-wealth.html?_r=1&src=me&ref=general) more secure and rewarding for people like him.

Saverin is young, so perhaps life will teach him what Harvard failed to do. By many accounts, he’s a nice guy. But one of liberal education’s many lessons is that not [everyone who does the wrong thing does it malevolently](http://thepolitic.org/?p=59). Some people do it foolishly, because they lack the necessary moral and social compass that liberal education can implant, cultivate, and sustain but that, somehow, Saverin’s and Zuckerberg’s Harvard did not.

Will Yale succeed in Singapore when it has failed at home? Or has it come to Singapore to escape and recover from its failings – and to enable some lucrative but otherwise dubious investments for its endowment on the side?

.

**Jim Sleeper**

\* Jim Sleeper lectures in political science at Yale and posts frequently at TPM. He has been a New York newspaper columnist and is the author of The Closest of Strangers and Liberal Racism. His website is [www.jimsleeper.com](http://www.jimsleeper.com/).

**9.** <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/as-yales-blunder-deepens-_b_1569495.html>

also in

**History News Network**: http://hnn.us/articles/jim-sleeper-yales-blunder-deepens-singapore-bares-its-teeth

## Tremeritus (dissident Singapore website:) http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/06/07/singapore%E2%80%99s-300-million-side-deal-for-yale/

## Cutting Edge News: http://www.thecuttingedgenews.com/index.php?article=74063&pageid=44&pagename=Slices

**openDemocracy.net (U.K.):** http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/how-yale-becomes-more-confucian-rather-than-singapore-more-civic-republican

**June 5, 2012**

## [[college](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/) [The Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)

**As Yale's Blunder Deepens, Singapore Bares its Teeth**

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

**Jim Sleeper**

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale

When the Yale College Faculty [passed a resolution in April](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/04/benhabib-whats-stake-yale-nus/) condemning the "lack of respect for civil and political rights in the state of Singapore, host of the proposed Yale-National University of Singapore College" and urged "Yale-NUS "to uphold civil liberty and political freedom on campus and in the broader society," Yale's president Richard Levin declared that the resolution -- passed in his presence and over his objection -- "carried a sense of moral superiority that I found unbecoming."

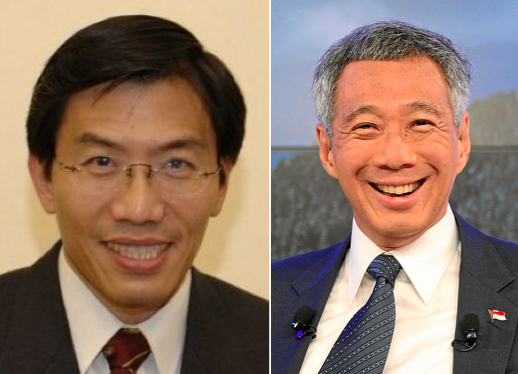
Levin then unbecame what he ought to be as president of a liberal-arts university by going to Singapore and giving a speech at the end of last month, the same month in which that authoritarian corporate city-state had committed yet another of its abuses against basic civil liberties that have been monitored and condemned by many international observers and advocates -- liberties that, as the Yale faculty resolution emphasized, "lie at the heart of liberal arts education as well as of our civic sense as citizens" and "ought not to be compromised in any dealings or negotiations with the Singaporean authorities."  
  
When Levin gave his speech touting the appointment of the ill-prepared but energetically pliable Yale professor Pericles Lewis as Yale-NUS' first president, Singapore had only recently prevented Chee Soon Juan, Secretary-General of the opposition Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), [from leaving the country](http://asiancorrespondent.com/82059/unable-to-leave-singapore-dr-chee-soon-juan-records-a-video-for-the-oslo-freedom-forum/) to give a speech of his own at the Oslo Freedom Forum.

Not only wasn't Chee allowed to leave Singapore; the International human rights lawyer Bob Amsterdam, counsel to the SDP and Chee's representative internationally, [was detained and turned back](http://www.yoursdp.org/index.php/news/singapore/5255-bob-amsterdam-refused-entry-into-singapore) at Singapore's Changi Airport when he tried to visit Chee on May 20, days before Levin's visit.

So the Yale faculty resolution was right on target, and Levin's reaction to it was way off. Singapore's action prompted Thor Halvorssen, President of the Human Rights Foundation, to publish an open letter, [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/thor-halvorssen/an-open-letter-to-singapore-prime-minister_b_1449661.html) in the Huffington Post, to Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, urging the government to grant permission to Dr Chee to attend the event:

"In the last 20 years he has been jailed for more than 130 days on charges including contempt of Parliament, speaking in public without a permit, selling books improperly, and attempting to leave the country without a permit. Today, your government prevents Dr. Chee from leaving Singapore because of his bankrupt status.... It is our considered judgment that having already persecuted, prosecuted, bankrupted, and silenced Dr. Chee inside Singapore, you now wish to render him silent beyond your own borders."

According to the Associated Press, the Singapore "government's bankruptcy office denied Chee permission to travel to the conference because he has failed to make a contribution to his bankruptcy estate." But Singapore is infamous for prosecuting dissenters and opposition leaders for "defamation," thereby bankrupting them with legal costs and fines:

"Supremely confident of the reliability of his judiciary, the prime minister [Lee Hsieng Loong] uses the courts ... to intimidate, bankrupt, or cripple the political opposition while ventilating his political agenda. Distinguishing himself in a caseful of legal suits commenced against dissidents and detractors for alleged defamation in Singapore courts, he has won them all," [writes Francis T. Seow](http://www.singapore-window.org/1028judi.htm), a former solicitor general of the country. of  

**Opposition Leader Chee Soon Juan             Singapore P. M. Lee Hsieng Loong**

For example, as I've recounted [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-has-gone-to-singapor_b_1476532.html), the first opposition politician to win a seat in parliament after Singapore's independence in 1965, Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam, was soon charged with defamation in a suit that bankrupted him and forced him out of public life. His was only the first prominent case in a relentless tide of prosecutions that shuttle dissenters, including NUS faculty, out of their jobs and homes and into unemployment, prison, or exile.

Chee himself, who holds a PhD from the University of Georgia and once taught at NUS, was fired from his post there as a lecturer in neuropsychology in 1993 after he joined the SDP party. When he attempted to contest his dismissal, he, too, was sued for defamation, bankrupted, imprisoned, and then barred from leaving the country.

When Singapore's apologists at Yale are forced to acknowledge such abuses, they explain them away as cultural differences or assure us that the country is changing. Yale astronomer Charles Bailyn, Yale-NUS' "inaugural dean," explains Singapore's bans on speaking at public demonstrations without a permit by saying. "What we think of as freedom, they think of as an affront to public order, and I think the two societies differ in that respect."

They differ in more ways than that: The [SDP reports](http://asiancorrespondent.com/82059/unable-to-leave-singapore-dr-chee-soon-juan-records-a-video-for-the-oslo-freedom-forum/) that "Chee declared bankruptcy in 2006 after he was unable to pay the fines imposed after he lost defamation suits initiated by Singapore's then-prime minister Goh Chok Tong and then-senior minister Lee Kuan Yew. He was also convicted on charges of libel during the 2006 General Election after both Lee Kuan Yew and the current prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong, sued him for implying corruption in an SDP newsletter. On top of not being able to travel out of the country, he has also been barred from standing for elections."

Amsterdam, the human-rights lawyer, has written a long [white paper on such abuses](http://www.scribd.com/doc/22965223/White-Paper-on-Singapore) by Singapore. Bailyn can't explain these away, but If he's still in doubt, he can learn more about the country's record and continuing practices from Yale student [Luka Kalandarishvili,](http://www.jimsleeper.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/luka-kalandarishvili-final-paper.pdf) who wrote a paper on the subject for a seminar on "Global Journalism, National Identities" that I taught last spring.

Why is Yale disgracing itself this way? It's one thing for a business corporation to roll with the punches while dealing with clients, customers, and investors in countries that do things differently than ours does. It's also okay for a university to establish a small center or professional school that limits itself to transferring skills. It's quite something else for a liberal-arts college to transform itself, as Yale is already doing in New Haven, from the crucible of civic-republican leadership it has been into a career-networking center and cultural galleria for a global managerial elite that answers to no republican polity or moral code.

A liberal education is supposed to show the young that the world isn't flat, as neoliberal economists like Levin think, but that it has abysses that yawn suddenly at our feet and in our hearts and that require insights and coordinates far deeper than those offered by markets and the states that serve them -- as Singapore's state does to a fault.

Then again, Yale is a business corporation now. As Amsterdam was being denied entry into Singapore last month, I was seated at a dinner in Germany next to a very high official of a European university who'd been to Singapore a few times himself. "There's $300 million for Yale in its deal with NUS," he confided to me.

"What? How do you know that?" I asked. "Yale claims it's not getting a dime from Singapore, although Singapore is paying all the costs of constructing and staffing the college itself."

"Oh, it's not a direct payment," my interlocutor explained. "It's what you call insider trading: Yale will be cut in on prime investments that Singapore controls and restricts through its sovereign wealth fund. These will be only investments, not payments, so there's some risk. But you'll see that Yale's endowment will swell by several hundred million in consequence of its getting in on these ventures."

-

This hit me with some force because, only a few weeks before, I'd written here that the real scandal in Yale's Singapore venture is Yale Corporation members' blithe assurance that they can do well by doing good, as long as they ignore the costs to republican liberty and the creativity and citizenship such liberty yields. When I think of Levin's envisioning the Yale-NUS arrangement, first at Davos, where it began, and then with his recent Yale Corporation members G. Leonard Baker, Charles Ellis (who maintains an investment business in Singapore and is married to the Secretary of Yale, Linda Koch Lorimer), and with Charles Waterhouse Goodyear IV (once the CEO-designate of Singapore's sovereign wealth fund, now a member of the Yale Corporation), the European university official's comment sounds right.

Take a look at [this short video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncOkGbfgN7s) of yet another Yale Corporation member and Yale-NUS champion, Fareed Zakaria, interviewing Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsieng Loong at the Davos World Economic Forum last January, and notice the nuances of subservience: Zakaria, who would take to the pages of the Yale Daily News in April to disparage, as "provincial," those faculty supporting the resolution criticizing Singapore's abuses, never mentions Yale's venture with Singapore in the January interview, nor does he ask Lee about any of Singapore's human rights abuses.

The prime minister is a piece of work here -- British-educated, well-buffed and modulated, dispensing pellets of charm, a studied dignity in informality, and sinuous liberal bromides, with just the right hint of tempered steel behind the smile. In this, he's not unlike what Zakaria used to be, but study Zakaria's countenance and see the perfect mask of complicity and obeisance that recalls W. H. Auden's observation, in the Europe of the 1930s: "Intellectual disgrace stares from every human face."

American college administrators, struggling to balance truth-seeking with power-wielding and wealth-making, are readily disarmed by operators like Lee and Zakaria. Our liberal arts colleges are vulnerable to market riptides, to putsches by would-be donors and moneyed interest groups, and to the stomach-turning descent of America's civic culture into brutal political speech, gladiatorial sports and degrading entertainments, all of it accelerated by those market riptides and the global capitalist wrecking ball. Small wonder that to the beleaguered Levin and his globe-trotting trustees, Singapore seems a port in the storm: The little city-state need "liberalize" only a little, and Yale need "Singaporize" a little, they think, for the fit to be as perfect as the mask that is Fareed Zakaria's face. They find the Yale College Faculty resolution "unbecoming" because it disrupts that fit and discredits that mask.

To its designers, the Singapore undertaking seems all the more harmonious a convergence because, throughout Levin's presidency, Yale has compared poorly with other American universities in its support and practice freedom of speech, as I showed [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-has-gone-to-singapor_b_1476532.html) at some length and as Stephen Walt noted last week in a Foreign Policy post, "[Yale Flunks Academic Freedom](http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/05/29/yale_flunks_academic_freedom)."

The Yale Alumni Magazine, which, unlike Harvard's equivalent, functions dutifully as a press office for Levin, finessing controversy after controversy to minimize its effects on his administration, has yet to inform Yale alumni that even though Yale-NUS graduates will not earn bona fide Yale degrees, they'll find the Yale name and logo on their diplomas and will be "fully integrated into the Association of Yale Alumni Network" -- a puzzling first, for reasons I've reported [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/will-yales-alumni-rescue-_b_1417888.html).

The Yale Daily News has allowed its reporter covering the Yale administration to serve as a press officer for the administration, failing to report any of the irregularities in the Yale-NUS venture. (Find the section, "A Telling Default," in [this long post.](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-has-gone-to-singapor_b_1476532.html))

Yale's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs now has undergraduates sign agreements not to disclose anything taught and said in seminars with "professors" such as Stanley McChrystal and other power-celebrities.

And the Yale Law School, of all places, has been obdurately, shamefully silent about the abuses by Singapore that I've mentioned. The law school can redeem itself by inviting Chee's lawyer, Bob Amsterdam, and Yale alumnus Bo Tedards, the global democracy activist who's been writing to Levin about the Singapore regime, to speak to what I'm sure would be a capacity crowd in the Yale Law School auditorium. Will it issue the invitations? If not, what is the law school for?

The Singapore venture has compromised Yale deeply not because Singapore is such an evil place in the larger scheme of things - it's an authoritarian, corporate city-state with a well-educated, prosperous populace that may surprise us someday by curbing and licensing its governors -- but because Yale itself has been led so crudely, cluelessly, and prematurely into this place where it need not have gone and where, pedagogically, can ill afford to go right now.

In his nearly twenty years as president, Levin has been invaluable to Yale as the pilot of its enhancement fiscally, physically, and in town-gown and labor relations, and just last September, I congratulated him for an address to incoming freshmen, whom he implored to be true to liberal education's skepticism of dogmas and over-simplifications. But now I think that I missed the note of desperation in his address: It was almost as if he were imploring 18-year-olds to save Yale from itself -- and perhaps from what he has done by choosing the Singapore venture as a way to make his mark and seize the future. He has been a very good manager with a very bad sense of liberal education's purposes and stakes and of what courage and choices are necessary to vindicate them in this world.

In the 1950s, Yale's president A. Whitney Griswold crusaded for liberal education against both McCarthyism and Communism, no easy task for a university president in those dark years. Levin has outsourced the equivalent challenge of our time by presuming to bring liberal education to Singapore, which becomes a laboratory for the decorous prostitution of liberal education to market riptides here at home -- all while enhancing Yale's brand name and market share, of course. The real cost is already being felt in [the Singaporization, not cosmopolitanization, of Yale.](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-has-gone-to-singapor_b_1476532.html)

10. <http://www.todayonline.com/Print/Singapore/EDC120612-0000009/Yale,-NUS-rebut-Huffington-Post-story>

(From the Singapore daily newspaper TODAY)

Top of Form



**Yale, NUS rebut Huffington Post story**

*Varsities say Yale not being given special access to investment opportunities here*

04:45 AM Jun 12, 2012

by Ng Jing Yng

SINGAPORE - There is no "backroom" deal in the National University of Singapore's partnership with Yale University to set up the Yale-NUS College, and the American university is not being given special access to investment opportunities in Singapore as a quid pro quo - as suggested in a commentary by a Yale political science lecturer published on US news website The Huffington Post last week.

Responding to TODAY's queries, both NUS and Yale yesterday denied the allegations which were attributed by Dr Jim Sleeper - who wrote the article - to an unnamed "very high official of a European university who'd been to Singapore a few times".

In his article - published on June 5 - which was largely critical of the Yale-NUS partnership, Dr Sleeper, a former journalist at the New York Daily News, wrote that the source whom he met "at a dinner in Germany" said that there was "US$300 million for Yale in its deal with NUS".

Dr Sleeper quoted the source describing the financial gains for Yale as "what you call insider trading: Yale will be cut in on prime investments that Singapore controls and restricts through its sovereign wealth fund. These will be only investments, not payments, so there's some risk. But ... Yale's endowment will swell by several hundred million in consequence of its getting in on these ventures".

Dr Sleeper also likened Yale University to a "business corporation" and claimed that some members of Yale Corporation - the governing board and policymaking body for Yale University - have business and investment links to Singapore, including Dr Charles Ellis.

Dr Ellis is currently an adviser emeritus to the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation's Investment Strategies Committee.

Dr Sleeper's claims were rebuked by Yale University Press Secretary Tom Conroy. He said: "Jim Sleeper has written repeatedly in recent months about his opposition to Yale-NUS College. He was a political journalist for a daily newspaper before he came to teach at Yale, and thus it is particularly disappointing that his most recent commentary in the Huffington Post once again contains errors of fact."

"Yale is not, as Sleeper asserts, a business corporation. It is a not-for-profit organisation recognised around the globe as one of the world's great research and teaching institutions."

Mr Conroy also reiterated that Yale is not getting any financial gain from the partnership with NUS, apart from reimbursement of expenses.

He said: "Sleeper makes the claim - based on the conversational speculation of an unnamed European - that Yale is receiving special access to investment opportunities in Singapore as a quid pro quo for pursuing a partnership with NUS to create Yale-NUS College. This claim is false."

He added: "Sleeper also makes the claim that former Yale trustee Charles Ellis 'maintains an investment business in Singapore'. This is false."

In a separate response, an NUS spokesperson said there "is no 'backroom' deal as alleged". She added: "Yale University is reimbursed only for work done in connection with Yale-NUS College."

According to the spokesperson, the reimbursement to Yale is for teaching replacements for Yale faculty members who had been involved in the joint planning processes for the college.

The Government has said that it is funding the college. According to its budget book this year, the infrastructure cost for the Yale-NUS college campus is S$114 million.

Contacted by TODAY, Dr Sleeper claimed in an email response that he did not make the allegations.

He said: "My post does not say - in fact, it denies - that there is any payment or quid pro quo from Singapore or any of its government affiliates to Yale. My post does not say - in fact, it denies - that there is anything illegal about what the person I quoted suggested will be arranged."

He added: "My post does not say that there has been any agreement to allow Yale to participate in restricted investment opportunities. It merely quotes someone saying that he is convinced that that is a possibility."

URL <http://www.todayonline.com/Singapore/EDC120612-0000009/Yale,-NUS-rebut-Huffington-Post-story> ,Copyright 2012 MediaCorp Pte Ltd | All Rights Reserved

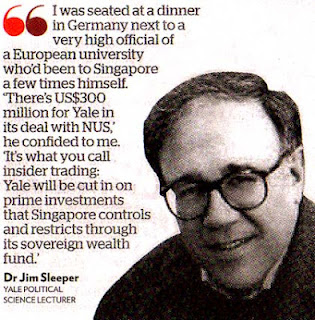
http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html

[](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/)

*Jottings from my Singapore desk, warts and all*

## Wednesday, June 13, 2012

### Where There's Smoke...

[](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-gswcIYvtoqc/T9bRcvZd0aI/AAAAAAAAAug/b_XuVU0QbU4/s1600/Sleeper.jpg)

Why is Yale-NUS coming on so strong about the Huffington [post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/as-yales-blunder-deepens-_b_1569495.html) by Yale political science lecturer Jim Sleeper? Yale University Press Secretary Tom Conroy is adamant Yale will not be getting any financial gain from the partnership with NUS, apart from reimbursement of expenses.  The NUS spokesperson parrots similar script,  "Yale University is reimbursed only for work done in connection with Yale-NUS College."  
  
But both are not denying the fact that Yale trustee Dr Charles Ellis, and member of Yale Corporation, is currently an adviser emeritus to the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation's Investment Strategies Committee. [*Please note corrections and updates kindly provided by Mr Sleeper below*.]  
  
Sleeper makes it clear: "My post does not say that there has been any agreement to allow Yale to participate in restricted investment opportunities. It merely quotes someone saying that he is convinced that that is a possibility." And that quote qualifies the potential financial gains for Yale as "what you call insider trading: Yale will be cut in on prime investments that Singapore controls and restricts through its sovereign wealth fund. These will be only investments, not payments, so there's some risk. But ... Yale's endowment will swell by several hundred million in consequence of its getting in on these ventures".  
  
Insider trading has long been regarded as reprehensible as far as securities regulation is concerned in Singapore - it is worse than the extra egg that goes with the *char kway teow*, local parlance for justifying unsolicited discounts in condominium purchases. The main regulatory frame work is the Securities and Futures Act (SFA), which has replaced the repealed Securities Industries Act (SIA). The relevant Section 218 of the SFA lists the types of prohibited conduct by connected persons in possession of inside information. The most important of the provisions regulating insider trading is Section 219 of the SFA, which adopts an "information-connected" approach towards insider trading:

**Prohibited conduct by other persons in possession of inside information**  
219.—(1)  Subject to this Division, where —  
(a) a person who is not a connected person referred to in section 218 (referred to in this section as the insider) possesses information that is not generally available but, if the information were generally available, a reasonable person would expect it to have a material effect on the price or value of securities; and  
(b) the insider knows that —  
(i) the information is not generally available; and  
(ii) if it were generally available, it might have a material effect on the price or value of those securities,  
subsections (2) and (3) shall apply.

It is fair to conclude that someone, anyone, may be convinced that participation in restricted investment opportunities is a real possibility, given the unique position afforded to  Dr Charles Ellis as adviser emeritus to the GSIC Investment Strategies Committee. It is up to Dr Ellis to prove everyone wrong. Meanwhile, it would be pertinent to watch if Yale's endowment will be swelling by several hundred millions in the near future. As the idiom goes, forewarned is forearmed.

Posted by [Tattler](http://www.blogger.com/profile/11037010707866164010) at [1:00 AM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Reactions: |  |

#### 12 comments:

1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/anon36.png

Alan Wong[6/13/2012 7:59 PM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339588749316#c4589847103532299758)

All this while I had been wondering why the heck would Yale University ever want to set up a branch in Singapore, given our apparently such a poor record for respecting and upholding civil liberties ?  
  
So looks like someone tried to led the cat out of the bag to hint at the prize catch for Yale ? So now the big question is whether to believe both NUS & Yale that Yale was more than happy to be reimbursed only for all their troubles and yet risk their own reputation ?

[Reply](javascript:;)

1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/anon36.png

Anonymous[6/13/2012 11:28 PM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339601309937#c8306509904365093985)

Alan Wong is right. Why would an ivy-league university set up shop in Singapore, a well known dictatorship? Unless there is a carrot dangling in front of the Yale governing board. Yale in singapore is not the same as the Yale in US. It is still a local University with local characteristics. Don't expect any mind expanding experience when you come in.

[Reply](javascript:;)

[Replies](javascript:;)

* 1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/anon36.png

Anonymous[6/14/2012 1:10 PM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339650600492#c8967419660244234741)

Duke receives $350million from 3 ministries in Singapore.

[Reply](javascript:;)

1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/anon36.png

Anonymous[6/13/2012 11:53 PM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339602820333#c7470559181974029823)

But I thot Yale loves Singapore's long tradition of academic freedom.  
That is why they come here.  
We are the hub of LIBERAL;  
a.liberal arts,   
b.liberal politics  
c.liberal thinking  
  
Yale is coming here to help liberalize our ISA also.

[Reply](javascript:;)

1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/anon36.png

Anonymous[6/14/2012 12:03 AM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339603438545#c5107312882519798932)

//..The Singapore venture has compromised Yale deeply not because Singapore is such an evil place in the larger scheme of things - it's an authoritarian, corporate city-state ...//  
  
Now is this where you can call in the CPIB to investigate?   
I mean, how financially skewed are they against the white-collars of executives in real life? I would go after those seafood chefs, ministerial corrupt officials etc, but do they have a clue how to go after those well hidden behind the banks and institutions such as MAS, SWF etc?   
  
  
http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/how-yale-becomes-more-confucian-rather-than-singapore-more-civic-republican

[Reply](javascript:;)

[Replies](javascript:;)

* 1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/anon36.png

Anonymous[6/14/2012 9:16 AM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339636592027#c906229622572433843)

In fact, we should be told where is our CPF money. CPIB may as well start its investigation at the same time.   
  
I have done a simple calculation but still could not understand why our Reserves is still so low. Lets say we have 2 million working adults (out of 6 million)and each contributing $500 per month (self & Company), CPF should have collected $1b or $12b in a year. Since CPF started, we should have tens of Trillions somewhere, even after some payout. So how come our national reserves is still in hundreds of billions and not trillions?

* 1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/anon36.png

Anonymous[6/14/2012 12:52 PM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339649552135#c4711599884342930318)

Columbia and NYU are the largest landowners in Manhattan and they each have billion dollar endowments. And the interesting anecdote is “Yale will be cut in on prime investments that Singapore controls and restricts through its sovereign wealth fund”.  
Dear Professor Balding, could that be your missing trillion?

* 1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/anon36.png

Anonymous[6/14/2012 1:26 PM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339651581113#c2435432814814290878)

When IMF needed money, they called Singapore. When UBS and Merrill Lynch needed capital, they called Singapore.  
Dear Professor Balding, could that be your missing trillion?

[Reply](javascript:;)

1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/openid36-rounded.png

[*jim sleeper*](http://jimsleep.myopenid.com/)[6/14/2012 4:20 AM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339618806517#c2845192577470377788)

From Jim Sleeper  
  
Thank you very much for this magnificent post.  
  
One correction: Charles Ellis is no longer a member of the Yale Corporation, but he did work with and for the Singapore Government Investment Corporation while a trustee of Yale. He is the husband of Yale University Secretary Linda Koch Lorimer, who one of is Yale President Richard Levin's closest advisers.  
  
A current member of the Yale Corporation, Charles Waterhouse Goodyear IV, was CEO-designate of Singapore's Temasek sovereign wealth fund in 2009 but was not yet a Yale trustee at that time.  
  
So a pattern emerges here -- I've said more about it in other posts at Huffington Post -- that gives the European university official's prediction a certain plausibility. I noted that prediction and its plausibility in the post that you've kindly linked. But the post is mainly about the awkwardness of Yale, a liberal-arts university, venturing into a partnership with a university and government whose current as well as past record on civil liberties is what I described. My expression of this deeper political and pedagogical concern seems only to have stupefied Yale's press office into silence.

[Reply](javascript:;)

1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/anon36.png

Anonymous[6/14/2012 12:33 PM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339648397449#c4706968894806776740)

But there was no silence. The mainstream press has rubbished it as another conspiracy one would read in fiction book.   
  
Even if such an investment deal were to exist or come through for Yale, there is no way one could tell given the massive and global apparatus of the SWF. How good and independent is our CPIB really?   
  
http://www.edvantage.com.sg/edvantage/news/schoolnews/1156206/NUS\_Yale\_rubbishes\_prof\_s\_claims\_of\_conspiracy.html

[Reply](javascript:;)

Anonymous[6/14/2012 1:00 PM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339650002672#c74603400598321344)

"Do you believe everything you read in the Straits Times?" - PM Lee Hsien Loong, April 2007

* 1. http://img1.blogblog.com/img/anon36.png

Anonymous[6/14/2012 1:07 PM](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html?showComment=1339650470165#c3155523483298508487)

Certainly not!   
  
Yale’s claim Charles Ellis does not have investment interests in SG, and it was reported (uncritically once again) by the Straits Times & CNA is false to begin with.   
  
Mr Charles Ellis is still a Senior Advisor in Greenwich with branch office in Singapore. The MSM couldn't even get their facts right.   
  
<http://www.greenwich.com/WMA/about_greenwich/our_people/1,1605,,00.html?rtOrigin=G&vgnvisitor=eqaZm6SKn5g>=

**11.** <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/in-liberal-education-a-co_1_b_1599511.html>

**June 15, 2012**

## [[college](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/) [The Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)

# In Liberal Education, a Cover-Up Worse than the Crime

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

## [Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University

May I invite you to take a short, reading-comprehension test like one you might take on the GMAT for graduate school? First, here's the passage you'd have to read; then, a couple of questions and possible answers; and, then, the right (and wrong) answers.

The passage:

**It's one thing for a business corporation to roll with the punches while dealing with clients, customers, and investors in countries that do things differently than ours does. It's also okay for a university to establish a small center or professional school in another country that limits itself to transferring skills. But it's quite something else for a liberal-arts college to transform itself abroad, as Yale is already doing in New Haven, from the crucible of civic-republican leadership it has been into a career-networking center and cultural galleria for a global managerial elite that answers to no republican polity or moral code....   
  
Then again, Yale** is **a business corporation now. As the human-rights lawyer Bob Amsterdam was being denied entry into Singapore last month, I was seated at a dinner in Germany next to a very high official of a European university who'd been to Singapore a few times himself. "There's $300 million for Yale in its partnership with the National University of Singapore" he confided to me.**

**"'What? How do you know that?" I asked. "Yale claims it's not getting a dime from Singapore, although Singapore is paying all the costs of constructing and staffing the new college itself."**

**"Oh, it's not a direct payment," my interlocutor explained. "It's what you call insider trading: Yale will be cut in on prime investments that Singapore controls and restricts through its sovereign wealth fund. These will be only investments, not payments, so there's some risk. But you'll see Yale's endowment swell by several hundred million in consequence of its getting in on these ventures."**

**This hit me with some force because, only a few weeks before, I'd written that the real scandal in Yale's Singapore venture is Yale Corporation members' blithe assurance that they can do well by doing good, as long as they ignore the costs to republican liberty and the creativity and citizenship such liberty yields.  
  
When I think of Yale President Richard Levin's envisioning the Yale-NUS arrangement with recent Yale Corporation members G. Leonard Baker, Charles Ellis (who maintains an investment business in Singapore and is married to the Secretary of Yale, Linda Koch Lorimer), and Charles Waterhouse Goodyear IV (once the CEO-designate of Singapore's sovereign wealth fund, now a member of the Yale Corporation), the European university official's comment sounds right.**

Now, here are two questions to test your comprehension of what you've just read:

**1.** Where the passage says, "Then again, Yale is a business corporation," does the writer mean this literally?

[a.] Yes, that's what the passage asserts, so it's what the writer means.

[b.] No, the meaning isn't literal, because the passage also draws a distinction between a university and a business corporation, making clear that Yale is not the latter. So it means that Yale is behaving like a business corporation, even though it shouldn't.

[c.] The writer knows that Yale isn't really a business corporation but wants to mislead readers into thinking that it is.

**2.** Does the passage claim that Yale is receiving preferred access to certain investments as a form of payment or quid pro quo for establishing a new college in partnership with Singapore?

[a.] Yes, that's what the passage reports.

[b.] No, the passage reports that someone has predicted that Yale will receive investment access in exchange for its services and imprimatur. But the passage does not assert that this is actually happening.

If your reading comprehension is good, you know that the right answers to both questions are [b]. Unfortunately, the long-serving, much-beleaguered press secretary of Yale's Office of Public Affairs & Communications, Tom Conroy, didn't pass this test, possibly because couldn't, but also possibly because he didn't want to because he doesn't want you to pass it, either. In other words, it is possible he wants to mislead you. But he has become so inured to doing such things that probably he has also misled himself.

Conroy mis-answered the two questions in an official statement that Yale produced after I wrote and posted this passage [on June 5](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/as-yales-blunder-deepens-_b_1569495.html). (I've changed only a few, minor words in the excerpt here to make it intelligible outside the rest of the post; this has no effect whatever on the questions or their answers).

Conroy's answer to the first question is [a]: He claims that the passage means literally, albeit mistakenly, that Yale is a business corporation. After all, one sentence of the passage says so, so he pounces on it!

**Yale is not, as Sleeper asserts, a business corporation. It is a not-for-profit organization recognized around the globe as one of the world's great research and teaching institutions.**

Why does Conroy's second sentence here remind me of a smallish, regional airport putting up banners announcing that it's "A World-Class Airport"? But let that pass. Conroy's answer to the second question, too, is [a]: He tells you that the passage claims, literally (albeit wrongly), that Yale is in it for the money:

**Sleeper makes the claim -- based on the conversational speculation of an unnamed European -- that Yale is receiving special access to investment opportunities in Singapore as a** quid pro quo **for pursuing a partnership with NUS to create Yale-NUS College. This claim is false. Yale is receiving no financial gain other than reimbursement of expenses.**

But the passage doesn't claim that Yale is getting anything! It reports someone's prediction that it will and suggests that, given the thick nexus of Yale-Singapore business connections, that "sounds right."

Conroy then compounds his folly or duplicity by reading one part of the passage correctly and then lying about it:

**Sleeper also makes the claim that former Yale trustee Charles Ellis "maintains an investment business in Singapore." This is false.**

But actually, my claim is true. Charles Ellis, a former member of the Yale Corporation, the husband of Yale's Secretary Linda Koch Lorimer, and a long-time adviser to Singapore's Government Investment Corporation, is a founder and senior advisor of [Greenwich Associates](http://www.greenwich.com/WMA/about_greenwich/our_people/1,1605,,00.html?rtOrigin=S&toEmail=info@corsential.com&toContact=Customer+Service&toPhone;=+1.416.493.6111&vgnvisitor=eqaYnqGInZU=), which maintains an [office in Singapore](http://www.greenwich.com/WMA/about_greenwich/offices/1,1602,,00.html?rtOrigin=S). Ellis has written to the Huffington Post to say that he has never seen this office. But the Singapore newspaper TODAY [notes](http://www.todayonline.com/Print/Singapore/EDC120612-0000009/Yale,-NUS-rebut-Huffington-Post-story) accurately (as Conroy does not) that Dr Ellis is currently an adviser emeritus to the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation's Investment Strategies Committee.

As a continuing contact for the Government Investment Corporation and a senior advisor to the firm he founded, Ellis is himself the connection which he has denied exists between the GIC and his Greenwich Associates. More important, he is one of three recent and current Yale trustees -- the others are Charles Waterhouse Goodyear IV, G. Leonard Baker -- who have intimate knowledge of Yale's governance and investments as well as of Singapore's. Ellis left the Yale Corporation in 2008, just as Yale's negotiations with Singapore to establish the new college were beginning in earnest, but his wife, who is one of Yale President Richard Levin's highest and closest assistants, has been very aggressively involved in planning and promoting the new college in Singapore and will be a member of its governing board.

Let's mitigate Conroy's duplicity here with the suggestion that he should work on his reading comprehension. This isn't what we should expect from a university whose motto is "Light and Truth." Yet, for more than a decade, I and others have watched this man mislead clumsily to protect people at Yale who were lying, and we've watched him mislead just as clumsily about truth-tellers (like me in this case and in another I'd describe if I had more time and more bile).

The problem has only gotten worse now that Yale is collaborating so intensely with people who crow like Conroy on cue, driven by an excess of Confucianism or of anti-Communism (don't they know that Communism has become corporatism?), or out of spasms of a perverse neo-colonialism that has kept a few of them searching for something Anglo-American to hail ever since the end of the Raj and the Hong Kong handover.

The moment Conroy issued his statement -- paralleled by a disclaimer from the National University of Singapore that anyone was paying anyone for anything beyond reimbursements -- this sturdy chorus crowed dutifully, "NUS-Yale Rubbishes Professor's Claims of Conspiracy." The government-controlled, ever-Orwellian Straits Times and its [ChannelNewsAsia](http://forum.channelnewsasia.com/showthread.php?113532-NUS-Yale-rubbishes-prof-s-claims-of-conspiracy) did just that. But I found more amusing, if also pathetic, passages by the rubbishers [such as this one](http://www.edvantage.com.sg/edvantage/news/schoolnews/1156206/NUS_Yale_rubbishes_prof_s_claims_of_conspiracy.html):

Dr Sleeper meanwhile continued to believe that Singapore is another Myanmar of sorts, where citizens are not allowed any social liberties. Perhaps he did not read about a 17-year-old lashing out at a minister and not being charged for it.

Even Conroy should feel unclean. He and the curdled yea-sayers who write such things have needlessly compounded Yale's blunder by calling attention to what's ludicrous and dangerous about it. "Where there's smoke, there's fire," warns [Singapore Notes](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html), a dissident website that assessed my post against Singapore's murky laws on insider trading.

Yale asserts that there's no fire, but, if that's true, why say so much that's false? In an undertaking as fragile as liberal education, the cover-up can be worse than the crime. (Note to Conroy: "crime" in this passage is a metaphor, not a charge, as would be clear to some whose reading comprehension exceeds that of a business-corporation spokesman who reads everything only for its implications for his company's legal liability, brand name, and market share.)

Perhaps the biggest irony is that my post and its predecessors on this subject aren't an attempted exposé of financial and business conflicts of interest. They're warnings about underestimating the danger to liberal values and virtues in universities' hasty and often top-down accommodations to regimes whose repressions of liberty, even inside their own national universities, mesh only-too well with the increasingly obvious repressions that are now encircling and violating Americans in the United States itself.

Even on their own home campuses, Yale and other old American colleges, formerly crucibles of civic-republican leadership for the world as well as the United States, have been turning themselves almost mindlessly, because desperately, into military and national-security cockpits, commercial career-networking centers, and cultural galleria for a new global elite that will answer to no republican polity or moral code. Universities' mad scramble abroad (and online) is happening in ways that only compound their growing pedagogical hollowness and perversity at home.

There may be irresistible reasons why the administrators, trustees, and their celebrants are tempted, even desperate, to stampede in these directions. Unlike the embarrassing Conroy, many of them aren't clueless or perverse; they're just trying to ride swift cross-currents instead of trying to critique them from any depth.

However necessary that may seem for institutions struggling to survive, a liberal education should stimulate the critique even more than the ride.

When only a few colleges like Yale have the resources necessary to stay true to that mission, their default on it is all the more reprehensible. Why don't they use their prestige to withdraw from the U.S. News college rankings and to rebuff feelers from donors with the wrong agendas? Why don't they cherish those who are trying to remind them, and their weak courtiers, neo-colonial cheerleaders, crude enforcers, and earnest youths yearning to salute, that they're losing something invaluable even when collaborations like Yale's with Singapore seem legal, commercially pure, and "cosmopolitan" in the manner preferred by elites who are bankrupting our societies and our souls?

What's being lost could be rescued, but that would take guts and depth as well as money and savvy from donors wise enough not to think that they're investing in productivity or in conscripting the humanities to providing commercial and military voyages with better-disciplined crews and tighter rigging. A liberal education will provide that, too, but only if it's nourishing more critics than conformists -- more people who are free.

As I wrote in the post that so confuses today's Yale, a liberal education is supposed to show that the world isn't flat, as neo-liberal economists like Levin think, but that it has abysses that yawn suddenly at our feet and in our hearts and that require insights far deeper than those offered by markets and the states that serve them -- as Singapore's state serves them to a fault.

It would be amusing if it weren't so distressing that what really set off all those alarm bells in New Haven and Singapore wasn't this critique and the growing bewilderment, foreboding, heartbreak, and anger over its asphyxiation by a thousand bromides from gilded functionaries, but rather my one, passing account of one man's prediction over dinner that, in exchange for Yale's name and services, Singapore will give it some preferred investments.

Investments in what?

**12.**  July 17, 2012

[**[politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/politics/)  
[The Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/politics/)**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/politics/)

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-into-the-abyss_b_1678428.html>

and

<http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/07/18/yale-steps-into-the-authoritarian-abyss/> (TR Emeritus, a dissenting Singapore website.)

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

## [Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University

# Yale Steps Into the Authoritarian Abyss

In ["Quarrels With Providence,"](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/01_03/lapham.html) his magisterial and, to my mind, unforgettable essay of 2001 about his alma mater's past glories and contemporary travails, Lewis Lapham noted a bit impishly that "Institutions as venerable as Yale ordinarily arrange [their announcements] with considerable care, the press releases staged in a sequence indicative of sound judgment, good feeling, and the dawn of a bright new day."  
  
This month Yale tried to keep up that pretense as its new, star-crossed liberal arts college -- undertaken with and paid for entirely by the authoritarian city-state of Singapore and its National University of Singapore -- announced that "Students at the new Yale-NUS College will be able to express themselves freely on campus."

Skepticism about this among Yale's own faculty "would fade as people see the "successful education experiment," [Business Week was told by Pericles Lewis,](http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-07-06/yale-to-ensure-students-in-singapore-have-freedom-of-expression) the energetically pliable former Yale English professor who is now the new college's president. "We expect students to express all kinds of opinions on campus," he said. "The issue is about going off campus and, there, students will have to abide by the laws of Singapore." The college's first students, who are now being admitted, will arrive just over a year from now.

But something was missing from these on-campus freedoms, I thought -- especially as I read the [comments](http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/07/07/yale-to-ensure-students-in-singapore-have-freedom-of-expression/) posted by young Singaporeans below a Bloomberg version of the story that was carried on the Singapore website Tremeritus.

I expected a "clarification" of these policies to follow very soon from Yale-NUS, in a manner staged to indicate sound judgment, good feeling, and the dawn of a bright new day. My suspicions only intensified as I conversed online with Kenneth Jeyaretnam, secretary general of Singapore's small opposition Reform Party, which is constrained and sometimes harassed by the slick, duplicitous, and steely ruling People's Action Party.

Jeyaretnam, who holds a Double First Class Honours degree in Economics from Cambridge University, told me that "Our son was denied a place here at one of Singapore's so-called elite schools... clearly politically motivated to isolate me." He also recounted that when he was invited last year to speak at candidates' forums at the National University of Singapore and other Singapore universities, each invitation was rescinded at the last minute. Would that happen again, I wondered, now that Pericles had spoken?

Partly because Jeyaretnam's father, Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam, an early opposition leader, had been persecuted mercilessly and infamously by the regime, Kenneth has not been treated as harshly. His own political contemporary Chee Soon Juan, leader of another opposition party, the Singapore Democratic Party who holds a PhD from the University of Georgia, was fired by the National University of Singapore from his position as a lecturer in neuropsychology in 1993 after he joined the opposition party; he was sued for defamation, bankrupted, and imprisoned when he attempted to contest his dismissal.

Although relations among Singapore's opposition parties are not cordial, Kenneth Jeyaretnam, with courage and nobility reminiscent of his father's, [spoke out against renewed persecution of Chee](http://sonofadud.com/democracy/to-help-keep-my-political-rival-out-of-jail/) two months ago, when the latter was barred from leaving Singapore to give a speech to a human rights organization in Oslo -- the same month, ironically, when Yale University President Richard Levin came to Singapore to give a speech celebrating Pericles Lewis' ascent to the Yale-NUS presidency.

What a disgrace for Yale, I noted in ["As Yale's Blunder Deepens, and Singapore Bears Its Teeth,"](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/as-yales-blunder-deepens-_b_1569495.html) a post that's been read and shared widely. And last night I was about to write another, asking Pericles Lewis what he and the Yale-NUS governing board would do if, say, Yale-NUS students, seeking to exercise their promised freedom to "express all kinds of opinions... freely on campus," invited Jeyaretnam to give a talk on campus..

Before I could even pose that question, a Wall Street Journal story [provided the answer](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303933704577530524046581142.html?mod=WSJ_article_comments#articleTabs%3Darticle): "The Singapore campus won't allow political protests, nor will it permit students to form partisan political societies."

"Students at the new school 'are going to be totally free to express their views,' but they won't be allowed to organize political protests on campus, said Pericles Lewis, the college's new president, in an interview last week.

"Although groups will be allowed to discuss political issues, he said, 'we won't have partisan politics or be forming political parties on campus,' including societies linked to local political groups akin to college groups supporting Democrats and Republicans in the U.S., he said."

At this posting, Lewis is telling Yale faculty that he was misquoted and never said that there could be no protests on campus. But the new policy still dashes any hope that Yale-NUS will widen space for free political debate and organizing in that young, energetic, but assiduously self-censoring city-state.

By reporting the truth, the Journal bested the New York Times, which has never reported that Yale faculty actually passed a resolution expressing concern about their university's collaboration with such a regime -- a surprising lapse by the paper, since it did run a long story about faculty discontent the morning of the fateful meeting at which the resolution was passed. The Times never followed up to report that the faculty passed the resolution, by a wide margin, over President Richard Levin's objection and in his presence.

Worse yet, the Times' next story on Singapore, ["Activism Grows as Singapore Loosens Restrictions,"](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/world/asia/activism-grows-as-singapore-loosens-restrictions.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all&gwh=A718F60F2253024A99ACE8690470C284) made no mention of the regime's assiduous suppression of political expression and of opposition leaders, in ways that generate extensive self-censorship. Impressed with the loosening of restrictions against gays, Times reporter Andrew Jacobs engaged unintentionally in what some people call "pink-washing" -- helping a regime that tolerates gay life (as a profit center or a harmless showcase for its "liberalism") to distract attention from its ongoing repression of political freedoms.

A few people at Yale -- which some consider the gay friendly Ivy -- have been gulled by such "loosening." They and the Times reporter need to read William Dobson's new book, [The Dictator's Learning Curve](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=william+dobson%2C+The+Dictator%27s+Learning+Curve%22), which, although it barely mentions Singapore and doesn't address gay rights, shows how deft some of today's authoritarian regimes have become at disguising their brutality.

Such regimes have learned how to use overt repression against a few, in sparing but exemplary ways, to frighten others into thinking that it could happen to them: "Fear leaves no fingerprints," Dobson, Slate's politics and foreign-affairs editor, told NPR a few weeks ago while discussing his book. Some authoritarian corporate states asphyxiate dissent without administering too many beatings and imprisonments that might spark uprisings and worldwide condemnation.

A "friendly" tip to a dissenter that the regime has recorded but refrained from punishing some small infraction he or she committed years earlier can prompt dread of surveillance, of knocks in the night, and of prosecutions for "defaming" the state that Singapore's ruling party uses to send its vocal critics into bankruptcy and worse. For example: Singapore still has draconian laws against homosexuality. Although it has backed off from enforcing them, they remain in its arsenal.

The larger tragedy in all this for a compliant Yale beggars description. A few months ago, after attending an eerily Orwellian forum at Yale called "Singapore Uncensored," at which a Yale Daily News reporter worked to suppress a full and honest account of a panel discussion staged by Singaporean students to "humanize" the regime under the banner, "Singapore Uncensored," I described the incident and the Singaporization of Yale -- amid a galloping culture of self-censorship among Yale students themselves -- [in a 13,000-word post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-has-gone-to-singapor_b_1476532.html), one of the longest the Huffington Post has ever carried.

The point of that chronicle wasn't to defend Yale's humanist purity from the sins of Singapore but to show that, wittingly or not, Yale's president and trustees have embraced Singapore's model of authoritarian prosperity and have lost any sense of how a real liberal education might strengthen the American republic against market riptides and the seductions of militarism. A liberal capitalist republic has to rely on a critical mass of its citizens upholding certain public virtues and beliefs that markets and armies, necessary though they certainly are, can't ultimately provide.

American liberal arts colleges did once provide it. Do they still? Yale's governors have overseen the creation of a strange parallel university that, in some courses of its Directed Studies humanities program, its Grand Strategy program, and its Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, conscripts and distorts the humanities to provide better-disciplined crews and tighter rigging for its graduates' commercial and military expeditions -- perhaps including Yale's venture into Singapore, as I've shown in the other posts with reference to the business ties of Yale's own trustees.

The ethos in some of these new courses shows that not only a fear of power but the seductions of power can generate cultures of insider networking and enthusiastic self-silencing by students who imagine that this brings them closer to power and freedom. Actually it brings them closer to a culture of bureaucratic self-mutilation that's amply reinforced in corporate and national-security America but is bottomlessly costly to their souls and to the American republic, as they tend to discover, if at all, only too late in life.

Yale has done this so often and perversely in the past -- creating and then staffing the CIA through secret student societies like Skull & Bones, whose alumni sealed themselves off into their national-security strategizing -- that you might think the college would have learned something by now from these graduates' endless blunders on the world stage, from installing the hated Shah in Iran in 1953 and their committing the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam fiascos right up through their handing Iraq to the sphere of influence of Iran's mullahtocracy through a war waged by Skull & Bones alumnus George W. Bush. Their ideas about where power comes from and how it flows are deeply wrong.

Yet, according to a Wall Street Journal story, when students in Yale's Studies in Grand Strategy program [visited West Point](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122973925559323583.html#articleTabs%3Darticle) a few years ago to discuss a book about Iraq with cadets there, the Yalies -- not the cadets -- "decided not to record the discussion because they did not want to have 'views expressed in the spirit of intellectual debate be used against them at a Senate confirmation hearing'" according to the program's associate director.

And when recent posts in [The Atlantic](http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/05/why-is-general-mcchrystal-teaching-an-off-the-record-course-at-yale/257626/) and Foreign Policy asked why General Stanley McChrystal is teaching an off-the-record course in "leadership" in Yale's Jackson Institute, his [students leaped forward](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/06/01/general_mcchrystals_leadership_lessons_for_yale_students) to defend and to "salute" their great teacher, who told his first class that "a seminar is like a team," but they've only wound up proving that what he teaches in a supposedly broad, open discussion can't be shared with anyone outside it, even with other professors in other courses on related matters that McChrystal's students happen to take.

The students' claim that vigorous and intelligent debate is fostered this way unwittingly mimicks the Yale-NUS policy in Singapore of quarantining freedom to the campus, as if it could flourish that way. It buys into [facile understandings of democracy that compromised McChrystal's own leadership on several occasions before Yale grabbed him to teach about it.](http://www.dissentmagazine.org/online.php?id=311)

The consequences are profound. "The sinister fact about censorship... is that it is largely voluntary," [George Orwell wrote](http://www.jimsleeper.com/articles/signature-pieces/Orwell%27s%20Orthodoxies,%20and%20Ours,%20%28book%20chapter%202004%29.pdf), as his manuscript of Animal Farm was receiving rejection after rejection by frightened British publishers in 1944. "Unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without the need for any official ban.... Because of a general tacit agreement that 'it wouldn't do' to mention that particular fact. It is not exactly forbidden to say this or that or the other, but it is 'not done' to say it... Anyone who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness...."   
  
There's a legitimate difference between being discreet and being silenced -- that is, between exercising a sound judgment not to do something and accepting blindly that something is simply "not done." It's quite right that some things are" not done," because agreeing to take certain things off the table can actually help a discussion to proceed and freedom of thought to flourish. But courses [like these at Yale](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2007/dec/07/there-is-to-be-no-fighting-in-the-war-room/) and, now, on several other campuses, do little better than the old secret societies have done at teaching students when and how to draw such distinctions on behalf of a real republic, not a corporate state.

Yale administrators' lack of understanding and their loss of faith in real freedom is ignoble. And it's heartening to some warped minds elsewhere. A Singaporean who was offended by the Yale faculty's resolution expressing concern about the university's drift into Singapore's "behind closed doors" ethos retorted:

"I don't see why we need to have a partnership with an institution that has produced the talents who... have morally and financially bankrupted their once great nation. Your nation's economy is in a depression as your central bank robs the general population with its easy money policies transferring more wealth to the bankers. Your political parties are both bought and paid for. Your men and women are sent to die in senseless wars to protect the reserve currency status of the petrodollar. Before this decade is through the Treasury market will be in free fall and so will the dollar along with your living standards.

*"Call us authoritarian all you want but we are a prudent state while yours is a once great nation that is a banana republic on its way to fascism. And your nation owes us and other authoritarian regimes A LOT of money. All made possible in part by the notables graduates of Yale and other Ivies.*

"I suggest that debt slaves adopt a more courteous attitude toward their creditors instead of name calling and stereotyping. Btw Feel free to come grovel for a job once this comes to pass."

Most of what this writer said about what's happened to American political culture under the tutelage of people who think like Yale's governors -- President Levin and trustees s Fareed Zakaria, Charles Ellis, G. Edwin Baker, and Charles Waterhouse Goodyear IV, the latter three long and deeply involved in business with Singapore's government investment funds -- is true.

They need to be reminded that the university was founded, in 1701, to stop a Harvard-based "social network" from diverting the Puritan effort to balance authority with consent into other efforts, at wealth-creation, in a society increasingly connected and flattened by commerce. The world isn't flat, Yale's founders tried to remind the settlers. It has abysses, and students need a faith deep and strong enough to plumb them and sometimes even to defy worldly powers in the name of a Higher one.

Students still need a faith that strong, the kind that a real liberal education awakens when it makes them grapple with lasting challenges to politics and the human spirit, not only in their texts but also in their lives as citizen-leaders. At times, the old American colleges have done this extraordinarily well. "To a remarkable extent this place has detected and rejected those who wear the colors of high purpose falsely," President Kingman Brewster Jr. '41 told my entering freshman class in 1965. "This is done not by an administrative edict ... but by a pervasive ethic of student and faculty loyalty and responsibility... deep in our origins."

A neoliberal might dismiss [Brewster's admonition](http://www.jimsleeper.com/articles/signature-pieces/Yale%27s%20Purpose.pdf) as a snob's boast about an in-crowd. But Brewster, a descendant of Puritans, really wanted students to plumb abysses in order to know true leaders from false, and his college had struggled for three centuries, in Calvinist and classical ways, to balance humanist Truth-seeking with republican Power-wielding.

That balance determines how we live, invest and wage wars, and there's a lot more to be said for what it accomplished than many now tend to acknowledge. I've had the profound pleasure of watching many Yale undergraduates awaken and rise to the challenge of striking better public balances than are being struck by the Machiavellian mice in Yale's "parallel university" and its Singapore venture.

Yale and other old colleges are morphing from the crucibles of civic-republican leadership that they sometimes were at their best into career-training centers and cultural galleria for a global elite that no longer answers to any republican polity or moral code. Yale teaches that the world is flat thanks to global engines of wealth-creation driven by investors and consumers.

Many a lecture chirps this good news, along with characteristically elegant apercus and tips on how to do well by doing good. Isn't that what liberal education is for? A flat world may have valleys, but abysses? Please. We're riding neo-liberalism to Singapore, even the Moon!

So Yale's governors have thought. But this week's news warns that they're leading the college into an abyss. This was anticipated in Lapham's "Quarrels With Providence" and is rendered chillingly, though not in reference to Yale, by Robert Kaplan in "Was Democracy Just a Moment?," a 1997 Atlantic [essay](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1997/12/was-democracy-just-a-moment/6022/) that Morris Berman summarizes in The Twilight of American Culture:

"Kaplan ends his article... saying that "we are poised to transform ourselves into something perhaps quite different from what we imagine." ... [W]e shall "sell" democracy to hybrid regimes that will, for economic reasons, take on democratic trappings, while the political reality is something else; and in the process of doing that, we too shall become - are becoming - a hybrid regime."

So Singapore "loosens" a bit to take on democratic trappings, and Yale surrenders some of the hard-won commitments to freedom speech and political expression that I described in the long post mentioned above. To prove that it hasn't surrendered, the Yale administration would have support students and faculty in New Haven if they want to host Kenneth Jeyaretnam; his fellow opposition leader Chee Soon Juan; Chee's international human-rights lawyer, Bob Amsterdam (whom Singapore barred from entering the country to see him); Francis Seouw, the former solicitor-general of Singapore and critic of the regime, who now lives in Boston; and other honorable, knowledgeable dissenters to participate in a panel called "Singapore Really Uncensored."

That's what freedom of speech and political expression should promise, isn't it? We'll see if Yale will countenance it now, or if it has lost its soul in self-censorship and is too terrified of its new partner across the Pacific to do anything but grovel.

**13.**

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/fareed-zakaria-plagiarism_b_1765903.html>

August 10, 2012

[The Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/08/bloomberg-news-doubles-convention-staff-2012_n_1756178.html?utm_hp_ref=media)

**Zakaria's Plagiarism: Even Worse Than It Looks**

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

## [Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University

A few hours ago Fareed Zakaria [apologized publicly](http://www.theatlanticwire.com/business/2012/08/fareed-zakarias-take-gun-control-strikingly-similar-new-yorkers/55652/) for passing off New Yorker writer Jill Lepore's work as his own in an essay he wrote for Time magazine. Not to put too fine a point on it, Zakaria committed egregious plagiarism, as Alexander Abad-Santos of the Atlantic Wire reported.

But the offense does not end there. Zakaria is a trustee of Yale, which takes a very dim view of plagiarism and suspends or expels students who commit anything like what he has committed here. If the Yale Corporation were to apply to itself the standards it expects its faculty and students to meet, Zakaria would have to take a leave or resign.

Worse still: Lepore, whom Zakaria wronged by misappropriating her work, is herself a Yale PhD. If anyone knows what it means to steal another scholar's work, it's Zakaria, who holds a PhD from Harvard.

Zakaria is a busy man, of course. Although he's been judged by The New Republic to be one of America's ["most-overrated thinkers,"](http://www.tnr.com/article/politics/96141/over-rated-thinkers?page=0,1) he was interviewed about the state of the world last year by Yale President Richard Levin before a large audience at the kick-off off Yale's $50 million Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, the new home of "Professor" Stanley McChrystal and of what Lewis Lapham has called "the arts and sciences of career management," including mastery of "the exchange rate between an awkward truth and a user-friendly lie."

Zakaria was Harvard's commencement speaker this June, and, as Paul Starobin [reported](http://www.cjr.org/feature/money_talks_marchapril2012.php?page=all" \t "_blank) in the Columbia Journalism Review, he's also very busy collecting his standard speaking fee of $75,000 for talks he gives at Baker Capital, Catterton Partners, Driehaus Capital Management, ING, Merrill Lynch, Oak Investment Partners, Charles Schwab, and T. Rowe Price.

Might Zakaria have fobbed off the drafting of his ill-fated Time article to an assistant or intern (from Yale, perhaps?) and given the draft his glancing approval before letting it run under his byline in Time? Whatever the truth, he couldn't have fobbed off the blame on anyone but himself, and so he has issued his clipped but "unreserved" apology to Lepore.

He should also apologize to Yale. Last April Yale's trustees, under fire for their [ill-conceived](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303933704577530524046581142.html) venture to establish a new liberal arts college bearing Yale's name in collaboration with the authoritarian city-state of Singapore, wheeled in their fellow trustee and favorite journalist, Zakaria, to write [a column](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/03/zakaria-a-global-education-for-a-global-age/) defending the venture in the Yale Daily News that, as I noted [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/the-showdown-at-yale_b_1401122.html) in Huffington Post at the time, read as if it had been written by a wind-up toy of Zakaria at his self-important, elitist worst.

After parsing the new Singapore college's prospective East-West syllabus with affectations of an erudition he doesn't possess, Zakaria, a consummate player of the "Third World card" against Westerners who dare to criticize his Davos neo-liberalism, discovered in the Singapore venture's Yale faculty critics "a form of parochialism bordering on chauvinism -- on the part of supposedly liberal and open-minded intellectuals" who, he wrote, can't "see that we too, in America and at Yale, can learn something from Singapore."

I've since had several occasions to explain what exactly we're learning from Singapore, as well as to note Zakaria's bad habit of resorting to put-downs of his critics. Last summer, he lit into a leftist critic of President Obama, the academic psychologist and political consultant Drew Westen, by [telling](http://articles.cnn.com/2011-09-08/opinion/westen.obama_1_obama-young-people-unemployment-rate/3?_s=PM:OPINION) Charlie Rose, "I'm not going to get into the what-ifs of a professor, you know, who has never run for dogcatcher advising one of the most skillful politicians in the country on how he should have handled this."

Zakaria -- who hasn't run for dogcatcher, either, but doesn't hesitate to advise presidents -- can't help himself at such moments, and he hasn't been able to help himself now, either. As long as he remains a Yale trustee, he will remain a sad example of Yale's own transformation from a crucible of civic-republican leadership for America and the world into a global career-networking center and cultural galleria for a new elite that answers to no polity or moral code and that aggrandizes itself by plucking the fruits of others' work.

*(AN ABSURD BUT AMUSING TWEET):*

** mad @er8/20/2012 8:18 pm Zakaria bows to the power of Jim Sleeper, resigns:** <http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/aug/20/amid-controversy-zakaria-86-resigns/>

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***SEE THE TWO PARAGRAPHS IN BOLD, BELOW:***

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444508504577591054290952344.html>

**[Description: http://s.wsj.net/img/b.gif](http://online.wsj.com/home-page)THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

**In Defense of Fareed Zakaria**

## *The famous pundit made a mistake, but the schadenfreude brigades are guilty of worse.*

### By [BRET STEPHENS](http://online.wsj.com/search/term.html?KEYWORDS=BRET+STEPHENS&bylinesearch=true)

Last year I wrote a foreword to a short book by Alex Grobman about the history of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. "Oscar Wilde," I began, "once said that homosexuality is 'the love that dare not speak its name.' Today, anti-Semitism is the hate that dare not speak its name."

A few weeks ago, while going through my father's effects, I found an issue of Commentary from the 1980s with a cover story by Norman Podhoretz. The title: "The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name."

I had no conscious memory of the article at the time I wrote the foreword. But the turn of phrase had obviously planted itself in a corner of my brain where I had forgotten it wasn't my own. Anyway, sorry, Norman: It was an honest mistake. And it's still a great line.

Pundits who spend their days reading and reading and writing and writing will likely have made mistakes similar to mine. That's all the more reason to take additional precautions against every form of plagiarism, which can as easily happen inadvertently as it does deliberately. It's also a reason to apply strict standards of attribution, though these can vary widely across different publications and forms of media. Footnotes, for instance, do not work well on TV.



Associated Press

Then again, I hope my anecdote shows there are degrees of plagiarism, only some of which (such as the recent case of science writer Jonah Lehrer) deserve to be treated as professional capital offenses. Which brings me to the case of Fareed Zakaria, the star pundit who writes columns for Time and the Washington Post, hosts an eponymous show on CNN, and has written a couple of bestselling books.

Last week Mr. Zakaria apologized "unreservedly" to New Yorker writer Jill Lepore after a blogger noticed that a paragraph in his Time column was all-but identical to something Ms. Lepore had written. Mr. Zakaria has now been given a month's suspension by his employers pending further review of his work.

We'll see if there are other shoes to drop. Among the more mystifying aspects of this story is that plagiarism in the age of Google is an offense hiding in plain sight, especially when the kind of people who read Mr. Zakaria's columns are the same kind of people who read the New Yorker. Why couldn't he have added the words, "As the New Yorker's Jill Lepore wrote . . ."? What could he possibly have been thinking?

My guess is he wasn't thinking. That's never a good thing, but it's something that might happen to an overcommitted journalist so constantly in the public eye that he forgets he's there. The proper response is the full apology he has already made, and maybe a reconsideration of whether the current dimensions of Fareed Zakaria Inc. are sustainable. Otherwise, end of story.

But that's not how Mr. Zakaria is being treated. To some of his critics, nothing less than the Prague Defenestration will do.

**Here, for instance, is Jim Sleeper in the Huffington Post—a publication that earns much of its keep piggybacking on the work of others. "Zakaria is a trustee of Yale," notes Mr. Sleeper. "If the Yale Corporation were to apply to itself the standards it expects its faculty and students to meet, Zakaria would have to take a leave or resign."**

**Mr. Sleeper, a one-time tabloid columnist, goes on to impugn Mr. Zakaria for various offenses, such as dissing people Mr. Sleeper obviously likes and commanding speaking fees Mr. Sleeper seems to think are too high. If Mr. Sleeper has ever been offered $75,000 to deliver deep thoughts to a corporate board and turned the money down, it would be interesting to see the evidence. Otherwise, his is the most vulgar voice of envy.**

Also gloating are the people who detest Mr. Zakaria for his views. In a recent column in Reason magazine, Ira Stoll—who often insinuates that this editorial page gets all its good ideas from him—more or less gives Mr. Zakaria a plagiarism pass, then lights into him for holding incorrect views on tax rates and the Middle East. Who knew that disagreeing with Ira Stoll was one of the world's greatest journalistic offenses?

I'm an occasional guest on Mr. Zakaria's show, for which I get no pay and not much glory. Mr. Zakaria and I have an amicable relationship but have never socialized. And my political views are considerably to the right of his, to say the least.

But I will give Mr. Zakaria this: He anchors one of the few shows that treats foreign policy seriously, that aims for an honest balance of views, and that doesn't treat its panelists as props for an egomaniacal host. He's also one of the few prominent liberals I know who's capable of treating an opposing point of view as something other than a slur on human decency.

In my book, that makes him a good man who's made a mistake. No similar compliment can be paid to the schadenfreude brigades now calling for his head.

Mr. Stephens writes Global View, the Journal's foreign-affairs column.

# <http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/09/13/national-conversation/>

# National CONversation

[Sep 12](http://sonofadud.com/2012/09/12/national-conversation/)

**Posted by** [kenneth jeyaretnam](http://sonofadud.com/author/kjeyaretnam/)

**Secretary-General of the opposition Reform Party, Singapore**

National Conversation? LOL, as the youngsters would say.  It is just propaganda. The outcomes are pre-decided, the PAP model is rigidly entrenched, it has no parliamentary mandate,  it is an exercise in deflecting us away from  building a functioning democracy. How much tax payer money will be spent on this PAP propaganda machine? It’s not even an election campaign period so doesn’t come out of their own party coffers.

Personally for me the National Conversation is a continuation of the National Silence that I am so used to. Well, until Jim Sleeper of Yale started to make a bit of noise that is. No sooner had he posted an article detailing how I was excluded from National University forums, the National televised debates for GE 2011, National Media and so on than an invite arrived to appear at a forum from the earnestly co-opted NUSSPA. Thanks Jim! I am sure Jim causing embarrassment from Yale is also behind the sudden magnanimous decision by the PAP to accept Soon Juan’s offer of a $30,000 payment of his fine. Or the PAP have finally realised that they risk not only embarrassment but the creation of another National Martyr under virtual house arrest in the manner of Aung San Suu Kyi, if Soon Juan is not able to join us in a proposed visit to Yale later this year.

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-into-the-abyss_b_1678428.html>

So we all know it is just a Wayang,  a continuation of the National chorus for some , the silence for others. In any case National Conversation is a nice phrase borrowed from the UK, referring to the consultation process on devolution of Scotland and Independence. That resulted in a white paper and a proposed referendum but also complaints from the Opposition parties that it was all Propaganda.

Meanwhile  I very much doubt that our Nation’s State controlled Media’s level of English is sufficient to conduct a conversation in English.

Recently, for the first time in years, a reporter spoke to me and then surprise, surprise, a few words of what I said actually went into print.  ( As opposed to say all the reporters who attended our IMF case Press Conference but then filed nothing – A lawyer friend of mine said he had been speaking to a Business Times journalist who seemed to know nothing about the IMF case. “Was he just pretending ignorance?”, he wondered. Yes, he was. Business Times were in attendance at the Press Conference and I have photos to prove it. The non reporting is not from a lack of information but censorship)

But to get back to the point and at the risk of sounding ungrateful, what a pity that the reporter’s English and the editing team of Today’s standard of English wasn’t up to even reporting those couple of phrases that found their way from me into print.

However, Reform Party’s (RP) Secretary-General Kenneth Jeyaretnam said the RP is “not taking part in a state-managed exercise” as he demanded for “freedom of expression”.

<http://www.todayonline.com/Singapore/EDC120910-0000018/Opposition-slams-make-up-of-committee>

Ms Yng defined irony by reporting my words in Today as , “**State** Managed Exercise” ( sic). What I actually said was, we would not be taking part in a **STAGE** managed exercise. I also used the phrase, **stage-managed exercise** to refer to a question tabled in our parliament, in my open letter to Christine LaGarde.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**14.** <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-president-resigns-bu_b_1843535.html>

Also, see the interesting comments at Tremeritus, a dissident Singapore website: <http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/09/02/what-the-yale-presidents-resignation-means-for-higher-education/>

Also at History News Network: <http://hnn.us/articles/richard-levin-leaves-behind-mixed-legacy-yale>

Also at openDemocracy.net (U.K.) <http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/significance-of-resignation-of-yales-president>

September 1, 2012

**[The Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/education/)**

[**The Internet Newspaper: News, Blogs, Video, Community**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/education/)

**What the Yale President's Resignation Means for Higher Education**

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

## [Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

"I think the faculty want me out," Yale President Richard Levin told an emeritus professor glumly last spring after [a faculty vote of "no confidence"](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/how-yales-singapore-ventu_b_1352729.html) in his and his trustees' move to establish a new liberal-arts college, bearing Yale's name, in [collaboration](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/as-yales-blunder-deepens-_b_1569495.html) with the authoritarian, corporate city-state of Singapore.

Levin's announcement last week that he'll [resign](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/30/richard-levin-yale-steps-down_n_1843007.html) effective in June -- and Fareed Zakaria's resignation as a Yale trustee only two weeks earlier -- were indeed driven partly by growing faculty resistance to the "world is flat" corporate expansion of American universities that both men championed. But what now, and what kind of leadership should succeed them?

Not so subtly, the liberal arts at Yale are being reinvented "from the ground up," as one Yale publication put it -- instrumentalized, I fear, not only to benefit Asia's future capitalist leaders but also in a "parallel university" that has been emerging at Yale itself outside of the faculty's deliberation and control.

On Levin's watch, that parallel university bestowed an honorary doctorate upon President George W. Bush an [honorary doctorate](http://www.yale.edu/opa/arc-ybc/v29.n31/story103.html) at the 2001 Yale commencement, where Bush told "the C students among you" graduates that this proves that "you can be president." Levin's parallel university installed Stanley McChrystal [as a professor](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2011/jan/18/professor-mcchrystal/) only a few months after Barack Obama fired him. It has hired [Charles Hill](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/13/grand_strategic_failure?print=yes&hidecomments=yes&page=full), Ryan Crocker, John Negroponte, Tony Blair, and, most recently, David Brooks as instructors for undergraduates who thirst for celebrity, authority, and connections from eminences fighting old wars in Yale's classrooms.

The "parallel university" does this through its [Grand Strategy](http://dissentmagazine.org/atw.php?id=606), Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, and other programs for Yale undergraduates thirsting for celebrity, career connections, and the "worldly" wisdom of people still fighting old wars.

Yet Levin's and Zakaria's new resignations are no occasion for gloating. "If Rick [Levin] leaves, you'll appreciate how much he was protecting the liberal arts from immense pressures to undermine them and how many other good things depended on him," one of his defenders told me months before.

She may be right. Levin managed Yale well fiscally and physically. He strengthened its bonds to its workforce and to New Haven, and I've credited him with these achievements [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/the-showdown-at-yale_b_1401122.html) before.

He even got the *Wall Street Journal's* right-wing bashers of the liberal academy -- Robert Whitewater Bartley, John Fund, Bret Stephens -- off Yale's back by touting the Grand Strategy and other national-security oriented programs and Yale's short lived, neo-con propaganda factory the Yale Institute for the Interdisciplinary Study of Anti-Semitism, which the university wisely abolished in 2010.

But while Levin and his trustees have been deft managers of their storm-tossed craft, they've been poor visionaries and navigators for liberal education, whose course will require different risks and courage.

Unless faculty and students can affirm the liberal arts in better ways, Yale may be even more mindlessly corporate after Levin than it has been under him. A similar challenge faces other universities, I argue in an essay, "With Friends Like These, Who Will Defend Liberal Education?", that [*Dissent* magazine](http://dissentmagazine.org) will post and publish on October 1 in its special issue on higher education.

Those of us who've criticized Yale's Singapore venture know that many wonderful young Singaporeans want a fuller liberal education, but we also see the advance of a slick model of self-censorship in an authoritarian corporate milieu in that country and, increasingly, in public life in the U.S. While self-censorship in Singapore is ubiquitous and routine owing to fear of the state, here it's embraced almost enthusiastically by some undergraduates who think it will bring them closer to power and commercial advantage.

This old misunderstanding of where power really comes from and how it flows has carried Yale undergraduates from secret, Skull & Bones bonding of yore into countless foreign-policy domestic blunders. Yet some students embrace that kind of self-censorship with refreshed ignorance every year because they want "access" without thinking about what they're gaining "access" to or recognizing that they're only cultivating profiles in timidity.

Students need "access" to what the conservative political philosopher Michael Oakeshott called "the great conversation" of the humanities across the ages about lasting challenges to politics and the spirit. They need to learn how to recognize and take responsibility for meeting those challenges, sometimes even by defying established power instead of saluting or fronting for it.

Levin himself glimpsed this in 2010, when he [wrote](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/21/opinion/21iht-edlevin.html) that "... India has a powerful advantage over China" because "it affords faculty members the freedom to pursue their intellectual interests wherever they may lead and allows students and faculty alike to express, and thus test, their most heretical and unconventional theories -- freedoms that are an indispensable feature of any great university."

Singapore's Han Chinese ruling elite doesn't favor that. Is Yale's ruling elite much better? Faculty and students should insist that Levin's replacement establish new, formal mechanisms that reflect the centrality of the faculty in the life and essence of the university: no more Iron law of oligarchy, in which presidents and other administrators think they're entitled to rule.

And every university president should be asked publicly to restore balance between the institution's academic mission and its economic goals. Every president should try to repair the damage being done to universities' ethos by corporatization.

Conservatives as well as liberals are awakening to dangers in the neo-liberalization of liberal education. What a bitter irony if Yale, which the philosopher George Santayana called the "Mother of Colleges" because it has nourished so many of them and American civil society, has fallen asleep.

**15.**

The Washington Spectator is a small, online cousin of *The Nation.* Hamilton Fish, president of the WS' "Public Concern Foundation," has long been associated with *The Nation* Institute and with the magazine.  
  
<http://www.washingtonspectator.org/index.php/Blog/entry/yale-singapore-and-the-business-of-liberal-arts-a-galloping-culture-of-self-censorship.html>

[](http://www.washingtonspectator.org/index.php)

[About Us](http://www.washingtonspectator.org/index.php/general/about-us.html)

[http://www.washingtonspectator.org/images/stories/fbicon.png](http://www.facebook.com/TheWashingtonSpectator)[http://www.washingtonspectator.org/images/stories/twittericon.png](https://twitter.com/washspec)[http://www.washingtonspectator.org/images/stories/rssicon.png](http://www.washingtonspectator.org/index.php/component/option,com_ninjarsssyndicator/feed_id,1/format,raw/)

Tuesday, October 02, 2012

Yale, Singapore, and the Business of Liberal Arts

October 02, 2012 | [Jim Sleeper](http://www.washingtonspectator.org/index.php/Blog/blogger/listings.html)

**Jim Sleeper, a journalist and author, is a lecturer in political science at Yale. Since last spring, Sleeper has written more than a dozen [*columns*](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/) for the Huffington Post about Yale's venture to found a new liberal arts undergraduate college [*in collaboration*](http://yaleherald.com/bullblog/take-a-look-at-the-yale-college-where-free-speech-goes-to-die/) with the tightly controlled city-state of Singapore. The columns were posted widely on other sites, from [*openDemocracy*](http://www.opendemocracy.net) in the U.K. to a dissident website in Singapore. Here, in a talk to members of the Yale student activist organization The Y Syndicate on Sept. 20 at Yale's Memorial to the War Dead, Sleeper examines the corporatism, self-censorship, and erosion of dissent and protest at the core of the archetypal liberal arts institution. (Our thanks to the Yale Herald, which posted a transcript of the talk.)

Let me begin this little talk with a caveat: Not all protest or free expression advances freedom. First Amendment absolutists who push every envelope of conventional wisdom—whether in street demonstrations, in nasty Super-PAC ads, or just to play political “gotcha” or make quick bucks—tend to forget that the people and institutions they’re pushing against aren’t wholly wrong or bad and are often more vulnerable than even the critics want them to be.

For example, those of us who’ve protested Yale’s sad slide into its dubious adventure in Singapore and into its own business-corporatization here at home are actually trying to affirm, strengthen, and even rescue something that’s vulnerable in this university and that we must be careful not to trash. Little is gained and much lost by shooting off one’s mouth and trying simply to shock the complacent into action.

But that’s not actually the argument I want to emphasize here today. I want to say that discretion and caution at Yale have been carried too far, not only among administrators and faculty but even among students, who should be learning the arts and disciplines of truth-telling as well as power-wielding. In some other parts of the college, I’ve been noticing a galloping culture of self-censorship that requires some comment.

In Singapore and in some American business corporations, self-censorship is prompted by fear of established power. That kind of self-censorship assumes many subtle modulations and guises in daily life. Even here at Yale, as I saw last spring when I attended a panel discussion called “[Singapore Uncensored](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/20/yale-nus-discussed-at-singaporean-student-panel/),” this self-censorship of fear, evident among the Singaporeans on the panel, was reinforced by some in the audience who engaged in what I’d call a self-censorship of seduction. It is prompted not by the fear of state or of corporate power but by the allure of power: Some students silence themselves almost enthusiastically, hoping to get closer to insider networking and to high status and power itself by proving they can be relied on never to mention that an emperor has no clothes.

This kind of self-restraint is a terrible delusion. It hastens the decay of trust and freedom both inside and outside the halls of power, and it has a long and quite embarrassing record at Yale, stretching back to Yalies emerging from secret societies in the 1940s and ‘50s to perpetrate blunder after ignorant blunder in American foreign policy, from installing the Shah of Iran and stage-managing the Bay of Pigs fiasco to promoting the Vietnam War and its pathetic successors.

There’s a legitimate difference between being discreet and being silenced—between exercising a sound judgment not to do or say something and accepting blindly that something is simply “not done.” Agreeing to take certain things off the table can help a discussion and freedom of thought at times. But Yale today is doing little better than its old secret societies at teaching students when and how to draw such distinctions on behalf of a real republic, not a corporate state.

I want to tell you about some Yalies who broke courageously and constructively with both the self-censorship of fear and the self-censorship of seduction. I witnessed exactly that right here at this war memorial when I was 19, almost 45 years ago, and it has never left my mind.

One cold, windy, wintry morning in 1968 I was plodding across this plaza on my way to a class when I noticed about fifty undergraduates gathered silently around three students and the university chaplain, William Sloane Coffin, Jr. One of the three was speaking almost inaudibly because of the gusting wind and also because he was trying to find his voice against fear. “The government claims we’re criminals,” he was saying, as I leaned in to listen. “But we say that it is the government that is criminal in waging this war.” He and the other two were about to hand Coffin their draft cards to refuse conscription into the Vietnam War upon their graduation three months later.

Coffin, speaking in the idiom of an American civil religion that too few liberals these days understand, was there to bless this demonstration of a civic courage that too few national-security conservatives understand. Near us in the Woolsey Hall rotunda were all those names of young Yale graduates, graven in icy marble, under the admonition, “Courage Disdains Fame and Wins It.” The seniors before us were challenging us to join them in disdaining fame, too, but without hope of a memorial’s posthumous regard.

“Believe me,” said Coffin, himself a veteran of the CIA in Eastern Europe at the end of World War II, “I know what it’s like to wake up feeling like a sensitive grain of wheat lookin’ at a millstone.” It was a burst of Calvinist humor, a jaunty defiance of Established Power in the name of a higher one, and some of us grasped at that ray of hope, because we were scared. For all we knew, these guys were about to be arrested on the spot. Certainly if they refused induction three months later, they’d commit a felony punishable by five years in prison, and we felt arrested morally by their example because we were all carrying draft cards just like theirs in our wallets.

Yet something in these seniors’ bearing made them seem as patriotically American as Rosa Parks had been when she’d refused, only twelve years before, to move to the back of a bus in Montgomery. In both cases, the protesters broke the law openly and non-violently to evoke and elevate something noble in the very concept of law and in the whole society. Parks didn’t use freedom of speech to call the bus driver a racist mo-fo; and while the seniors did say that the government was criminal—and they would be proven right about that—by taking their stand with readiness to accept the penalty, they were also crediting the rest of us, whether we were bystanders or war supporters, with some integrity by speaking to us with clear dignity even as they exposed our shortcomings. By breaking the law in the way I’ve described, they were upholding law.

They were resisting the government in the name of a republic that stands for more than patriotic salutes to nationalist “blood and soil,” more than chants of “Yoo Ess Ay!”, and more even than global free-markets whose riptides are dissolving the republican virtues and sovereignty those Yale seniors were trying to redeem. The German philosopher Jurgen Habermas marveled at such demonstrations of “constitutional patriotism,” not flag-lapel patriotism.

Nathan Hale affirmed a nascent constitutional patriotism against the established but corrupted government and military of his time, and true Tea Partiers dumped a multi-national corporation’s property into Boston Harbor to protest its collusion with a corrupt government. As I watched the seniors speaking in 1968, that old civil society of the American republic seemed at least briefly to be rising from a long slumber and walking and talking again, re-moralizing the state and the law. And as Coffin intoned Dylan Thomas’ admonition, “Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light,” my silent, wild confusion gave way to something like awe.

I tell you this not just because it happened right here where we’re sitting, and not because anyone’s going to criminalize what we say here. I tell it because the Yale administration -- which believes and claims that it’s acting on behalf of liberal education as surely as the architects of the Vietnam War believed and claimed that they were acting for freedom and democracy -- has signed a pact with, and sold its name to, a tightly controlled corporate city-state that does criminalize and otherwise intimidate people who would speak as I’m doing here.

I’m also trying to make a point about the nature of protest. Good protest requires giving clear reasons for what you are doing, even if others aren’t listening, and it requires making a binding commitment to uphold what you are affirming, not just sounding off against what you are opposing. I and other critics of the Singapore venture aren’t wishing it ill or trying to provoke an upheaval or scandal; we anticipate that the project will proceed all too smoothly, because the subtle, ubiquitous and cunning self-censorship of fear that I witnessed at the “Singapore Uncensored” panel and described in the Huffington Post is meshing all too smoothly these days with the self-censorship of seduction I’ve seen growing at Yale.

The university is transforming the college from the crucible of civic-republican leadership that I saw in 1968 into a career-networking center and cultural galleria for a new global elite that doesn’t answer to any republican polity or moral code.

I’m not idealizing the past. Although Howard Dean was a freshman here in 1968 and John Kerry had graduated two years before, George W. Bush and his gang lived near me in Davenport—he was president of my roommate’s fraternity, DKE—and not everyone considered the Vietnam War a duplicitous folly. What I’m trying to show is that protest for protest’s sake accomplishes little if the protesters aren’t as serious about making clear what they’re affirming as they are about making clear what they’re exposing and opposing.

What the civil-rights movement learned from Gandhi, and what every generation must re-learn to keep a republic or a liberal-arts college, is that these institutions are fragile because they have to rely on citizens’ or students’ taking to heart and acting on certain public virtues and beliefs that neither the institutions nor markets themselves can do all that much nourish or protect and that, indeed, their wealth and power may actually weaken.

Only a civic love that’s disciplined and canny enough to renew an institution’s or republic’s higher purposes, by challenging its misjudgments without destroying it, can accomplish anything lasting. Otherwise, as we see elsewhere, twitter revolutions and armed upheavals can intensify chaos.

Only an activism that balances group organizing with the irreducibly personal conscience and courage that enabled Rosa Parks and the Yale seniors to risk their standing and security in order to “arrest” others morally can awaken more people to the subtle dangers to freedom.

In other words, a protest strategy has to draw on some wellsprings of civic faith, as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. and even secular activists like Vaclav Havel and Adam Michnik in Eastern Europe certainly did.

When self-censorship is generated by fear of a state or a corporate employer, that fear leaves no fingerprints, as Slate political editor William Dobson puts it in his new book [*The Dictator’s Learning Curve*](http://www.amazon.com/Dictators-Learning-Curve-Inside-Democracy/dp/0385533357). In university administrations and faculties, too, there are no smoking memos that order people not to say this or that. Yet Yale’s tenurati and emeriti conduct too much of their communication only with arched eyebrows and significant silences, not with the candor and robust give and take that are the oxygen of self-government.

What troubles me even more is the culture of enthusiastic self-censorship that’s been rising among some students, driven not by fear of the state or the Yale Corporation but by the allure of becoming a powerful “inside player” after proving that one can be relied on to keep one’s mouth shut. That self-censorship is destroying the republic far more than riotous street demonstrations are. It is already rendering our political and financial systems illegitimate and unsustainable. The failures of pathological, multi-problem elites in any sector you can name are impossible to gloss over.

Yet that’s precisely what too many of you are being trained to do, and it’s why we read so many books and articles in which Yale is despised. Like fear of power, seduction by power slowly asphyxiates candor and passion in public life and generates cynicism, prurience, and hazing instead.

I’ve already mentioned the "Singapore Uncensored" panel, which no campus publication found the courage to report on honestly. You can read [my report](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-has-gone-to-singapor_b_1476532.html) in the Huffington Post. A few years ago, The Wall Street Journal reported that when Grand Strategy students visited West Point to discuss a book about Iraq with cadets, the Yalies “decided not to record the discussion because they did not want to have ‘views expressed in the spirit of intellectual debate be used against them at a Senate confirmation hearing’” according to Grand Strategy’s associate director, who treated this as something to brag about. Unlike the Yalies, the cadets, who’d soon put their lives on the line to defend free speech, had no fear of recording the session.

And earlier this year, when posts in The Atlantic and Foreign Policy asked why General Stanley McChrystal is teaching an off-the-record course in “leadership” in the Jackson Institute, some of his students leaped into the public arena with a statement insisting robustly that he had never asked them to sign any pledge not to disclose what’s discussed in the class. But, because they refused to talk with anyone about what is said or done in the class, they only wound up proving that their seminar’s supposedly broad, open discussion of “leadership” could not, in fact, be shared even with professors teaching other courses on similar matters who invited McChrystal himself to share his insights, only to be rebuffed.

This sad misunderstanding of scholarly and democratic deliberation bears the same relation to robust freedom of speech as military music bears to music. The students’ claim that freedom is fostered this way unwittingly mimicked the new Yale-National University of Singapore college’s policy of quarantining freedom to the classroom, as if it could flourish that way. Such facile misunderstandings compromised McChrystal’s own leadership on several occasions in Afghanistan before Yale hired him to teach about leadership behind closed doors.

“The sinister fact about censorship...is that it is largely voluntary,” George Orwell wrote in 1944, as his manuscript of Animal Farm was receiving rejection after rejection by frightened British publishers. “Unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without the need for any official ban…. Because of a general tacit agreement that ‘it wouldn’t do’ to mention that particular fact. It is not exactly forbidden to say this or that or the other, but it is ‘not done’ to say it… Anyone who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness....”

A true liberal education would show students how to put words on things in ways that not only expose public corruption but enlarge personal and public hope. Only by doing both can leaders lead in ways that others can trust. What I learned that wintry morning at Yale is that to kindle such trust and the courage it requires, you have to be willing to “think without banisters” at times, as Hannah Arendt put it—she meant, without a predetermined ideology—and to deepen your own and others’ love of a society or an institution by standing intelligently and affirmatively against what’s wrong in it by summoning the better angels of its nature.

(This was originally posted by The Yale Herald at: <http://yaleherald.com/voices/discretion-and-caution-at-yale-have-been-carried-too-far/>



\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**THE YALE DAILY NEWS**

<http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/sep/21/levine-a-more-intellectual-yale/>

## LEVINE: A more intellectual Yale

By [Gabriel Levine](http://www.yaledailynews.com/staff/gabriel-levine/) Friday, September 21, 2012

We’ve been seduced: by a 6.8 percent acceptance rate, by the extracurricular bazaar and by the career fair. Most of all, we’ve been seduced by Tony Blair and Stanley McChrystal. We’ve been convinced, whether we ever think of ourselves in these terms or not, that we are, to use a phrase once employed to describe my high school, the “joyful elite;” that we are engaged, that we are passionate and that we are on our way to careers of real worth and standing.

We’ve been seduced — and we’ve been silenced.

Yesterday afternoon, Jim Sleeper, a lecturer in the Political Science Department, spoke to a seminar-sized group of students about what he terms “the corporatization of Yale.”

In Sleeper’s account, the University, in pursuing legitimate ends such as global engagement and fundraising, has been caught in a tide overwhelming all academia. Yale has been carried away from the values that undergird its educational mission, towards a model of opaque authority that treats students as customers.

While Sleeper’s critique focuses on the Yale administration, he contends that corporatization has also crept into the student body. Students ingratiate themselves to authority figures and take care not to jeopardize their eventual senatorial prospects. But the confusion about the purpose of the University runs deeper: Too often, we at Yale forget that we came here because we are intellectual omnivores.

We prioritize the extracurricular over the curricular. We are overwhelmed as freshmen by the number of organizations in Payne Whitney — most genuinely interesting, most of genuine value. Nothing wrong with that: Yale really is one of the few places on Earth where so many smart, motivated people are together in one place.

Yet somewhere between being swept away by the energy of our peers and the feeling of obligation to do great things with our lives, we develop unctuous habits of mind and action. We seek to distinguish ourselves within a narrow conception of professional success, prizing high grades over challenging courses, default subjects of study over those that might truly interest us and e-board meetings over office hours. These habits draw us away from the very reason Yale attracts us in the first place: academic excellence.

In short, we come to feel that what sets us apart from the rest of the world — those who didn’t get in — isn’t our intellectual prowess but what we surely will accomplish as alumni. Intrinsic motivation is crowded out by the extrinsic. Who, after all, remembers what Tony Blair studied in his Oxford days?

Hopefully, some among us will do great things in and for the world. But for many, the price of that opportunity is too dear: How many of us would say that, above all else, we are seeking out the kind of first-rate education Yale can still offer?

The Yale administration abets this. It hires with pride world leaders who bring titles with enough sheen to surpass the blemishes of their blunders on the world stage, including such gems as the Iraq War. It gestures towards educational principle by instituting distributional requirements and then abandons all pretense of rigor by offering An Issues Approach to Biology and Planets and Stars.

Even Provost Peter Salovey’s signature class, Great Big Ideas, is based on the premise that intellectual exploration is something students can’t be bothered to do outside a class.

Perhaps worst of all, the Admissions Office fails to emphasize — the way, say, the University of Chicago or Swarthmore does — that one comes to Yale to learn.

It’s easy to treat education solely as a path to gainful employment, especially when that’s so hard to find. But Yale can provide haven from those practical pressures. These are the only four years in our lives when we can devote ourselves to thinking.

As the University selects its 23rd president, we students must do everything in our power to ensure that the first priority of those who lead our institution is to rejuvenate its intellectual climate. Of course, President Levin, over the last two decades, has been invaluable in ensuring that the facilities and faculty are of the highest caliber. But those efforts will have been wasted on Yale College if we take no joy in the life of the mind. Now, from the bottom of this University, we must reclaim our highest intellectual ideals and demand that those at the top do the same.

Gabriel Levine is a junior in Trumbull College. Contact him at gabriel.levine@yale.edu.

#### http://presence.mail.aol.com/mailsig/?sn=jimsleep[JimSleeper](http://www.yaledailynews.com/users/JimSleeper/)

I endorse Gabriel Levine's critique of the college's policies and priorities and his assessment of the broader societal pressures on students.

A liberal education is both a luxury and a wound. It's a luxury these days because you do need some freedom from economic and political constraints, as well as from escapist distractions, to really engage a liberal education's lasting challenges to politics and the human spirit. But it's a wound because, if you really do grasp those challenges, you're not likely to become an unctuous conformist.

Here's the text of the talk yesterday at Beinecke Plaza that Levine describes:

<http://yaleherald.com/voices/discretion-and-caution-at-yale-have-been-carried-too-far/>

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

#### [BtL\_2012](http://www.yaledailynews.com/users/BtL_2012/)

Dear Levine,

You seem to have forgotten that educating the whole person requires looking beyond the classroom. Yale does that. Narrower institutions, such as UChicago or Swarthmore, provide focus on academic learning but at the expense of developing every other sort of intelligence, from EQ to the values taught in sports and the organizational skills born of extracurriculars. I suggest taking a few moments away from the books to immerse yourself in one of the vast array of other opportunities that Yale offers. As for the practitioners that Yale brings in, let me say this: the experience they bring is dearly bought. It facilitates a type of learning inaccessible to those who have spent their lives in academia. In the world of politics, business, or international relations, theory often does not survive contact with reality. A whole different set of skills and insights are necessary to be effective in those spheres, and that's what practitioners teach. I believe that Yale exists to educate its students to how change the world positively. Some will do that by writing books or conducting research. Others will do that by shaping policy. Yale does that positive mission a disservice if it does not offer the resources to teach both sets of skills.

Also, these individuals do little to detract from the academic side of Yale. For instance, the International Security Studies (ISS) program funds numerous predoctoral and postdoctoral programs. (FYI, Jim Sleeper has attacked ISS programs and affiliates repeatedly.) While Yalies were unwilling to give up their newspapers in the dining halls during the budget cuts a few years back, the administration cut graduate student slots instead. ISS created a back door to bring in graduate students who carried out research, helped teach, attended and offered lectures--in short, who acted as the lifeblood of an academic institution. Let's face it: some of the "corporate interests" that Sleeper decries cover his paycheck. The size of Yale's endowment is largely due to alumni who "sold out." That isn't to say that graduates should "sell out," but rather to serve as a reminder that, frankly, the University needs a mix of both, and that we ought not categorically castigate a full and legitimate segment of Yale's population. Please do not belittle the vast array of interests Yalies pursue. It is that array, extending beyond the classroom, that makes Yale such a vibrant place. Historically, Yale was no different. If you think that we've only recently been pumping out financiers and lawyers, I'd check your history books again. Finally, every college has a niche--that's why you get to choose where you go. UChicago and Swarthmore do academics. Yale teaches a full person. That's Yale's niche. Maybe it doesn't do it perfectly. Maybe some people balk when presented with the wide array of choices Yale provides. I'm not saying that Yale is a good fit for everyone. But for most of us it is. btl'12

Top of Form

2

[http://yaledailynews.media.clients.ellingtoncms.com/static/ellington_defaults/2.3.0/images/avatars/blank_avatar.gif](http://www.yaledailynews.com/users/ldffly/)

#### [ldffly](http://www.yaledailynews.com/users/ldffly/)

I'm in agreement here. I think the college system is a big source of Yale College's virtue. That's why I hate to see it being weakened in recent years.

Top of Form

#### [JimSleeper](http://www.yaledailynews.com/users/JimSleeper/)

For a full explanation of Btl 2012's observation that people who've "sold out" often contribute generously to Yale, I commend an essay about Yale, "Quarrels With Providence," by Lewis Lapham, that ran in the Yale Alumni Magazine a few months before 9/11. At one point, Lapham recounts,

"I probably talked to as many as 200 people about events at the College in the last quarter of Henry Luce's century, and if the conversation went the distance of a second drink, I invariably could count on the prophet seated across the table at Mory's or standing at the bar of the Yale Club to open a vein of idealism.... [Having been 'wounded' by liberal education at Yale], ]they expected more of themselves than a fortune in vulcanized rubber or a row of condominiums on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The object of a Yale education they remembered as a joining of the proofs of success to those of conscience, the perfect synthesis of the College dialectic never more perfectly expressed than by James C. Thompson, a member of the Class of 1953 who subsequently became both a Chinese scholar and an agent for the Central Intelligence Agency—'Do good, walk humbly with thy God; but become powerful, famous, and, if possible, affluent.'"

The essay is at <http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/01_03/lapham.html>

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**LETTER TO THE YALE DAILY NEWS**

<http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/oct/19/letters-101912/>

**Student perspective on Yale-NUS**

As one of the four professors contacted for “Students Divided over Yale-NUS,” I’d like to make clear what was wrong with the YCC survey’s putting Yale-NUS parenthetically in a question on international presence.

There are many kinds of international presence. It may be great for universities to set up exchanges, collaborative research, even medical and business schools, law clinics and arts programs abroad. For Yale, contracting to set up a whole new liberal-arts college for undergraduates in collaboration with a tightly controlled corporate city-state is not great for Yale in New Haven, especially because the administration won’t disclose the terms of the contract. I’ve written a lot about this since last spring, most recently in a Dissent magazine essay on “global network universities” that I’ll forward to anyone writing to [james.sleeper@yale.edu](mailto:james.sleeper@yale.edu)>.

Not all forms of international presence are equal — or equally justified --- and students should understand the difference.

Jim Sleeper

The writer is a lecturer in Political Science at Yale.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**16.**

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/is-singapore-romneyizing-_b_2075599.html>  
  
(also at Tremeritus, the dissident Singapore website: [http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/11/06/singapore-has-been-romneyizing-yale/ )](http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/11/06/singapore-has-been-romneyizing-yale/)

**November 5, 2012**

**While We've Been Following the Election, Singapore Has Been Romneyizing Yale**

**Jim Sleeper**

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale  
  
Few people combine the moral intensity of prophecy with the strategic savvy of public leadership, but Yale Prof. Christopher Miller has been doing it since May of 2011, when [The Chronicle of Higher Education](http://chronicle.com/article/Yale-in-Singapore-Lost-in/127277/) published his dignified, pointed rebuke to his university's trustees and its president, Richard Levin, for betraying the mission of liberal education.

Miller was the first to criticize Yale outside of the university itself for collaborating with the tightly-controlled, corporate city-state of Singapore to establish a brand-new (and I do mean "brand") undergraduate college in the National University of Singapore that will bear Yale's name, Yale-NUS, even though it won't grant bona-fide Yale degrees.

And now, just before our fateful presidential election, The Chronicle has published an update by Miller depicting the ["Frankenyale"](http://chronicle.com/blogs/conversation/2012/11/02/frankenyale/) that's emerging from that betrayal more rapidly than anyone but a few other inspired and intrepid faculty had prophesied.

Miller's first column noted that Human Rights Watch in 2010 called Singapore "the textbook example of a politically repressive state. Individuals who want to criticize or challenge the ruling party's hold on power can expect to face a life of harassment, lawsuits, and even prison." For several months, he and others chronicled this perverse ethos' sickening backwash in academic life in New Haven.

These warnings have had little effect on Yale's trustees, three of whom worked for a decade as investment advisers to Singapore's government before spearheading Yale's new college there. "Singapore is changing," they and professors they've recruited to the project now insist, citing visits to the country that acquainted them with realities "on the ground."

If trustees spent more time "on the ground" in New Haven, they'd notice that Yale and the U.S. have been changing, too: They've been Singaporizing themselves in ways surprising and distressing enough to prompt other Ivies to promise they'll never commit blunders like Yale's. (Actually, they and other universities are surfing other riptides of global capital, [with consequences I characterized briefly](http://www.jimsleeper.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Dissent-Liberal-Education.pdf) in a Dissent magazine essay sketching New York University's claim to be a "Global Network University.")

Now, after six months of instructive, often saddening struggle against the political and academic consequences of Yale's transformation abroad and at home, Miller is writing to correct any misperception that a Yale faculty resolution of last April that crirticized the Singapore arrangement, followed by Levin's announcement of his resignation this June, represented a lasting victory over the business corporatization of liberal education that drove the Singapore venture.

The project grind ons, drawing much of Yale into its premises and policies, which are metastasizing into what Miller calls "Frankenyale,"a "Brave New University: full of 'best practices,' 'shared services,' [business-corporate] vice presidents, and deanlets, and with a name.... franchised to Singapore. A burgeoning administration and an aggressive Board of Trustees (some with financial interests in Singapore) had far outrun the faculty and changed Yale's profile at home and abroad."

The Yale faculty is waking up, he says, to the fact that many of its own decisions are made by committees of professors appointed by the administration, not elected by the faculty itself. Even the agendas of monthly Yale College Faculty meetings have been determined by administration-appointed committees and deans. Until this month, there was virtually no way for a few tenured professors to get an item onto the agenda of a meeting unless the item was approved by such a committee. (The April resolution criticizing the Singapore project came to a vote only because proponents managed to get an unusual majority of professors at the March meeting to force it onto the agenda for the next one.)

Absent substantive faculty deliberation, Yale has used its Singapore venture to reconfigure liberal education "from the ground up," as one university release put it. Yale-NUS is part of a tail that's wagging the dog of Yale College's transformation from the crucible of civic-republican leadership that it was at its best into a cross between Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In 2016 the university expects that 59% of Yale undergraduates will major in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Medicine -- worthy and urgent pursuits, but not if they come with a sleek, galloping culture of self-censorship, centralized control, commercialization, and ignorance of the humanities' lasting challenges to politics and the spirit.

I've witnessed and described [in several columns here](http://www.jimsleeper.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/singapore-round-up.docx) the exfoliation of just such a culture at Yale, one increasingly like Singapore's, a textbook demonstration that what's good for business is sometimes bad for liberal education and liberal democracy, whose work isn't marketable.

Opposition to this model reflects not some clash of ivory tower moralism with "Asian values" and other civilizational differences, as the Singapore project's defenders insist. We're witnessing not a clash but a seductive, dangerous convergence of Asian capitalist elites' marketing and governing principles with those propounded by Mitt Romney other American business and political elites.

Not surprisingly this model is also embraced by students looking for inside fast tracks to "prosperity" and to willed, well-policed ignorance of the real economic, cultural, and planetary costs to others and even to their own jet-setting selves. Opposition comes mainly from Americans and Singaporeans who still uphold civic-republican virtues and beliefs.

Some fine young Singaporeans and opposition political leaders who share those public virtues and beliefs had hope that Yale's presence might give liberal democracy a little more wiggle room. Miller's "Frankenyale" column suggests that that's unlikely. The prospect of change never justified Yale's risking its own "American values," which also merit respect and require nurture and defense these days, at home as well as abroad. So does the distinctive college culture that has made places like Yale as valuable to democracy as they are vulnerable to global riptides.

Liberal arts colleges shouldn't rush to ride those riptides, but rationalizations for doing so have abounded in the Yale administration's slippery charm offensives, double-talk, and continuing secrecy about Singapore. The university still hasn't disclosed the terms of its contract and other arrangements with the National University of Singapore and, through it, the ruling national People's Action Party.

And the project is consuming so much time and resources -- and generating so much opportunism among some faculty and indignation among others -- that many besides Miller insist that there have to be better ways to engage cultural differences across national borders. (I'd commend Barack Obama's ways over Mitt Romney's).

There must be better ways also to renew liberal education's curricular, pedagogical, and global prospects and to strengthen free inquiry and expression against commercialization and political distortion. Consider the implications:  
  
**Academic Freedom:** In 2009, as Singapore's governing and business elites were romancing their counterparts at Yale, the Association of American University Professors and the Canadian Association of University Teachers issued a report - ["On Conditions of Employment at Overseas Campuses"](http://www.aaup.org/aaup/comm/rep/a/overseas.htm) - warning that:

**as the U.S. and Canadian presence in higher education grows in countries marked by authoritarian rule, basic principles of academic freedom, collegial governance, and nondiscrimination are less likely to be observed. In a host environment where free speech is constrained, if not proscribed, faculty will censor themselves, and the cause of authentic liberal education, to the extent it can exist in such situations, will suffer.**  
  
Ample justifications for this warning are sketched in ["Dangerous Liaisons,"](http://thepolitic.org/?p=1374) a survey of some recent consequences of American universities' collaborations with authoritarian regimes written in a Yale student magazine, The Politic, by Shaunzhiming Tan, a Malaysian well-acquainted with Singapore who earned a master's degree in international relations at Yale in 2012.

And the AAUP statement references [a UNESCO resolution on academic freedom](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13144&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) that can't be reconciled with Singapore's policy. Here's UNESCO's statement, and, following it, in stark contrast, Singapore's protocols:

**The publication and dissemination of the research results obtained by higher-education teaching personnel should be encouraged and facilitated with a view to assisting them to acquire the reputation which they merit, as well as with a view to promoting the advancement of science, technology, education and culture generally. To this end, higher-education teaching personnel should be free to publish the results of research and scholarship in books, journals and databases of their own choice and under their own names, provided they are the authors or co-authors of the above scholarly works. The intellectual property of higher-education teaching personnel should benefit from appropriate legal protection, and in particular the protection afforded by national and international copyright law.**

In contrast, here's what Yale's host, the National University of Singapore, states in "Policies Relating to University Intellectual Property":

**The University shall be the sole arbiter as to whether any Intellectual Property is discovered, created or developed in the course of University Research" (p. 9 of 21); The University Member shall be deemed to have granted to the University an irrevocable, unconditional, perpetual, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty free license to use, print, publish, reproduce, copy and publicly distribute the University Member's Authored Work, in whatever form...." and "The University may at any time require an assignment of the University Member's copyright over an Authored Work for the purposes of commercialising the Authored Work...**

**Student Freedom:** Even the students' freedoms of expression are chilled, when not asphyxiated, by [Singapore's Public Order Act,](http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/aol/search/display/view.w3p;ident=e2b272d2-7a20-4498-b0ef-d28dfa5cd99b;query=Status%3Acurinforce%20Type%3Aact,sl%20Content%3A%22public%22%20Content%3A%22order%22%20Content%3A%22act%22;rec=0;resUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fstatutes#HIT18) which reads as if it had been written by George Orwell and Franz Kafka. I have covered this controversy, and Yale's prevarications about it, here before.

As one Yale faculty member characterizes the situation, "Students can hold events on campus, but no one else can witness them, let alone come 'from outside' to address them."

Yale faculty who've been recruited to set up and run the new college have been assuring their skeptical colleagues back in New Haven that they've reached firm "understandings" with Singapore protecting student freedom, academic freedom, and the autonomy of the college. But they keep declining to disclose the terms fully enough to assure anyone familiar with authoritarian regimes' Orwellian double-speak and opportunistic promises.

In a nation of only 5.3 million people living on fewer square kilometers than New York City, officials and functionaries of a government and ruling party that have run the country uninterruptedly since 1965 (and have fired several national-university faculty members for reasons arbitrary and obscure) hold very tight control of the university (and of major newspapers and television stations). The student newspaper and dissident blogsites have been much more creditable, but as Singapore is "changing" a little, Yale and the U.S. are Singaporizing a little, too, in ways that Miller and I and others have described.

**Whose University?** For example, the Yale administration has created a parallel university right in New Haven whose curricula and pedagogy lie outside of most faculty deliberation and assessment in the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs and national-security programs funded by conservative donors.

The Jackson Institute advertised its ["Gateway to Global Affairs"](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2011/sep/01/shopping-period-dispatch-new-lineup-gateway-global/) course last fall with a statement by director James Levinsohn -- whose professorship is named for and funded by one of the Yale trustees long active in Singapore as an investment adviser - that in a module of the course, a retired British general and the retired American general Stanley "McChrystal are going to do six weeks on essentially what a Yale College undergrad should know about the Middle East or Iraq. I think this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for our students to hear about Iraq and Afghanistan from the guys that ran the war.... It ought to be pretty amazing."

What's amazing is the presumption that what a Yale graduate should know about the Middle East and Iraq can be taught by McChrystal, who also teaches another course, on leadership, but whose own leadership came under careful scrutiny in several dimensions until he was fired by President Obama. Discussions in that leadership course have been kept strictly closed to anyone but its students, [who've collaborated enthusiastically](http://www.washingtonspectator.org/index.php/Blog/entry/yale-singapore-and-the-business-of-liberal-arts-a-galloping-culture-of-self-censorship.html) in the silencing.

It's understandable, and in some ways admirable, that students attune themselves to teachers' expectations and promises, but a liberal education should nourish rigorous critical thinking.

**Ironies in gay struggle.** In his first column Miller, who is gay, noted that Singapore's regime still criminalizes male homosexuality and wrote that "Yale has no business establishing a campus in a state where some of its own faculty members are subject to arrest because of who they are." That the regime tolerates gay life in practice as a profit center and a showcase for "liberalism" that blunts criticisms from places like Yale has distracted some people's attention from its sinuous but decisive repression of other minorities, political critics, scholars, and journalists. The regime could still bring criminal charges against gay people whom it wants to silence for political reasons that it wouldn't need to disclose.  
  
Unlike Miller, some at Yale have been fooled by this or have become active apologists for the regime. Prof. George Chauncey, an historian of gay life in New York, has become an unlikely apologist for Yale's project. The same week that Miller's second Chronicle column on Frankenyale appeared, Chauncey organized and introduced [a lecture by Lynette Chua](http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/nov/01/nus-professor-addresses-gay-rights/), a professor at the National University of Singapore whose research concentrates on the relationship between law and the gay rights movements in Southeast Asia.

Chua didn't exonerate the regime or make the gay rights struggle look easy. "If you want to get somewhere without ending up in jail," she said, "you have to employ non-confrontational tactics." Still, as the Yale Daily News put it, "Despite having a human rights record that has faced significant criticism, Singapore has been developing a grassroots gay rights movement since the 1990s."

That's music to the ears of apologists for Yale's Singapore venture. The same news story reported Chauncey's hope that the lecture "will provide the Yale community with a more nuanced, fuller understanding of the gay rights movement in Singapore. He added that the lecture was not meant to address the controversy about the establishment of Yale-NUS College,... though he said he thinks the campus debate about Yale-NUS would inevitably provide a context for the event."

Chauncey's statement bears an oddly close resemblance to part of a panel discussion, titled "Singapore Uncensored," that was presented last spring by other Singaporeans at Yale. It opened with a brief slide show of gay dancers in Singapore, and the subsequent discussion included comments, Skyped in from Singapore, by Yi Sheng, a gay-activist brother of one of the panel's chief apologists for the regime, E Ching Ng.

Like Chauncey last week, the "Singapore Uncensored" panelists emphasized that they weren't trying to address the controversy about Yale's venture in Singapore but only to present a "more nuanced" view of actual life there than critics of Yale's venture had done.

"You can say anything you want on campus," Yi Sheng told the Yale audience, if only because "the government doesn't care what most academics say," but then he modulated that claim by telling of a gay friend whose teaching contracts were suddenly terminated with no explanation. Then Yi Sheng added that he wasn't sure his friend's being gay was the reason for his dismissal. It might have been something more political or more strictly academic, because other gay faculty weren't being dismissed. In fact, there's been "a rapid rise in acceptance" of gays in recent years, he said, because "the government has realized that the country can make a lot of money from having more gays."

But other constraints on other freedoms haven't been loosening. Quite the opposite, [as I've show](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/as-yales-blunder-deepens-_b_1569495.html)n in earlier columns here. On the panel, E-Ching Ng ignored her brother's warning that academic freedom might escape surveillance and suppression "only if Yale NUS faculty are really willing to exercise their freedom and advocate for it outside of classroom."

Here was a plea for help that no one in authority at Yale has answered. It occurred to me then that Singapore's ruling party has figured out that if it lets some Singaporeans showcase gay struggle to liberal American audiences, they'll decide that while Singapore is far from perfect, it's moving in the right direction; thus reassured, Yale students and faculty can be relied on not to raise their voices about much else and to acquiesce in arrangements Yale may later regret. Perhaps Chauncey will answer Yi Sheng's plea by also elucidating struggles against Singapore's suppression of the rights of migrant workers and academic freedom.

**What next?** As more of Yale's faculty bestirs itself to take control of its agendas and decisions and ensure more voice for lectors and others who've had no voting power, it may move toward revitalizing an AAUP chapter or creating a faculty senate as strong as those that have saved liberal education from the misapprehensions and misadventures of university trustees and administrators. And it should demand that Yale's name be removed from the Singapore project, even if that triggers a costly buy-out clause in the contract whose terms the administration won't disclose.

As Miller warns in the Chronicle, "If the promised 'feedback loop' between Singapore and New Haven succeeds, the two institutions in tandem will produce a new generation of conformist, dissent-averse managers and executives, particularly well-suited for the new global boardroom and tea at Davos."

That may be precisely the Yale trustees' goal, but liberal education should nourish and provoke something better. Yale may well have gone to Singapore because it sensed that it was failing to do better in New Haven and because its governors have embraced a neo-liberal, "World Is Flat" model, instead.

But the world isn't flat. It has abysses that are opening suddenly in the ground below our feet and even in our hearts, right here in the United States. The controversy isn't mainly about the sins of Singapore; it's about the weaknesses of liberal democracy in the grip of global riptides that are dissolving republican sovereignty and virtues everywhere.

Yale was founded to show future leaders not just how to manage their way around those depths but how to plumb them and face the demons in them. If they can't do that, they'll only create more Frankenyales.

**17.**

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/blame-the-latest-israelar_b_2147509.html>

also on the Singapore dissident website Tremeritus: <http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/11/20/blame-the-latest-israel-arab-war-on-singapore/>

and:

<http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/11/26/singapores-military-spending/>

November 17, 2012

**[politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/politics/)**

**Blame the Latest Israel-Arab War on.... *Singapore?***

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

[**Jim Sleeper**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

*Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University*

Israel's last big military venture into Gaza began soon after Barack Obama's 2008 election and before his 2009 inauguration. It's more than ironic that this is happening again between Obama's re-election and his coming re-installation.

But here I won't get into conspiracy theories or into "who started it" in 1936, 1948, 1967, 1973, 2006, 2009, or now. [Been there, done that,](http://www.jimsleeper.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/israels-tragedy1.pdf) and, tragically, not enough has changed since the last time.

What I do have now that I didn't in 2009 is a small part of the story of Israel's militarization that sheds light on Israel's inclinations and strategic judgments. Before telling it, let me emphasize that ever since I assessed the first Gaza war, online and [on NPR](http://www.wnyc.org/shows/bl/2009/jan/15/gaza-latest/), I've considered Hamas' end game and how it does business inexcusable. But equally so -- and arguably more stupid, because unsustainable -- has been Israel's long "holding pen" strategy against Gaza and, arguably, the West Bank.

Now that each side has again provoked the other's darkest impulses, I can offer only a bit of background to the tactically and technologically clever but strategically and politically bone-headed conduct of Israeli politicians. It concerns a country whose similarities to Israel are a lot more striking than its obvious differences.

In 1965, when Singapore declared its independence, its first prime-minister (and, for many years, its virtual dictator) Lee Kuan Yew asked Israel to design, set up, and supervise its military machine. Israel did precisely that. How successfully? Just this month, the Bonn International Center for Conversion published a world-wide survey ranking Israel the world's most militarized nation -- and Singapore the second-most.

You can read about the Bonn Center's ranking [here](http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/11/israel-ranked-as-worlds-most-militarised-nation/). To find out how Israel and Singapore actually got together on this, you'd have to have been reading accounts like this one on ["Israel's Deep Dark Secret Love Affair"](http://www.haaretz.com/a-deep-dark-secret-love-affair-1.128671) with Singapore in *Haaretz,* one of several Israeli newspapers that, even when partisan, are far more open about Israel itself than major U.S. news organizations are.

I knew nothing about this love affair in 2009, when, while watching office parks and eight-lane expressways gliding by my window on a Tel Aviv-to-Haifa train, I mentioned to my wife that Israel has become the Singapore of the Middle East. I had no idea then that Singapore had long been the Israel of Southeast Asia not only economically and geo-politically -- as a glance at a couple of maps and statistical tables will suggest -- but militarily, with all the intimacy of that "Deep, Dark, Secret Love Affair" that's now nearly 50 years old.

The similarities of these two little engines that could (and did) become models of state capitalism with high per capita incomes and growth rates haven't often been noted. Both have been governed and stamped by the British. Both have populations of 5 or 6 million, including 2 or 3 million second-class citizens and non-citizens, some of them migrants, some of them openly despised.

Both Israel and Singapore are non-Muslim, and both face much larger, less-than-friendly Muslim neighbors -- in Singapore's case, Indonesia and Malaysia, the latter of which expelled Singapore in 1965 (or lost it, depending on who's telling), amid high racial tensions.

Yet another striking analogy involves the fact that the politically dominant majority of Singapore's population consists not of indigenous natives but of "overseas" Han Chinese," whose literary and commercial strengths long ago earned them the sobriquet "the Jews of Southeast Asia" and the envy and resentment due a wealthy, elitist, and supple minority.

Like Jews who live outside Israel, the Han Chinese are minorities in most countries outside China, but here a real difference dogs the similarity. The similarity is that in Singapore, the Chinese are 75% of the population, and Malays are 15%, Indians 8%' in Israel, Jews are 76%, with the rest mostly Palestinian Arabs, most of them Muslim some of them Christian. In Singapore the Chinese have a status, power, and reputation that will sound familiar to Palestinians and others who regard Israel's Jews as arrogant interlopers.

The difference is that Israel's Jews, unlike Singapore's Chinese, have never been the rooted, dominant majority in any other country besides ancient Israel itself, where Hebrew was spoken 700 years before Arabic. And there are other differences of consequence: Singapore is an island, a micro-state smaller in area and population than New York City's five boroughs. Israel is 30 times larger, geographically, and in some ways more dangerous and endangered.

That said, Singapore's and Israel's situations at international crossroads of trade and power at opposite ends of the Asian continent incline them both to serve as investment and cultural entrepots and as political mediators. Without oil, water, or minerals to speak of, both live mainly by their wits, which is to say by trade. But both are compelled to militarize, and both have formidable armed forces, with defense budgets that consume 5 or 6% of GDP, a proportion much higher than that of all but a few other nations, including even China.

The *International Political Review* calls Singapore's armed forces "the most technologically advanced military in Southeast Asia" and notes that while everyone in the region fears China and no one could prevail against a Chinese onslaught, China fears that any such onslaught would bring a very painful Singapore Sting.

The punchline to all this, not very funny but very, very true, is that no sooner had Singapore gained its independence in August 1965 than its British-educated founder and first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew (whose eldest son is now prime minister), invited Israel to organize his armed forces, because he saw all the parallels between the two young nations that I've just noted.

On Christmas Eve, 1965, six Israel Defense Force officers and their families moved to Singapore, followed by waves of consulting teams that established the country's "Total Defense" combat doctrines, its recruitment and training regimens, its intelligence services, and its state-of-art arms procurement.

"We are not going to turn Singapore into an Israeli colony," chief of staff and future prime minister Yitzhak Rabin admonished these teams. He needn't have worried. Singapore's highly intelligent, eloquent, ruthlessly energetic dictator knew how to collaborate without being colonized, something one couldn't say about some of the Americans he's been collaborating with most recently. He was as deft and determined as the Han Chinese in other countries who, even as minorities, dominate major industries, banks, and even English-language media in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

The Israelis militarized Singaporean society, even with Israeli military songs, to which Lee's soldiers marched in one of Singapore's first real Independence Day parades. Less symbolically, they showed Singapore how to establish military conscription in a hitherto un-militaristic populace that, according to at least one survey, ranked the profession of soldier far below that of thief, while placing artists, teachers and merchants on top.

So determined was Lee to adjust this that when Israel won the Six-Day War in 1967, vindicating his decision to work with it and boosting Singaporeans' confidence in their Jewish military mentors, Singapore's UN delegation surprised other Third World nations by abstaining on a resolution condemning Israel.

Israelis persuaded Lee to make conscription universal to tap well-educated, prosperous Han Chinese as well as the Malay, Indian, and other minorities. That produced an intelligent, dynamic army and a disciplined male student population: Singaporean university students receive substantial tuition subsidies after military service but must accept what the National University of Singapore calls "a service bond under the terms of the tuition grant to work for a Singapore-registered company for three years upon completion of their degrees so as to discharge some of their obligations to the Singapore public." In some professions, the mandatory service is to government agencies, for up to six years. The whole regimen, as most Israelis would recognize, produces more than a little griping, but little softness or self-indulgence.

All this has posed an exquisitely discomfiting dilemma for Yale's neoconservatives, who never hesitate to ridicule leftists who've collaborated with authoritarian "Third World" regimes. Now they find themselves looking into a mirror and falling spookily silent about Yale's [collaboration with Singapore](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-has-gone-to-singapor_b_1476532.html) in setting up an undergraduate liberal arts college.

When Shaunziming Tan published [a damning essay](http://thepolitic.org/dangerous-liaisons/) about Yale's and other Western universities' collaborations with such regimes, Michael Rubin of the neoconservative flagship Commentary Magazine commented, quite rightly, that

"Foreigners flock to American universities because of their freedom and opportunity. How sad it is then, as Tan describes, that so many American university presidents are willing to compromise basic values in order to make a quick buck, often padding endowments which already reach billions of dollars. That will not bring progress; it is simply intellectual prostitution."

Unlike Yale in Singapore, Israel was smart enough to keep its name out of the public eye at the time, eager though it was to advance its national interests and prestige.

So it's noteworthy -- and perhaps commendable -- that Rubin condemned Yale and other universities for accommodating to an authoritarian regime that has worked so closely with Israelis without drawing criticism from defenders of authoritarian regimes at *Commentary*.

At least this should teach other neoconservatives what Yitzhak Rabin and Lee Kuan Yew always understood and what I learned after my epiphany on the road to Haifa: matters like these cannot be viewed clearly through binary, left-vs.-right lenses: Leftists who supported "people's liberation struggles" by helping to harvest sugar cane in Cuba or crops in early Israeli socialist kibbutzim believed that nation-building requires disciplined struggle and sacrifice to lay the groundwork for prosperity and, with it, national pride, often at cost to individual freedom.

But even in the 1960's, when Singapore was getting underway, it was already more authoritarian in its nation-building than Israel had been, at least among its own Jewish citizens, but even to some extent among Arabs who became citizens of Israel. Perhaps that was because Jews, fleeing recent destruction and facing new/ancient enemies with Western Enlightenment traditions, some of them as socialists, bonded in relatively more democratic, egalitarian ways.

Although Singaporean society hasn't had to be on military alert as much as Israel, neither has it become the Switzerland of Southeast Asia, a region bristling with huge armies. Singapore does have enough economic and military power to take another bit of advice that the Israelis of Rabin's time gave it and should take more seriously themselves than they have under Netanyahu: Keep your vast military under the radar, if possible while strengthening and showcasing your diplomatic, cultural, and educational offerings.

Singapore is trying to become the education center of Southeast Asia by setting up a liberal arts college that bears Yale's imprimatur, while controlling the showcase as tightly as it does the military. "Increasingly we are noted for taking up the knowledge industries and doing cutting edge stuff," says Ambassador Chan.

Note, though, that, in this official view, education is an "industry," perhaps even a "cutting edge" weapon of sorts. Can any liberal democracy ever hope to flourish while pacing a gilded but iron cage?

**18.**  
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/at-last-singapore-opposit_b_2207424.html>

http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/11/30/at-last-singapore-opposition-leaders-can-tell-yale-the-truth/

November 29, 2012

# [[college](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/college/)

**At Last, Singapore Opposition Leaders Can Speak Truth to Yale**

## [Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University

Communication among Yale faculty and administrators is so often conducted with arched eyebrows and significant silences that the college, home of Skull and Bones, has been known more for its elite "understandings" than for its freedoms of speech. But that consensus may be disrupted a bit this Friday, November 29, when two brave, whip-smart leaders of Singapore's beleaguered opposition parties [will finally get their say in New Haven.](http://www.yale.edu/seas/SingaporePanel)

To appreciate how important this can be, you need to know that, four days before the opposition leaders will speak, a panel discussion was hastily scheduled at Yale last Monday at which Pericles Lewis, the former Yale professor and first president of the undergraduate college-cum global career training center in Singapore, which Yale will open in September in collaboration with that tightly-controlled city-state at its National University of Singapore (NUS), assured listeners that students at the Yale-NUS College "can invite whom they want" to speak to their groups on campus.

But Lewis didn't say whether everyone whom Yale-NUS students invite will actually be able to come and speak to them. The answer is infamously murky in law and in practice, as Lewis' Monday session itself unfortunately reminded me: Although it was officially "open to the Yale community," no one at Yale had received notice of it until that very morning, seven hours before the event, and some had received no notice at all.

This characteristic commingling of lofty principle and shady practice yielded a small audience of 30, almost all of it affiliated with Yale-NUS or aspiring to be. But it also yielded a Yale Daily News student reporter who, told of the event 15 minutes before it began, produced an anodyne [account](http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2012/11/27/yale-nus-panel-mulls-student-life/) that missed much of what happened, but told "the Yale community" all the administration wanted to hear.

The really important thing Lewis didn't say was that two Singapore opposition-party leaders who've been "disinvited" from speaking at the National University of Singapore itself and who've endured years of slick, duplicitous and steely harassment by the country's eternal ruling party [-- would speak at Yale four days after his own discussion.](http://www.yale.edu/seas/SingaporePanel)

Indeed, they're speaking at Yale only after the university has hosted three Singapore-friendly panel discussions since last spring (one of them called, disingenuously, "Singapore Uncensored") in an effort to "dispel misconceptions about Singapore" supposedly spread by critics of Yale's venture there.

The uniform message: "Singapore isn't perfect, but it's changing" -- a truism that conceals harsh truths that may be "uncensored" on a platform at Yale for the first time on Friday thanks not to Lewis, Yale-NUS, or Yale's administration, but to the undergraduate Yale International Relations Association, which approached some faculty on Yale's Southeast Asia Council last summer. The two organizations are co-sponsoring this unprecedented event.

We may even learn something about why the Johns Hopkins University, Australia's University of New South Wales, and New York University's [Tisch School of the Arts](http://www.thecobrapaper.com/viewarticle.aspx?smid=514&aid=12348) have [all pulled their programs out of Singapore](http://theonlinecitizen.com/2012/11/john-hopkins-unsw-and-now-tisch-when-will-we-ever-learn/), and about why faculty at the Claremont Colleges rebuffed overtures to establish an undergraduate liberal-arts college in Singapore after Britain's prestigious [Warwick University cancelled its own effort](http://www.yawningbread.org/apdx_2005/imp-226.htm) there and before Yale rushed in where they'd declined to tread.   
  
At last, "the Yale community" will hear Kenneth Jeyaretnam, secretary-general of Singapore's tiny opposition Reform Party, Chee Soon Juan, secretary-general of the somewhat larger Singapore Democratic Party, and a commenter (and possible critic) of unquestioned integrity, the political scientist Meredith L. Weiss, a Yale Ph.D. now at the State University of New York in Albany who studies comparative politics in Southeast Asia.

Jeyaretnam himself holds a Double First Class Honours degree in Economics from University of Cambridge and has long experience in finance; he's been [watch-dogging the Singapore government's](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kenneth-jeyaretnam/open-letter-to-christine-_b_1637228.html) investment funds. Partly because his father, Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam, an early opposition leader in Parliament, was persecuted infamously by Singapore's eternal ruling party, Jeyaretnam hasn't been treated as harshly. But not only was he "disinvited" from speaking at NUS last year after receiving an invitation; his own son was rejected by one of Singapore's elite secondary schools (from which several of Singapore's defenders at Yale have graduated), [a characteristic ruling party move](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-into-the-abyss_b_1678428.html) "clearly politically motivated to isolate me," he says.

Jeyaretnam's co-panelist on Friday, Chee Soon Juan, secretary-general of the Singapore Democratic Party, was fired by the National University of Singapore from his position as a lecturer in neuropsychology in 1993 after he joined the opposition party. In another characteristic ruling party move, Chee, who holds a PhD from the University of Georgia, was sued for defamation, convicted of it, bankrupted for it, and imprisoned when he tried to contest his dismissal.

Although relations among Singapore's opposition parties aren't cordial, Jeyaretnam, with courage and nobility reminiscent of his father, spoke out against [the renewed persecution of Chee several months ago](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/as-yales-blunder-deepens-_b_1569495.html), when the latter was barred from leaving Singapore to give a speech to a human rights organization in Oslo -- the same month, ironically, when Yale University President Richard Levin came to Singapore to give a speech celebrating Pericles Lewis' ascent to the Yale-NUS presidency.

Yale, which is quick [to put gay rights struggles in Singapore into a perspective](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/is-singapore-romneyizing-_b_2075599.html) that acknowledges the regime's abuses but emphasizes its progress, has had no panel on [the miseries of migrant workers](http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/11/27/first-strike/) such as the 100 bus drivers from China who tried to hold an illegal strike against their bus company just when Walmart workers walked off their jobs on Black Friday.

So, when guests of Jeyaretnam's and Chee's talent and experience do speak to the Yale community on Friday, will the Yale administration welcome and celebrate them? Or will it be too busy promoting, almost luridly now, Yale's marketing bid to rising upper-middle class Asian parents and their children who aspire to international careers after a few years under the Yale imprimatur in Singapore?

The Yale-NUS brochure distributed at Lewis' Monday forum opens with more photos of Yale's New Haven campus in all its glory than of Singapore, and no wonder: "As one of the first Yale-NUS students, you will start your education on the Yale campus in the United States." Yes, in the summer of 2013, all new Yale-NUS students and faculty will live in a Yale residential college in-New Haven for a month-long ["immersion" experience.](http://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/index.php/living/inaugural-summer-term-at-yale.html)

And what will they be "immersed" in? I'm all for collegial bonding and of dialogue across differences, and I don't begrudge any Singapore-destined freshmen from Southeast Asia a first-class trip to the U.S. that mimics a luxurious Yale Alumni tours of, say, ancient Greece and the old Levant: There will be walking tours of colonial Boston, bus tours through the amazing "diversity of New York City, ecology-sensitive forays to rustic New England sites, a real New England clambake, even a final dinner at the elegant Yale Club of New York, where Yale-NUS grads will later take their business clients to dinner because they'll join the Yale Alumni "community" even though Yale-NUS won't grant bona fide Yale degrees.

The [brochure guarantees](http://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/images/doc/apply/yale-nus-college-prospective-student-brochure.pdf) every Yale-NUS student "an internship in Singapore or abroad. Leading multinational companies such as American Express, Chanel, Google and Singapore Airlines and NGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund and the UN [mais, bien sur!] are partnering with Yale-NUS to offer top internships."

The brochure then presents a two-page map of the world showing sites of possible overseas internships in "one of 40 global programs exclusive to Yale and Yale-NUS students. Study at Yale in the United States or at one of the NUS Overseas colleges in entrepreneurial hubs like Silicon Valley."

There is also, by the way, a place called Singapore -- "a global center of business and entrepreneurialism, a cross-roads of diverse cultures, one of the safest cities in the world, with a growing art scene and a devotion to excellence that is just as celebrated as its food."

Who wrote such pap? Probably the public-relations maestro who orchestrated the [brochure](http://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/images/doc/apply/yale-nus-college-prospective-student-brochure.pdf)'s glowing testimonials from people who never attended Yale-NUS College, because it hasn't opened yet, but assure prospective students and their parents that "The NUS ecosystem is very entrepreneurial. Not only did I gain the knowledge required for staring my tech company but I also met like-minded people to do it with."

"Where will a Yale-NUS Education Take you? Anywhere you want," crows another [page](http://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/index.php/leading.html) of the brochure, listing "notable graduates" of Yale such as "Mr. Fareed Zakaria, Host of CNN's Emmy-nominated Fareed Zakaria GPS, Editor at large of TIME, Washington Post columnist, and New York Times bestselling author."

Oops: Zakaria, [with whom I have had my differences,](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/the-showdown-at-yale_b_1401122.html) resigned from Yale's governing corporation after committing plagiarism, but that doesn't matter to talented young people desperate to get out of Malaysia or Indonesia or Singapore itself and to join the new global elite after a few years at Yale-NUS before transferring or hiring themselves out to people who they dream will carry them to Davos.

Yale-NUS' repeated hints that its students may get a chance to transfer to Yale itself, coupled with elaborate offerings of global-internships and career-placement services, tell the true story behind this venture, initiated in the first place by three current or recent members of Yale's governing corporation -- G. Leonard Baker, Charles Ellis, and Charles Waterhouse Goodyear IV -- who've [also been investment advisers to Singapore's](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html) sovereign wealth funds and government investment corporation for more than a decade.

This is no venture to bring liberal education to Asia, but, as its progenitors frankly assert, to re-invent liberal education from the ground up. What this turns out to mean is that liberal education must be fitted out to serve those who are trying to smooth the convergence of Asian state capitalism with American state capitalism.

In other words, Singapore will "loosen up" a little, and a Yale-trained American elite will learn from Singapore how to tighten up a lot: Those [striking Chinese migrant bus drivers in Singapore](http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/11/27/first-strike/) and defiantly absent Wal-Mart workers in the U.S. are part of the same problem for global capital, and you can bet that it isn't workers of the world whom Yale wants to unite, any more than it wanted to bring Kenneth Jeyaretnam and Chee Soon Yuan to New Haven this Friday.

Fortunately, the U.S. isn't yet as tight as Singapore, and Jeyaretnam and Chee may well hope that liberal education at Yale-NUS can loosen things up a little. But the collaboration is already making things harder here, as Yale Prof. Christopher Miller [showed recently](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/is-singapore-romneyizing-_b_2075599.html) in The Chronicle of Higher Education, where he [describes the emergence](http://chronicle.com/blogs/conversation/2012/11/02/frankenyale/) of a new "Frankenyale," one that I think Singapore's ruling party would probably love to show how Americans how to run.

At the hastily announced little Monday session that tried to keep dispelling "misconceptions" about Singapore before Friday's event dispels others, two of the very earnest Singaporean students on a panel did urge Yale administrators to stand up for academic and expressive freedom in their country and to stop sounding so much like Singapore's own bureaucrats.

And Prof. Mira Seo, a classicist who said she'd left the University of Michigan for Yale-NUS because "the humanities are dying" in many American universities but "growing" in Singapore, slipped her new employer's harness a bit by describing herself as one of those "passionate and dorky" humanists who believe that "a liberal education is supposed to make you more free" and that students' "demands on the world around them should be more robust and precise."

This was met with awkward silence, as was her request -- repeated to the audience during the question period by the moderator, Yale Prof. Marvin Chun -- that the Yale students present "reflect with us on what you really love about Yale here and what you'd like to change." That request was met by a long and embarrassing silence because there were only two or three non-Singaporean Yale students in the room.

Perhaps that was because the session had been virtually unannounced. Perhaps it reflected students' wariness of these endless, stagey put-ons. But will more students and faculty, and even a journalist or two, show up to hear two really brave Singaporeans tell more of the truth [at 3:30 on a Friday afternoon](http://www.yale.edu/seas/SingaporePanel)?

**19.**

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/singaporeans-win-for-free_b_2249430.html>

December 6, 2012

# [The Huffington Post](https://blogger.huffingtonpost.com/politics/)

**Singaporeans Speak Freely at Yale -- and Against It**

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

**Jim Sleeper**

**Is the Tide Running Out on Liberal Democracy?**

In his immodestly titled and even more immodestly influential book of 2007, [The Future of Freedom](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Fareed+Zakaria%2C+The+Future+of+Freedom), the journalist and Yale trustee Fareed Zakaria advanced the belief of Margaret Thatcher and the late Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Ronald Reagan's U.N. ambassador, that illiberal, authoritarian capitalist regimes like Augusto Pinochet's in Chile and Lee Kuan Yew's in the little corporate city-state of Singapore build the strongest foundations for liberal democracy because they stabilize the national wealth-production upon which a democracy ultimately depends.

But while entrepreneurial capitalism was indeed a progenitor of liberal democracy in the 18th century, where the mind of Margaret Thatcher resides, today's corporate capital, especially in its most recent, casino-finance iterations, has become subversive of democracy. It is undermining the sovereignty and the morals of democratic polities without generating any new frame or faith strong enough to sustain them.

Not surprisingly, democratic movements -- Occupy Wall Street, public-sector union uprisings in Wisconsin -- have returned the favor by becoming equally subversive of finance capital's agendas, and they'll become increasingly so in the years ahead.

Sure, they'll sometimes be desperate and irresponsible. And that will prompt people like Zakaria to interview people like Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and his son Lee Hsien Loong, the current prime minister, at the World Economic Forum, helping them to hint to receptive audiences that most people must be ruled because they really can't govern themselves.

In such hands as these, disparagement of democracy is becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy that sometimes summons an iron fist against national' working classes and migrants, [as Singapore did so decisively this week.](http://theonlinecitizen.com/2012/12/you-can-resign-and-go-to-sbs-the-drivers-were-told/)

This doesn't discomfit Zakaria, who hasn't a democratic bone in his body and savors a lively and imaginative contempt for left-of-center movements that, in his telling, always turn their promises of democracy into engines of oppression more draconian than any dreamed of by stern paternalists like Pinochet and Lee.

Never mind that Chile had democratic and republican roots as deep as Wisconsin's before General Pinochet led a coup that murdered his more intelligent and effective predecessor Salvadore Allende and thousands of supporters; Zakaria's high-capitalist, militaristic music in The Future of Freedom suited Davos' orchestra of high-minded opinion well enough, and the book became a best-seller.

No surprise, then, that last spring [Zakaria joined three fellow Yale trustees,](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/the-showdown-at-yale_b_1401122.html) long-time investment advisers to Singapore's government, to tout Yale's collaboration with that country's ruling party in establishing an undergraduate liberal-arts college to boost Singapore as the center of what its ambassador to the U.S. called "the education industry" in Southeast Asia.

Zakaria soon had to resign from Yale's governing corporation for committing plagiarism in an article for TIME magazine, but by then his neoliberal symphony had already skipped a few bars on its score: Zakaria mistakes the hubbub of capitalist market dynamism for the conversations of citizens deliberating democratically about big decisions shaping their lives.

Zakaria missed or downplayed a reality harsher than any he's had to face: It's that the true framers of constitutional democracies can't just stride onto foundations prepared by illiberal regimes like Singapore's.

As Jonathan Schell shows unforgettably in The Unconquerable World<http://www.amazon.com/Unconquerable-World-Jonathan-Schell/dp/0141016868/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1354763838&sr=1-1&keywords=jonathan+schell%2C+the+unconquerable+world>, democrats such as Mahatma Gandhi, Vaclav Havel, and Martin Luther King, Jr., have to be willing to survive years of nearly paralyzing fear, public smearing, prosecution for "defamation" of the authorities, bankruptcy, imprisonment, and more, in their struggle to displace power-wielders and their crony capitalist collaborators. (That may sound archaic. But look around.)

Most such efforts are suppressed energetically by the powers they challenge, and when they seem irrepressible, they may be crushed violently. "Repression is like making love; it's always easier the second time around," explained Singapore's British-educated, eloquent ruthlessly energetic autocrat Lee while refining this "love" into an art form.

Under the country's Lee's son Lee Hsien Loong, the country is still deep into an energetic, fine-spun suppression of democracy. And world history lately hasn't exactly been smoothing Zakaria's much-herald neo-liberal paths to democratic reform.

**At Last, Singapore's Brave Democrats Speak to Yale**

Against this dark background, two brave framers of democracy in Singapore - Chee Soon Juan, secretary-general of the Singapore Democratic Party, and Kenneth Jeyaretnam, secretary-general of the Reform Party -- created a sensation last week, thrilling many who'd been smothering under Yale's institutional happy talk about Singapore and inciting denial and consternation among the regime's and the Yale administration's operatives.

[Chee and Jeyaretnam flew many thousands of miles to New Haven](http://www.yale.edu/seas/SingaporePanel) to speak out at the invitation of some independent students at the Yale International Relations Association and faculty at the Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies. The third panelist was the political scientist Meredith Weiss, a Yale PhD who teaches at the State University of New York in Albany and presented richly researched, nuanced information that tended to reinforce the opposition leaders' credibility, not because she cast it that way but because of what the reality is:

"The crux of my argument," Weiss said, "is that the Singapore polity offers more space than voice: non-institutional engagement is possible and increasingly common, but institutional channels to express those preferences or perspectives remain absent or curtailed..... The structure of 'civic society' that Singapore's ruling People's Action Party has crafted allows for a degree of feedback and responsiveness, so at least some demands have been subtly met, but in a way that gives no credit to those generating the ideas the PAP chooses to embrace."

The panel organizers had also invited three representatives of the Singapore government, including its recent ambassador to the U.S., Chan Heng Chee. But, perhaps wary of according opposition leaders any recognition beyond what the government has given them in smearing and prosecuting them, the officials declined.

These officials' absence only reinforced Weiss' description of their modus operandi and prompted the organizers to change its title from "Singapore: The Democratic Divide" to "Singapore Today: Opposition Perspectives."

Brief but solid accounts of the two-hour session in the [New Haven Register](http://nhregister.com/articles/2012/11/30/news/new_haven/doc50b98693893cf480368866.txt?viewmode=default) http:// and the [Yale Daily News](http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2012/12/03/singaporean-opposition-leaders-challenge-yale-nus/), and even in a short report in the Singapore government-controlled Today, have prompted thousands of Singaporeans to clamor for the video that will be posted soon on the website of Council on Southeast Asian Studies. (E-mail the Council at [seas@yale.edu](mailto:seas@yale.edu)).

The video is really worth watching, even if you're more interested in academic freedom and human rights generally than in Singapore per se, because Singapore thwarts academic freedom and human rights in ways both sinuous and intimidating.

The panel gave Chee and Jeyaretnam an opportunity to speak to more than 100 Yale faculty and students in person, including many Singaporeans studying in the U.S -- an audience more open and public than any these men have been able to address in Singapore.

Their account of harsh and often insidious realities hidden by a deluge of Yale-NUS promotional happy talk was as wrenching for Singaporean students who've been apologists for their regime, as it was liberating for others who've come to the U.S. partly to escape the stifling self-censorship and conformity that make Singapore seem clean and safe to outsiders.

Some Singaporeans listened with their heads down, as if ducking Jeyaretnam and Chee, whom they'd never heard before. The most assiduous and crafty apologist among them, E Ching Ng, sat silently, and "a young woman sitting with her kept running her hands through her hair, braiding and un-braiding, arranging, separating, smoothing, all so anxiously and compulsively throughout the talks that one of us finally had to tap her arm and ask her to put her elbows down so that we could see the speakers," a Yale faculty member told some of us later.

**What You Hadn't Been Told About Singapore and its Democrats**   
  
Chee and Jeyaretnam are seldom seen or heard even on television or radio in Singapore and are slighted or ignored in the print press. The news media are controlled through Government Linked Corporations, or GLCs, that run much else in this country of approximately 6 million, a little over half of them citizens, the rest "permanent residents" and non-resident migrants whose rights are minimal.

The government controls 50% of the economy and owns 80% of the land, in a nation smaller in area than New York City, and it subsidizes 90% of the housing, so it has wields lots of carrots and sticks to silence the independent-minded.

Websites are more open and invigorating to Singaporean twentysomethings, a majority of whom identify them as their first or second sources of information. Whenever [my columns are posted on www.tremeritus.com](http://www.tremeritus.com/2012/11/30/at-last-singapore-opposition-leaders-can-tell-yale-the-truth/), readers' comments are numerous, feisty, and enlightening.

But the government still licenses websites and can pull the plug on them legally for any number of infractions, and Weiss reports that while "Online campaigning was legalized in 2011, with limits, and clearly helped opposition parties to get their messages out,... only 25% of all voters.... said that the internet was their first or second source of information in the 2011 general election."

Singapore's labyrinthian, omniscient governance comes from the eternal (and eternally-rigged) People's Action Party, which has a lot more than websites: The PAP took 60% of the vote in the 2011 elections but 93% of the seats in Parliament, the rest going to one "opposition" party whose deputies always vote with the government.

Neither Chee's nor Jeyaretnam's party has a deputy in Parliament, and they can explain the reasons why, including some you'd never think of: Anyone contributing more than a certain amount to an opposition party must register his or her name, income and many other details - with the Prime Minister's office, via the election commission that his PAP alone controls.

Weiss notes that the PAP reacts to every democratic stirring but without true accountability. Few Americans can imagine what this means: In a micro-state with a ruling party that has held power for 50 years, the universities, press, courts, and even civic associations are wired top to bottom with government operatives who dispense punishments from the draconian and punctiliously legal penalties to unofficial and undocumented reprisals.

All these have been [visited upon Dr. Chee](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/as-yales-blunder-deepens-_b_1569495.html), who holds a PhD from the University of Georgia, was fired from his professorship at the National University of Singapore in 1993 after joining the Singapore Democratic Party that he now leads. To appreciate the significance of his speaking at Yale, it helps to know that earlier this year he was barred by the regime from leaving Singapore to give a speech of at the Oslo Freedom Forum.

"In the last 20 years he has been jailed for more than 130 days on charges including contempt of Parliament, speaking in public without a permit, selling books improperly, and attempting to leave the country without a permit," wrote Thor Halvorssen, President of the Human Rights Foundation, in an open letter, published here in the Huffington Post, to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. "It is our considered judgment that having already persecuted, prosecuted, bankrupted, and silenced Dr. Chee inside Singapore, you now wish to render him silent beyond your own borders."

It may have taken Singapore's heightened sensitivity to well-publicized criticisms of its collaboration with Yale, such as mine here, to loosen such restrictions on Chee, who is selling his book, Democratically Speaking<http://yoursdp.org/index/buy/0-13>, to help defray the bankruptcy charges and penalties that the government imposed, although it has recently reduced those penalties, as well.

Jeyaretnam, who holds a Double First Class Honours degree in Economics from Cambridge University, is the son of J.B. Jeyaretnam, the first prominent opposition member of Singapore's Parliament, who was evicted from that body in 1986 after being convicted by the ruling-party-controlled courts on criminal charges of misusing his own Worker's Party finances.

When the British Commonwealth's Privy Council declared the case a "miscarriage of justice," Singapore abolished its ties to the Privy Council, refused to reinstate Jeyaretnam, and sued him for libel years later, bankrupting him and leaving him to walk through transit stations wearing a sandwich board, an aging barrister trying to sell copies of his book, Make It Right For Singapore.

Kenneth Jeyaretnam's [Reform Party](http://thereformparty.net/) has a platform somewhat more centrist than his father's and than Chee's SDP, which emphasizes growing disparities in income that can't be discussed in Singapore as openly as in the U.S. Noting that because the government owns so much of the housing and land, Jeyaretnam observes that it has many ways to silence residents -- including NUS students, most of whom live in such housing and, despite Yale-NUS' assurances of freedom of expression, would jeopardize their families' access to patronage jobs, services and transit, as others have done in the recent past, if they opposed the ruling party with public statements or gatherings that could be closely monitored on campus. The Reform Party wants to loosen those strings by privatizing housing ownership more explicitly.

A relatively small recent incident tells quite a lot about what Chee and Jeyaretnam have been up against. Two weeks before they spoke at Yale, [Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs barred Australian clergyman James Blundell Minchin from entering the country](http://www.todayonline.com/Singapore/EDC121112-0000043/Aussie-clergyman-barred-from-entering-Singapore) because, on a previous visit, he'd participated in a "talk show" hosted by Chee's Singapore Democratic Party.

Minchin had "abused the social visit pass privileges previously extended to him while he was in Singapore by interfering in our domestic politics and mixing religion with politics," according to the MHA.

The ministry explained sanctimoniously that "The separation of religion and politics is a long established principle in Singapore, to safeguard the inter-religious and social harmony in our multi-religious society."

But the harmony is Orwellian: Singapore's regulations require all foreigners involved in activities directly related to "any seminar, conference, workshop, gathering or talk concerning any religion, race or community, cause or political end" to hold a Miscellaneous Work Pass.

Minchin's "real" affront was that he had written disparagingly about the nation's founder, Lee Kuan Yew, and, in August of 2011 had "alleged that the rule of law was bypassed and corrupted in Singapore, and questioned the independence and integrity of the judiciary."

The week of the panel, a strike by 100 angry migrant Chinese bus drivers exposed not only their employer's broken promises and their substandard wages and living conditions - Singapore has no minimum wage - but also how forbidden any labor-union action is in Singapore.

The government boasts to investors that it never has strikes or job actions, and it promptly arrested several of the bus drivers for trial and deported most of the rest, prompting the brave writer Vincent Wijeysingha of the Online Citizen website to pen [a long, scathingly satirical account](http://theonlinecitizen.com/2012/12/you-can-resign-and-go-to-sbs-the-drivers-were-told/) of its lies and brutality. It begins:

"The government has acted in our name as is its duty. It purged an industrial action and returned the nation to business as usual. The bus drivers from SMRT recklessly involved themselves in an illegal strike after refusing to bring their grievances to management or their trade union or seek the assistance of the Manpower Ministry. Twenty-nine have been deported, one hundred and fifty more issued a police warning and the five ringleaders will be tried. Industrial harmony has been restored, the tripartite relationship upheld, and public disorder averted.

"As fortunate citizens of this prosperous and stable nation, we can heave a sigh of relief. Those refractory foreigners got what they deserved. How dare they come to our land - which our government built from a fishing village - and demand such indulgences as suitable accommodation and an equal wage....."

Wijeysingha shows how ephemeral - virtually non-existent -- the "trade unions" are and how calculatingly feeble and false the Manpower Ministry is. Coming just as American Wal-Mart workers staged a walkout on black Friday without union or legal protection, Singapore's retaliation with what Chee called "zero tolerance for industrial action" reminded me that Asian state capitalism and Western state capital are converging to subvert democracy, not enable it.

Do Zakaria and the liberal arts teachers at Yale-NUS mean to help workers of the world to converge, as well? Chee noted that when he arrived at NUS in response to student invitations to speak about civil liberties, he was turned back by police on one occasion and by university officials on another.

"I am not asking Yale to change the country, but do not be complicit in helping the PAP to oppress Singaporeans, and do not seek to advance your interests at the expense of ours," Chee said in New Haven. "I fear that despite all assurances, making money is the be-all and end-all. I have never yearned so much to be proven wrong." His fear is that Yale's claim to defer to the government and laws of Singapore out of respect for supposed "'Asian values' has been used" in ways that will prove him right.

While Singapore boasts a per-capita income of $57,000 compared to the U.S.'s $46,000, Chee noted that that's only because the tiny city-state has seen a 67% increase in centi-millionaires - residents worth at least $100 million. Meanwhile, 5% of Singaporeans earn less than $5000 a year - less than $100 a week - in a city that is 42% more expensive than New York City. Chee then showed slides of people subsisting in miserable living conditions and reminded us of the tiny island's millions of rights-less migrant workers like the Chinese bus drivers.

"You Americans have just been through an election where income disparity was debated. It is not up for debate in Singapore," whose famously "disciplined workforce" works longer hours than those of Sao Paulo, Johannesburg and Moscow. "More than half say they'd emigrate if they could, and 10% do leave."

**A More Skeptical, Combative View**

Jeyaretnam was more sardonic than Chee, comparing Yale president Richard Levin's "naivete" about Singapore to that of Sidney and Beatrice Webb's about the Ukraine, whose wonders they touted rapturously upon returning to America, all to the great benefit and probable amusement of the Soviets in the 1930s. "Levin lets us know that Yale has done its homework about Singapore," Jeyaretnam mocked, adding that if Levin's delegation ever tried to talk with any opposition leaders, "We must all have been out that when they came calling."

Growing more serious, Jeyaretman told the Yale audience ruefully that, when he landed at Kennedy Airport in New York, the official checking his passport remarked that "The U.S. has a lot to learn from Singapore." To which Jeyaratnam added, in New Haven, "There is a lot to learn from Singapore about controlling your own people," but obviously the officer believed in Singapore's false front as a "rich, clean nation renowned for its disciplined workforce and its no-nonsense government" - an image that Jeyaretnam unpacked.

He worried that "the authoritarian model" is gaining ground worldwide as people "give away their freedom in exchange for security and prosperity. But Singapore was one of the richest cities in Asia before Lee Kuan Yew arrived. There has been no economic 'miracle,' it's been only a deliberate policy to open the floodgates to immigrant labor, producing a disastrous fall in real income for the bottom quarter. You Americans are losing jobs by outsourcing them; Singapore keeps jobs by bringing in cheap labor and increasing its repression."

Jeyaretnam's criticisms of universities in Singapore and of Yale's feeble accommodations to them were substantially the same as Chee's. "What Singapore does best is not anything that a liberal college such as Yale should want to learn. I can only hope that they'll fulfill their commitments to foster open debate at Yale NUS."

He also noted that while the internet has had positive impacts, "any blog can be required to gain government approval and a license"--I wondered how long Online Citizen can expect to survive - and he made scathing fun of the government's regulation of campaigns, noting that he was given television time on only a Mandarin-language channel even though, as he noted drily, "English is the national language."

Few of the Singaporean Yale students in the audience, most of them from elite high schools in Singapore, seemed to have heard of or witnessed anything like this before. The more defensive among them disparaged Jeyaretnam afterward, but they couldn't help but notice that his and Chee's presentations received long, vigorous applause from an audience deeply moved, even impassioned, by their example.

By far the most defensive, churlish, amazingly naive comments came from two Yale-NUS faculty members. I'm almost too embarrassed even to quote them here, but you can watch them on the video when it's posted on the Council on Southeast Asia Studies [website](http://www.yale.edu/seas).

These teachers of political science actually believed that because Yale is a non-profit institution and because they and other new faculty had sat together on a hilltop in New Haven for two weeks this past summer and then again in Singapore designing a new liberal arts curriculum in perfect freedom, no business or government interests will control them.

**The American Professoriate Weighs In**

But the pervasive monitoring and repression that Chee and Jeyaretnam described are so ubiquitous and generate such pervasive, unthinking self-censorship and fear that, the week that they spoke at Yale, the American Association of University Professors sent [a public letter to the Yale community and to 500,000 American professors](http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/newsroom/2012webhighlight/Yalelet.html) expressing "the AAUP's growing concern about the character and impact of the university's collaboration with the Singaporean government."

The letter poses 16 questions to Yale that the university has yet to answer convincingly because it has refused repeatedly to make public its contract with Singapore in establishing Yale-NUS. "We believe that a healthy atmosphere for shared governance at Yale can only be restored if the Yale Corporation begins by releasing all documents and agreements related to the plan to establish the Yale-National University of Singapore campus," the AAUP writes, after exhaustive reading and research on every document on the collaboration that has been made public.

"In a host environment where free speech is constrained, if not proscribed, faculty will censor themselves, and the cause of authentic liberal education, to the extent it can exist in such situations, will suffer."

This reinforces the political scientist Weiss' observation on the panel that "Arguably central to efforts to channel and control participation in Singapore has been depoliticizing students and the university since the late 1960s and early 1970s, through measures ranging from restructuring faculty governance at NUS to eliminating the more radicalized Nanyang U to building a new campus at Kent Ridge without a clear central meeting point to prohibition or restructuring of a host of student activities and organizations to a retreat from (then cautious, instrumental return to) the teaching of 'critical thinking.'"

The AAUP letter discredits claims by Yale-NUS administrators and faculty (and by Zakaria last spring) that their university critics are ivory tower moralists, provincials fearful of engaging cultural differences and respecting so called "Asian" values:

"At stake are not simply 'cultural differences' but whether Yale recognizes universal human rights and the protections for academic staff enunciated in the UNESCO Recommendation. Singapore is a modern, industrialized city whose leaders and citizens fully understand these values."

**Some Singaporean Professors Weigh Out**

So one might hope. But two weeks before the AAUP released its letter, the Singapore Management University [cancelled the opening of a research center on human rights](http://www.singapolitics.sg/news/smu-cancels-opening-research-centre) just days before its launch, without giving reason why.

The center, which had been planned for two years, "was meant to have been funded by a large donation of between $1 million to $3 million from the Japanese philanthropist Dr Haruhisa Handa, who had flown into Singapore last week specially for the launch," according to the website Singapolitics.

The brilliantly dissident Online Citizen speculated that the Government had a hand in the closure of the center. "Asked by Singapolitics "to respond to this allegation, a Ministry of Education spokesman only said: 'We were informed by the SMU that it had decided not to go ahead with the launch of the centre.'"

Recall here how small and tightly run Singapore is. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's wife heads the country's Temasek sovereign wealth fund, whose CEO-designate in 2009 was the current Yale trustee Charles Waterhouse Goodyear IV, a progenitor and proponent of Yale-NUS. Charles Ellis, another Yale trustee at the time when Yale-NUS arrangements were being negotiated, was also an adviser to Singapore's Government Investment Corporation and is married to Yale vice president Linda Koch Lorimer, who is a member of the new, fig-leaf governing board of the Yale-NUS, which will be held to Singapore's corporate laws, which none of Yale-NUS' boosters seems to have examined carefully.

In the past year the Johns Hopkins University, Australia's University of New South Wales, and New York University's [Tisch School of the Arts](http://www.thecobrapaper.com/viewarticle.aspx?smid=514&aid=12348) have [all pulled their programs out of Singapore](http://theonlinecitizen.com/2012/11/john-hopkins-unsw-and-now-tisch-when-will-we-ever-learn/), and faculty at the Claremont Colleges rebuffed overtures to establish an undergraduate liberal-arts college in Singapore after Britain's [Warwick University cancelled its own effort](http://www.yawningbread.org/apdx_2005/imp-226.htm) there.

**Business Unusual?**

Yet Yale's trustees and president have rushed in where these institutions declined to tread, without giving Yale's faculty a truly deliberative role like that assumed by the faculties at Claremont and Warwick.

What were they thinking? Or, as Evan Thomas kept asking in his book The Very Best Men, about the supposedly worldly, smart Yale men in national intelligence who fomented a hapless coup in Guatemala, installed the Shah in Iran, and staged the Bay of Pigs: "How could they be so dumb?"

I've never charged that Yale's trustees were furthering their own business interests directly by pushing Yale-NUS, nor even that Yale as an institution is "lining its pockets" from the Singapore venture. I've reported that someone with pretty good credibility [predicts they'll do so.](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html)

What I do charge is that the "business" mindset of Yale trustees who've meant to do some good in the world while doing well for themselves has driven this project despite many good reasons for doubting its wisdom pedagogically as well as politically.

I've also speculated about likely reasons why the Yale Corporation went this far. A possible line of inquiry for an investigative reporter or dispassionate historian and perhaps a prosecutor would require learning how business is done in Singapore, not to mention in America these days, where "payments" to institutions can be made, and individuals rewarded, without leaving contractual fingerprints.

Imagine that a Yale trustee who had left the Yale Corporation by the time the Corporation approved Yale-NUS had also been intimately and enthusiastically involved with Singapore for many years before then, and imagine that he is married to Yale's vice president, who has become a member of the new, Potemkin Yale-NUS governing board, an unmarked subsidiary of the National University and hence of the People's Action Party.

Imagine further that the Yale University endowment's investment portfolio just happens to be let in on restricted, lucrative investment opportunities that controlled in some measure by Singapore's government investment and sovereign wealth funds, including Temasek (whose CEO-designate in 2009, Charles Waterhouse Goodyear IV, is currently a Yale trustee).

As one Yale faculty member put it, a lot of business and public financing in Singapore "has been perfected by money launderers and high rollers in ways that make every lead that might throw light on the wheeling and dealing disappear into a Gordian knot."

Shouldn't we begin by insisting that Yale make public its contract with Singapore for Yale NUS? Why has it refused to do so despite repeated requests from many quarters? Shouldn't we make it impossible for Yale-NUS to enjoy credibility or dignity until that has been done?

There's no need to presume that the Yale Corporation members who were most active in conceiving and supporting Yale-NUS were mercenary about it, let alone corrupt. Assume that they're all good guys, hale fellows well met, knights-errant of a commodious American capitalism, and that they get almost weepily sentimental about their Yale undergraduate encounters with the liberal arts, which they remember fondly and dimly enough to think that by exporting them to Singapore in this fashion they'll be repaying Singapore and the whole world, by whose gilded graces they have done so well for themselves.

I think that we can doubt the soundness of their judgment, which has been clouded by the "doing well" side of their equation. They should have sat awhile with Jeyaretnam and Chee. And Yale-NUS' maestros and musicians should have looked more intently at Fareed Zakaria's symphony before hiring themselves out the play it for the People's Action Party.

**20.**  
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/hidden-truths-about-ameri_b_3853172.html>

**Hidden Truths About American Colleges Abroad**[politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/politics/)



**A visit to the U.S.S. Stennis: Photo from Yale-National University of Singapore College's Facebook page.**

**JIM SLEEPER**

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University

Posted Sept. 2, 2013, 4:29 pm

Although you wouldn't know it from watching developments in Syria or Egypt, one of the biggest difficulties in reporting and commenting on authoritarian regimes these days is that many have terrific "democratic" window dressing, designed by western-educated consultants and apologists, some very slick, some sharp-tongued, who easily gull or cow American innocents abroad.

One can't show this decisively in a newspaper column [like mine](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places.html?ref=opinion&_r=0) in this week's New York Times Sunday Review section. It argues, in 1,200 words, that some American universities are selling out liberal education's core values in collaborating with the authoritarian regimes to set up whole campuses on their turf.

Fortunately, **openDemocracy.net**, one of Britain's most thoughtful, respected websites, has just posted more of the [**truth**](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy)about these university-regime collaborations and their implications for U.S. foreign policy, in a 4,700-word opus I wrote a few weeks ago.

The most obvious problem with these collaborations is authoritarian regimes themselves: Decades ago, anyone reading the Soviet constitution might have thought the USSR a democratic paradise, and you'll be amazed to see how, for example, Singapore's seemingly meticulous legal system asphyxiates freedoms of the press and political expression as Americans look the other way.

And that points us to the less-obvious but also important problem: Many Americans who visit and make deals with such countries almost ask to be fooled.

As Malcolm Muggeridge [noted](http://www.jimsleeper.com/articles/signature-pieces/Folly%20on%20Left,%20Political%20Pilgrims,%20Salmagundi,%201983.pdf) about some American idealists visiting the Soviet Union in the 1930s, "Their delight in all they saw and were told... constitute unquestionable wonders of the age. There were earnest advocates of proportional representation who eagerly assented when the necessity for a Dictatorship of the Proletariat was explained to them, earnest clergymen who walked reverently through anti-God museums... earnest pacifists who watched delightedly tanks rattle across Red Square..."

It's happening again now, as globe trotting university presidents and trustees who are carrying liberal education's prestige and skill sets to iron-fisted oligarchies decide -- as Lincoln Steffens did of the early Soviet Union -- that they've "seen the Future, and it works" in these apparently orderly, energetic, prospering societies.

Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan, and today's China aren't as totalitarian as the USSR was, although Kazakhstan is still ruled by the autocrat who ran it in its last years as a Soviet Republic. As such rulers welcome corporate capitalism, they may seed some elements of ordered, liberal democracy in ways they don't intend.

But they're also seeding something ominous: It's becoming even harder, not easier, for investigative reporters, let alone observers like me, to document chilling abuses that are initiated only with arched eyebrows and significant silences at the top and are committed by seemingly ordinary "citizens" or decorously legalistic functionaries, including judges, while the true progenitors of what is becoming a pervasive fear and self-censorship remain smiling and "clean."

"Fear leaves no fingerprints," as William Dobson puts it in The Dictator's Learning Curve, which unpacks some of these deft, unspoken connections really well. Surveillance and seduction are as effective at silencing people as are truncheons and prison cells. But credulous American university visitors barely notice because they're being welcomed into carefully manicured holding pens.

It's devilishly hard to track arrangements under which China, Kazakhstan, Abu Dhabi, and Singapore are "buying" liberal education's prestige by bearing all or most costs of constructing the campuses, paying faculty salaries, and subsidizing students' tuition to lure American university leaders who, thinking like the business corporations on whose boards they also serve, are eager to expand their colleges' "brand names" and shares of burgeoning new markets among Asian middle classes.

For example, the contract between Yale and Singapore for the brand-new Yale-National University of Singapore College that opened last month remains secret, despite repeated Yale College Faculty demands that it be opened.

Also secret are many of the funding arrangements. "Yale has had no part in financing Yale-NUS, which is largely funded by the Singaporean government, in addition to private contributions," notes Yale undergraduate Cindi Hwang in ["Exporting the Ivory Tower"](http://fpif.org/exporting-the-ivory-tower/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=exporting-the-ivory-tower) on the website Foreign Policy in Focus, but not until Kenneth Jeyaretnam, the brave secretary general of Singapore's oft-harrassed Reform Party, read the official Budget documents for 2013, did anyone tell me that the Development Expenditure for the National University of Singapore had shot up from S$19 million [Singapore dollars] in 2011 to S$54 million in 2012 and estimated to be S$43 million in 2013.

"That could be the cost of construction of the Yale-NUS campus. So, close to S$100 million in capital expenditure likely was spent on building the new campus," notes Jeyaretnam, who holds double honors in economics from Cambridge University and ran a successful hedge fund for several years. But none of what he has observed has been officially disclosed or discovered by the country's cowed or government-controlled press.

Nor has anyone dug behind my own report [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/as-yales-blunder-deepens-_b_1569495.html) a year ago that a German university vice-chancellor had told me how he thinks "there's $300 million for Yale in this deal." The post set off [furious rebukes](http://singaporedesk.blogspot.com/2012/06/where-theres-smoke.html) from the Singapore press and the Yale public information office, but they never disproved the suggestion.

Nor, in regimes whose official reports never clarify what's done in tangles of money laundering and mutual back-scratching can anyone tell the public whether Singapore was behind one of the top 10 contributors -- "Anonymous, for International Studies" -- to Yale's recent $4 billion capital fund-raising campaign, led by Yale trustee G. Leonard Baker, a long-time investor and advisor in Singapore's sovereign wealth fund and a big moral booster of the Yale-NUS project.

One certainly can't show things like this in an op-ed piece, which must draw as deftly as it can on reporting that others (including the author) have done at length elsewhere. That's why, if you want to assess the dangers in American universities' collaborations with authoritarian regimes, I hope you'll read [the revelatory openDemocracy report](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy) as well as the [Times column](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places.html?ref=opinion&_r=0).

**21.**  
<http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy>

also in *The Washington Spectator*: <http://washsp.ec/Hw9IFI#.UnPGmJ4l_gc.gmail>

[](http://www.opendemocracy.net/)

**Globe-trotting universities serve diplomacy and markets, not democracy**

[**Jim Sleeper**](http://www.opendemocracy.net/authors/jim-sleeper) **1 September 2013**

*American liberal arts colleges are embracing collaborations with authoritarian regimes worldwide, with implications for US foreign policy. Following up his op-ed in the New York Times today --* [*http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places.html?ref=opinion&\_r=0*](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places.html?ref=opinion&_r=0)*-- Jim Sleeper reports on the issue in greater depth in this openDemocracy essay.*

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robert O. Blake performed the diplomatic equivalent of gold-medal figure skating last April in a meeting at the authoritarian central Asian nation of Kazakhstan’s Nazarbayev University when a student asked him about warnings by American critics and human-rights monitors that “a democracy cannot have its universities making partnerships with authoritarian governments,” as the questioner put it.

How could Blake justify his enthusiasm for American universities’ extensive contracts in Kazakhstan, when his own department had [reported](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2012&dlid=204402#wrapper) that country’s “rampant and diverse” human-rights violations and “pervasive corruption.”? Similar assessments have been offered Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders, and Freedom House, and also by *The Economist* magazine’s yearly Democracy Index for 2012, which ranked Kazakhstan 143rd among 167 nations (behind Iraq, Belarus, and Angola) in protecting civil liberties, press freedoms and other elements of liberal democracy.

Blake [acknowledged](http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2013/208000.htm) “a trend, not just in Kazakhstan,” toward what he delicately called a “more constrained space for civil society.” But he insisted “we have high expectations of Kazakhstan” and “a very positive and open dialogue” with its government and “we strongly support efforts by various American universities to establish more partnerships with… universities like [Nazarbayev University].”

 “[W]e’re really supporting… our own universities who… want to have a diverse student body in the United States, wonderful students like all of you,” he added, finessing the student’s question about why American universities haven’t only welcomed students from authoritarian lands to the U.S. but have also been scrambling to offer their services and prestige to such regimes.

U.S. diplomats do have *raisons d’etat* to encourage American colleges to collaborate with authoritarian regimes in nations strategically pivotal to American interests. But liberal-arts colleges have even stronger reasons to resist establishing campuses constructed, funded, and ultimately guided by regimes like those in Kazakhstan, Abu Dhabi, Singapore, and China, which are eager to buy liberal education’s “skill sets” and imprimatur, but not its commitment to interrogate the latest flows of power and wealth, not just ride and facilitate them.

It’s one thing, and probably a good thing, for Western research universities to set up research projects and programs in law, business, medicine, and technical training in a wide variety of societies. Nearly 250 are doing so, eight in Kazakhstan alone (including Duke, Carnegie Mellon, the University of Pennsylvania, and Pittsburgh, as well as Wisconsin), dozens in the United Arab Emirates and China, a dozen in Singapore.

Some have been shrewd enough to put down only light footprints: Columbia University’s undergraduate “learning centers” in Europe and Asia can be pulled back fairly quickly if it decides its academic mission and freedoms are being compromised. Carnegie Mellon’s undergraduate college in Qatar’s huge, $33-billion “Education City” gives degrees mostly in sciences, in a building it shares with Northwestern University, whose undergraduate curriculum emphasizes journalism and communications. Georgetown offers a bachelor's degree in Foreign Service in “Education City.”

But it’s another thing entirely for liberal-arts colleges to stake their prestige and strained pedagogical resources on collaborations with repressive authoritarians to introduce their own hand-picked young and transient international students to what the political philosopher Michael Oakeshott called the “the Great Conversation” of the humanities about lasting challenges to politics and the spirit -- all under contract to regimes that have become quite deft at suppressing such conversations with surveillance and seductions, as well as truncheons and prison cells.

We Americans have an infamously bad habit of exporting contradictions and hypocrisies we ought to face and resolve at home. If the British Empire grew “in a fit of absence of mind,” as the historian John Robert Seeley suggested, the single-minded stampede of American liberal educators to share liberal education with the world on the tabs and under the thumbs of illiberal rulers is as delusional as the more Christian collegiate mission early in the last century “to evangelize the world in a generation,” as the slogan of the campus based Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions put it.

If any academic mission is now proclaimed with equal ardor by the proudly public University of Wisconsin at Madison, the venerably private Yale University, and the hard-driving New York University (“a private university in the public service,” it styled itself, before becoming “A Global Network University”), it’s to bring the blessings of liberal education to illiberal societies in a world connected and flattened by commerce.

NYU President John Sexton [enthuses](http://www.jimsleeper.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Dissent-Liberal-Education.pdf) that his “Global Network University” will “mirror the flow of talent and creativity that increasingly defines the world.”

Yale University’ [claims](https://light.its.yale.edu/messages/univmsgs/detail.asp?Msg=64328) that the new college it has co-founded with Singapore’s National University will be “a place of revelatory stimulation” that will reinvent liberal education “from the ground up,” in “A community of learning, founded by two great universities, in Asia, for the world.”

Liberal education with an American republican inflection struggles to realize Thomas Jefferson’s vision, in founding for the University of Virginia in 1819, of a crucible for citizen leaders who “are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it.” its emphasis is on nurturing “citizens who can think critically, understand their own history, and give voice to their beliefs while respecting the views of others,” as the American Academy of Arts & Sciences put it recently in a call to renew the humanities.

Some of us who try hard to teach this way believe that when efforts to sustain the liberal arts as a *civic* art have worked well, they’ve made democracy more resilient. As Assistant Secretary Blake suggested, they’ve attracted international students who want to escape rote learning in repressive homelands.

But the American Academy worries rightly about the humanities’ prospects in the United States itself, more than in societies where they’ve never taken root. Buffeted by market, political and social pressures, liberal educators whose own public funding is dwindling and whose students’ resources and aspirations are narrowing have set sail for lavish subsidies and burgeoning new student markets. But they’ve forgotten that whoever pays the piper ultimately calls the tune.

                                                           \*   \*   \*

When Kazakhstan approached the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 2009 for help in establishing a biotechnology program, the Wisconsonites, flush with liberal idealism, proposed instead a School for the Humanities and Social Sciences “to extend ‘the Wisconsin Idea’ to Kazakhstan and the world,” as their letter of intent put it.

The new school would educate “leaders who will have an impact… like the thousands of UW-Madison graduates who have joined the Peace Corps over the decades,” [said](http://truth-out.org/news/item/15691-wisconsin-idea-gone-bad-at-kazakhstans-nazarbayev-university) Gilles Bousquet, a UW dean and vice-provost, after visiting the country. Kazakhstan approved the proposal, giving Wisconsin nearly $1 million in initial design contracts and the inside track to $55 million in faculty salaries paid by the regime.

But “The Wisconsin Idea” was developed more than a century ago by Progressives (including UW faculty) to strengthen labor rights and democratic procedures and to loosen the grip of robber barons. To say the least, that isn’t Kazakhstan’s idea. Its new, $2 billion Nazarbayev University is named for its President Nursultan Nazarbayev, 72, who ran the country in its final years as a Soviet republic and whose rubber-stamp parliament has anointed him "Leader of the People," elevating him and his family and state apparatus above the law.

Not surprisingly, Nazarbayev has a representative on his university’s governing board, clouding its promises of academic freedom, which, as in all such regimes, declines to “follow truth wherever it may lead” if it leads to pointed questions about freedom and the rule of law.

Shortly after Wisconsin’s school opened in 2011--  a year before Assistant Secretary Blake’s talk -- the Peace Corps removed its 117 volunteers from the country “following several sexual assaults and reported instances of harassment by the state intelligence service,” according to the historian Allan Ruff and investigative journalist Steve Horn in [an exhaustive account](http://truth-out.org/news/item/15691-wisconsin-idea-gone-bad-at-kazakhstans-nazarbayev-university) of Wisconsin’s venture there.

At about the same time, Kazakhstan state security forces opened fire on striking oil workers in the Caspian Sea oil company town of Zhanaozen, killing many, detaining and beating many more and blacking out communications from the region. The regime held show trials and even arrested some of the workers’ attorneys.

                                                           \*   \*   \*

Blake did have “reasons of state” for skating around these developments’ implications for liberal education. Although Kazakhstan’s population is only 17 million, its 4,000-mile border with Russia, its 1,400-mile frontier with China, and its billions of dollars in contracts with American firms like Exxon Mobil give the U.S. a foothold and buffer in central Asia.

And Blake was really only emulating his boss, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who had made [a similar pitch](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/04/160631.htm) at a 2011 celebration of “people to people” exchanges between the U.S. and China, whose restraints on freedoms of scholarship, journalism, and public expression are well known. Praising New York University’s plan to open a full [“NYU Shanghai”](http://shanghai.nyu.edu/about/academic-building) campus as a joint venture with the East China Normal University – it has just opened --  Clinton invited NYU President John Sexton to stand for a round of applause, praising his “vision” and saying, “we’re very excited about this endeavor.”

NYU’s endeavor in Shanghai follows its opening of a stand-alone “portal” campus in Abu Dhabi, whose Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, presented the university with a no-strings gift of $50 million even before paying for the entire campus’ construction, faculty salaries, and substantial tuition subsidies.

Abu Dhabi’s  “significant human rights problems” in 2012, [according to the U.S. State Department](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2012&dlid=204387#wrapper),  included “arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detentions, and lengthy pretrial detentions;” limitations on freedoms of speech, press, and association; “reports of police and prison guard brutality’” interference “with citizens’ privacy rights,” and a lack of government “transparency” and “judicial independence.”

In April 2011, five Abu Dhabi dissidents  -- including Nasser bin Ghaith, who was teaching at the country’s branch of the University of Paris, Sorbonne -- were arrested, detained for several months, and given prison sentences for urging direct elections of the Federal National Council. They were pardoned following an international outcry, but no thanks to NYU or the Sorbonne, which were silent.

The State Department was silent, too, and small wonder: The petrol-rich, geographically pivotal emirate is as important to the U.S. as is Kazakhstan. The 70-plus percent of Abu Dhabi residents are migrants with few rights and no nationalist fervor, and they pose little threat to American strategic or economic interests, let alone to Abu Dhabi’s authoritarianism. And the regime and its partners in the United Arab Emirates risk nothing by hosting international students seeking American degrees. The risks are to the essence and spirit of liberal education itself.

                                                           \*   \*   \*

In Singapore, Yale has co-founded [“Yale-NUS College”](http://fpif.org/exporting-the-ivory-tower/) with the National University of Singapore to offer a new, residential liberal education under the strict scrutiny and ultimately the control of that wealthy, tightly-run city-state. Like Abu Dhabi, Singapore is paying virtually all the costs of constructing and operating Yale-NUS’ brand-new panopticon of a campus.

Also like Abu Dhabi and Kazakhstan, the tiny, corporate city-state of Singapore is pivotal in its own way to American interests. It’s a critical base and listening post for foreign policy makers and the American military, an *entrepot* for global finance competitive with Hong Kong, and now, it hopes, an education hub, “the Boston of Southeast Asia.” The country’s ruling Han Chinese elite knows the Chinese colossus to its north very well, and it speaks English well, owing to its British colonial past: English is Singapore’s official language.

Here, too, the American academic rhetoric has been missionary. Yale-NUS President Pericles Lewis, a former Yale professor, announced that deliberations in the summer of 2012 by the new faculty, on a hilltop in New Haven and then in their campus in Singapore, were nothing less than “the liberal arts experience made manifest” in a place where “the forces resisting change do not exist,” as the Yale-NUS faculty’s preliminary [Curriculum Report](http://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/images/doc/Yale-NUS-College-Curriculum-Report.pdf) put it.

The college, which opened in August, will “rethink liberal education” in a Common Curriculum fostering “shared belonging… in a community” that will “instill habits of critical judgment and forbearing tolerance that arise from seeing peers struggle with problems one knows well oneself.” Students will keep portfolios of their progress and hone their speaking and writing skills.

But the college’s slick brochure for applicants promises them entry to a global managerial elite that answers not to any republican polity or code but to investors riding the casino-finance, corporate-welfare, consumer marketing. Although their degrees will be granted only by NUS, graduates will be “fully integrated” into “the Yale Alumni community” and so can host clients at the elegant Yale Club of New York on visits to the United States. The first such visit, for many of the new students, was a month-long stay in “one of Yale’s beloved residential colleges” on the New Haven campus, with tours of Boston and New York, before they settled into their Singapore campus.

Although the Yale-NUS admissions office claims that it culled its inaugural class of 157 from among 11,400 eager applicants, making the new college one of the most highly selective of its kind, 9,000 of those applications were made thanks solely to the Yale College admissions office in New Haven’s decision to put a small box on all application forms to Yale that, if checked, would forward the same application, automatically and without elaboration, to the Yale NUS admissions office in Singapore.

 “Despite the Admissions Office’s assurances, applicants may have felt that their decision of whether or not to check the NUS box might affect their chances of admission at Yale in New Haven,” wrote [Diana Rosen in the Yale Daily News](http://yaledailynews.com/crosscampus/2013/02/12/rosen-thoughts-on-yale-nus/). “Or, the Yale-NUS option on the application may have simply served as way of convincing applicants that they were improving their chances of receiving a diploma with the name ‘Yale’ on it. It’s deceiving and it’s wrong.”

Singapore itself is too infamously Orwellian in its repressions of freedoms of expression to be trusted to honor more than a boutique humanities curriculum. Reporters Without Borders [ranks](http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html) the island 149th out of 179 this year – down from 135th in 2012, owing partly to its recent crackdown on political websites. It has a truly flabbergasting array of legalistic restraints on freedoms of the [press](http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5571&Itemid=181), political activity, and labor rights.

Singapore’s founder Lee Kuan Yew, now in his ‘80s, has even tutored Kazakhstan’s Nazarbayev in the arts of authoritarian governance, including the control of their universities’ governing boards. (Lee has even persuaded Nazarbayev to make English Kazakhstan’s official language.) The National University of Singapore is one of the institutions partnering with Nazarbeyev University.

Liberal education can’t take root in a bubble. “In a host environment where free speech is constrained, if not proscribed, faculty will censor themselves, and the cause of authentic liberal education… will suffer," warned the American Association of University Professors last year in a letter criticizing Yale’s venture and posing 16 questions that Yale has declined to answer.

Jothie Rajah documents exhaustively *Authoritarian Rule of Law* that Singapore’s meticulous, sanctimonious, politicized judiciary enforces broad laws on “public order,” the press, and religious and racial expression. These have been rammed through parliament by the ruling party in unvarying sequences of declared “emergencies”; orchestrated denigrations of critics in parliamentary “hearings” that are show trials; the infantilization of citizens in the name of looking after their best interests; and deliberately vague wording of statutes to leave room for the state manipulate the laws at it wishes.

Critics who still protest are charged with “defamation” or “scandalizing the judiciary;” they are invariably convicted; bankrupted by large fines, and imprisoned and/or barred from leaving the country. Chee Soon Juan, who holds a PhD from the American University of Georgia and is now secretary general of the tiny opposition Singapore Democratic Party, was fired by NUS from his position as a lecturer in neuropsychology in 1993 after he joined an opposition party; when he attempted to contest his dismissal, he was charged with defaming public officials, imprisoned, bankrupted, and barred from leaving the country.

After Singapore incurred international embarrassment by preventing Chee from accepting a human-rights award in Oslo, I and some others were able to bring him and another opposition leader, Kenneth Jeyaretnam of Singapore’s Reform Party, to speak at Yale. Apparently Singapore thought the better of embarrassing its latest American university partner.

The Singaporean Professor Cherian George, an internationally distinguished scholar of press freedom, was denied tenure at his country’s Nanyang Technological University in a process so heavy handed it was condemned by his own colleagues – who showed unusual bravery -- and by distinguished scholars abroad.

Five American universities have pulled out of Singapore, most recently a branch of the University of Chicago’s Business School and two programs established by NYU in arts and in law. Some withdrawals have been prompted by financing and marketing projections that didn’t pan out, but others have been spurred by Singapore’s meddling to thwart the prospects of professors with dissenting opinions and to rein in students’ criticisms of government.

The faculty of Britain’s Warwick University forced its administration to withdraw from Singapore on such grounds before a college it was planning there had opened; California’s Claremont Colleges rebuffed Singapore’s offer to establish a similar college after an animated faculty opposed the president’s inclination to go.

                                                           \*   \*   \*

Yale-NUS students won’t be free to form political associations, much less to protest government policies, even on campus. In this, Singapore isn’t unusual. There’s little precedent for student freedom anywhere in the region.

China’s Johns Hopkins-Nanjing Center, which offers graduate programs in international relations, has experienced [draconian restrictions](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-11-28/china-halts-u-s-college-freedom-at-class-door.html) on political discussion and expression such as an attempted on-campus showing of a documentary about the Tienanmen Square uprising and a decorous but short-lived student journal whose distribution off-campus was banned. Chinese authorities are insistent that no such projects touch anyone who isn’t formally enrolled at the center and therefore carefully watched.

Officials at Duke University’s campus in Kunshan, “after pretty good conversations with people at Hopkins,” decided they “would be comfortable drawing similar distinctions between “intra-campus discussion and what you do at large,” Duke President Richard Brodhead told Bloomberg News. “If you want to engage in China, you have to acknowledge that fact.”

**"***What we [Americans] think of as freedom, they [Singaporeans] think of as an affront to public order***,”** [said Yale-NUS’ inaugural dean Charles Bailyn](http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2012/03/29/yale-values-to-be-tested-in-singapore/), explaining Singapore’s curbs on public assembly.

The ease with which Americans accept such restrictions in the name of multicultural engagement is instructive as well as frightening. Liberal educators abroad have begun to sound like business-corporate managers who adjust their labor and other practices downward to their host countries’ standards in order to facilitate their investments there. The Texas-based Houston Community College, under contract to the Qatar government as a vendor of educational services through "Qatar Community College," segregates its classes by sex.

“I have no trouble distinguishing between rights of academic freedom and rights of political expression,” NYU’s President Sexton declared when some students and faculty in New York protested the virtual indentured servitude of migrant workers constructing the Abu Dhabi campus two years ago. He added that ivory tower moralists should get “out of their comfort zones.” [l](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-11-28/china-halts-u-s-college-freedom-at-class-door.html)  Faculty “no-confidence” [votes against Sexton](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/04/23/votes-no-confidence-proliferate-their-impact-seems-minimal) in five NYU schools and programs didn’t shake him from his owncomfort zone.

And when a Yale faculty resolution warned that university’s administration against dealing with Singapore in ways that compromise “ideals that lie at the heart of liberal arts education and of our civic sense as citizens,” President Richard Levin dismissed it as “unbecoming” and carrying “a sense of moral superiority.” Levin resigned his presidency a few months later, but the Singapore venture proceeds, and Yale has refused to disclose the full terms of the contract.

                                                           \*   \*   \*

Why are university presidents so willing to make such compromises and even to celebrate them? Some, hoping sincerely to carry the blessings of liberal education to humanize globalization and even (*sotto voce*) to liberalize authoritarian regimes, are beguiled by “democratic" window dressing, designed by western-educated consultants.

The regimes’ smooth and/or sharp-tongued, Western-educated apologists easily fool or cow American innocents abroad, sometimes by wagging accusing fingers at the failures and hypocrisies the Americans left behind. The apologists dare not wag their fingers at failures in their own societies, whose repression displaces and intensifies their projections of disdain for their guests.

Many university leaders are vulnerable to such put-downs because, having come to think like corporate CEOs, they’ve forgotten the difference between the democratic rule of law that most Americans still honor and the simulacra of legalism in the cruel regimes that are hosting them. The more that they learn to characterize those regimes not as “authoritarian” but as “authoritative,” the more their own understandings of democracy and liberal education sound corporate, statist, and unfree.

The suppression or distortion of clear thinking abroad bleeds back into its suppression at home. The University of Wisconsin at Madison has asked the state legislature to exempt it from Wisconsin’s vaunted Open Records Law, a proud legacy of the Wisconsin Idea that enabled Allen Ruff and Steven Horn to produce their account of its Kazakhstan project. “The Wisconsin Idea” has already been rolled back in the state’s revocation of collective bargaining for public-sector workers and even more fatefully for UW with cuts in state funding from almost 50% of the university’s budget in the 1960s to less than 19% today. No wonder that it welcomed Kazakhstan’s offer.

Yale is less strapped for funding than Wisconsin, but three current or recent members of its small governing corporation advised and/or invested in Singapore’s sovereign wealth and investment funds for at least a decade before the Yale-NUS deal was arranged with their ardent support. Charles Goodyear IV, Charles Ellis, and G. Leonard Baker seem to think that they’ve glimpsed the Future in rising, wealthy state-capitalist regimes whose civil societies seem more orderly and energetic than America’s faltering, libertarian-capitalist one.

Another former Yale trustee, the journalist and global political commentator Fareed Zakaria, touted Singapore in *The* *Future of Freedom* as a model for his claim that societies that liberalize economically will liberalize politically. At Davos Zakaria interviewed Singapore’s founder Lee Kuan Yew and his son, Lee Hsien Loong, the current prime minister, almost worshipfully. Months later, Yale President Levin interviewed Zakaria before a New Haven audience inaugurating Yale’s new Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, which brought Tony Blair to teach a course on “faith and freedom.”

Presidents such as Levin lose liberal education’s compasses as they move from being scholars and teachers, of whatever caliber, to serving on multiple business-corporate boards, where they learn to think about expanding any institution's brand name and market share. When a university president treats liberal education as a game of money, power, and public relations, he has “played the role cast for him by the large forces shaping research universities today, which are the very forces that led the [Harvard] Corporation to think he was the man for the job," as Lewis, the former Dean of Harvard College, put it.

If university leaders imagine that they’re advancing America’s highest foreign-policy goals and strategic interests, diplomats such as Blake and Clinton have been happy to indulge them. After all, the diplomats are fiscally strapped, their embassies becoming fortresses, their networks of trust fraying amid leaks of their communications. Universities can accomplish “people-to-people” exchanges far more easily and convincingly.

                                                           \*   \*   \*

The real danger isn’t that these relationships will produce collisions and open conflict between American educators and their hosts in Kazakhstan, Abu Dhabi, Shanghai, and Singapore, although they may. It’s really that the relationships will facilitate a smooth, clueless co-dependency on what a special issue of *The Economist* identified as a convergence of Asian and American “state capitalism:” The Asian model “liberalizes” a bit politically and cosmetically, while the American model becomes more statist and corporatist, inducing educators and diplomats to define liberal expectations down. The “new normal” becomes a neoliberal purgatory where neither Socrates nor Jefferson could breathe.

Just after World War II, a more resilient American democracy opened liberal education to millions of Americans themselves through the G.I. Bill and National Defense Education Act loans, as Daniel Duedney and John Ikenberry note in a [Council on Foreign Relations paper](http://www.cfr.org/grand-strategy/democratic-internationalism-american-grand-strategy-post-exceptionalist-era/p29417) that calls for a new “liberal internationalist

American Grand Strategy” that would begin with democratic renewal at home.

                                                           \*   \*   \*

Authoritarian rulers have weaknesses, too, as they try to ride the global tides that have carried Western universities to their shores. They’re expanding state coercion to try to shore up the social cohesion their societies once drew from Confucian, Islamic, or even Western colonial traditions that are dissolving amid riptides of global finance, communications, labor migration, and consumer marketing that, so far, have generated huge inequalities amid prosperity and loosened restraints on degrading and criminal behavior.

*The Economist* casts “a sceptical eye” on this variant of state-capitalist control, pioneered by Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew, whom [it characterized](http://www.economist.com/node/21542922) as “a tireless advocate of ‘Asian values,’ by which he meant a mixture of family values and authoritarianism.” The Lees have drawn subliminally from Confucian traditions that present the head of state as a paterfamilias in order to rein in the county’s increasingly soulless and demoralizing materialism. “States hover like crows over the nests that nations make,” warned the historian Robert Wiebe in 2001 against these hollow, often brutal invocations of old cultural wellsprings to shore up new concentrations of power and profits.

Similarly, the sheiks of the Emirates – and even Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan-- have adapted Islamic traditions to offset the civic and social costs of their own simultaneous promotions of go-go investment and marketing that dissolve pre-market cultures of honor.

These rulers want liberal education to help them finesse the brutality and hypocrisy of these bargains. They want American colleges’ imprimaturs and the “critical thinking” and felicity in writing and speaking that a liberal education may provide to regime managers and spokesmen.

The students themselves are often as well-meaning as they are bright, and some hope that the new colleges will give them some intellectual and political wiggle room. But most simply want lucrative careers, just as most American students do: “In an Asian society likes ours,” a Singaporean student in the United States told me, “there is an infatuation with the Ox-bridges, HYP (Harvard Yale Princeton). So much so that joint programmes are the flavour of the day, example Singapore-MIT, Duke-NUS, Yale-NUS, and a now defunct Johns Hopkins-Singapore program.”

                                                           \*   \*   \*

Liberal education does need to make accommodations to wealth and power. At the dawn of the 18th century, Yale’s own Puritan founders, eager to purify a mission they thought was being corrupted by Harvard, found themselves turning for support to Elihu Yale, an officer of one of the world’s first multi-national corporations, the East India Company, which a century would later acquire the island of “Singapura” for the British crown.

But now university leaders are wandering a bit like Alice in Wonderland – or in NYU’s case, like Captain Cook -- into fogs of duplicity cast by regimes whose “features of Western-style democracy are worn relatively lightly and combined with a markedly authoritarian mode of rule,” as a recent analysis by the Washington-based Trans-Atlantic Academy put it. Authoritarian rulers must be laughing up their sleeves at their good fortune in capturing American innocents abroad.

No one expects university leaders to pose Socratic questions to such rulers or to captains of commerce and finance who are riding the golden riptides. American colleges are “like ships caught in the same current, some more obviously helpless than others, … but all drifting toward certain destruction on a lee shore,” the American editor Lewis Lapham warned in 2001.

Still, someone should warn them against supplying riders of the storm with little more than well-disciplined crews and tighter rigging. Colleges have to nourish and hold to the understanding, always fragile to begin with, that wise interrogation strengthens a society’s in ways that armies and states can’t.

If American colleges, surfing the golden tides, transform themselves from the crucibles of civic-republican citizen-leadership that they’ve been at their best into career-networking centers and cultural galleria for a global managerial class that answers to no republican polity or moral code, the American republic will lose its own compass and its anchors.

* Here is some of the back-and-forth that appeared in the comments on openDemocracy: 

[sieteocho](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy) I'm a Singaporean who has lived there for most of my life.

We have a half empty half full situation. I used to get annoyed at how you'd make it your own personal crusade to rail against the Yale NUS collaboration. I too am concerned about the lack of civil rights in Singapore but I saw this as the thin side of the wedge that would so something for our civil rights, one of many things that would help make Singapore look like a properly functioning democracy. It might sound like a dumb idea, but remember that most people thought that Speaker's Corner would be a complete sham, right up until a major protest actually took place there earlier this year.

So now that we do have Yale, I'm quite happy to have you snapping at the heels of the Singapore government.

I am a little puzzled that the collaboration with Singapore has raised such a stink, given that all the other collaborations you mentioned - with Chicago, MIT, Duke, etc etc created no such reaction. Furthermore, the liberal arts college actually has the potential for the learning to be two-way as opposed to the other collaborations where the Singapore side - though not a slouch - is partnered with another college with a greater reputation. Many of these ventures will fail, but some will succeed. It is the same with start-ups.

A liberal education is a very useful component for preparing people to live in a democracy and I'm a little puzzled by your belief that while this is true for the US, it wouldn't be true for Singapore. And hopefully we will produce people who are great stalwarts / champions of true democracy like George W Bush and Dick Cheney.

Jeyaretnam's father will always be a hero to many of us, but maybe this would make pretty clear what many of us think of the son:   
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S...](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singaporean_by-election,_2013)

While you are probably correct on most of the restrictions on civil liberties many of those incidents took place in the 90s and earlier. Politically Singapore is a rapidly changing place and the last five years have seen a profound change in the attitudes of the people towards the government.

When you keep yourself appraised of current events you might actually learn something, such as how the mighty PAP regime has actually lost the last two by-elections.

It is not inconceivable (but not yet inevitable) that Singapore will follow the path of Taiwan and South Korea in making the transition to being a true democracy, and in due course, you might have to find another windmill to tilt at.

But anyway thank you for helping us fight against oppression. Peace. I have no grudge about Yale doing to NUS what Asian students are doing to Yale.

[jim sleeper](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy) REPLY TO [sieteocho](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy#comment-1119131805)

I can only assume that the well-informed "sieteocho" knows that The Workers' Party -- the only one besides the ruling People's Action Party that ever wins by-elections for seats in Parliament -- isn't an opposition party but a virtual adjunct to the PAP whose deputies almost always vote with the government.

I will also assume that "sieteocho" knows that while the ruling PAP's share in such elections dropped from around 66% of the vote to 60% for the first time, two years ago, the PAP retains more than 90% of the seats in Parliament, with the rest held by the Workers' Party.

Surely sietoeocho also knows that the leaders of the other two opposition parties, Kenneth Jeyaretnam and Chee Soon Juan, have been subjected to relentless smearing in the government controlled media and to outright intimidation -- in Chee's case by the government itself, in Jeyaretnam's by Singapore's legions of dishonest editors and reporters and its swarms of online trolls.

So I would have expected "sieteocho" to acknowledge and to help us deconstruct Singapore's simulacrum of democracy instead of citing its ploys as evidence that the country is democratizing. It is not.

Can Yale-NUS help open things up? Sieteocho's concluding sentence obscures the truth that the U.S. is becoming far more like Singapore than Singapore is becoming like the U.S. The Economist magazine got at this a bit in its special issue last year on the convergence in Asian and American "state capitalism," a development it deplores. Singaporean apologists' exquisitely fine-spun insinuations are not a substitute for describing these developments straightforwardly.

These dissimulations and insinuations are sad to watch, but we can hope that sietocho will help Singapore's democratic prospects move from seeming "not inconceivable" to seeming "inevitable." .

[sieteocho](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy) [jim sleeper](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy#comment-1122159903)

Yes, I’ve often wondered why with the not yet sea-changing but unprecedented developments in the Singapore political scene, the worker’s party does not merit a mention. To say that the rise of the Worker’s party is not a true expression of democracy would be the equivalent of saying that America is not truly a democracy because the Democratic and Republican parties are too similar to each other. It is important to note that neither these two statements are 100% false. As for the assertion that the Worker’s Party is a puppet of the PAP, maybe you’re  
forgetting who was the long serving secretary general of the Worker’s Party  
during the 80s and 90s? Let me give you a hint, his last name is Jeyaretnam.

And while the worker’s party has so far not been as outspoken as we had hoped (not surprising – Low Thia Khiang has been in parliament for more than 20 years and we know his style) one of the most divisive issues of late has been a government plan to increase the population to 7 million. The vote in parliament has been split completely down party lines. There is a case to be made that the Worker’s Party is still operating somewhat in stealth mode.

It is true that the recent developments are merely a tear in the fabric at this point. For 40% of the votes to only translate to 10% of the seats is a quirk of the first past the post system, inherited from the British. (I would also like to point out that the electoral college in the US also functions in a similar way, and that is why Barack Obama in 2012 won two thirds of the electoral college with less than 55% of the popular vote).

It is a grand and hallowed American tradition to cast aspersions on political parties which are perceived to go against American interests, in the name of “promoting democracy”. You want there to be some level of dissent, and we don’t disagree on that. But you go a little bit further and you want to stipulate who you want the opposition to be. And I’m not blind to the fact that America does not always respect the will of the people when there is some divergence from what you would like the will of the people to be. We are what we is. Singapore is my country, not yours. I vote, and you don’t.

If I have one concern about Yale being in Singapore, it is the strong connection between Yale and the incompetent buffoons known as the Central Intelligence Agency. Reading about recent revelations about that august  
institution in a book called “Legacy of Ashes” has been a source of concern because I see what it did to Iran, Guatemala, Cuba and Indonesia (unfortunately I’m only up to the Kennedy administration). But the buffoonery in the book, I must say, is a more than welcome source of comic relief.

[http://www.amazon.com/Legacy-A...](http://www.amazon.com/Legacy-Ashes-The-History-CIA/dp/0307389006/)

In fact I would go a little bit further and speculate that the reason why there was such a strong resistance to Yale-NUS has something to do with the CIA. And I’m wondering – out loud, mind – if you weren’t connected to them in some way.

At the height of the PAP’s success in the polls, there have been many means by which election results are manipulated, and the rules are rigged to favour the PAP. Everybody knows that. But the conduct of the elections itself – albeit within the rigged rules – is above board. No accusation of electoral misconduct has ever stuck. No ballot box stuffing has been proven to take place. No disenfranchisement of minorities takes place. During the good years, the popularity of the PAP was genuine. That is a fact that folks like you don’t really grasp – without the machinations, the PAP would probably have won the elections anyway, just with a reduced margin of victory.

Chee Soon Juan is a guy whose heart is in the right place (although I would not be 100% surprised to find that he’s a CIA agent). His style of politics has been rejected by Singaporeans, although to a lesser extent today than 20 years ago. Ever notice that his party did much better in polls in 2011 than in previous years?

While it is true that his style of politics is somewhat misunderstood by the average Singaporean, it is also true that he does himself no favours sometimes, in the way he’s mismanaged his party’s branding in the past. It is true that plenty of the online trolls have cast aspersions on Chee Soon Juan, but I couldn’t help but notice that those same trolls have become extremely vitriolic about the PAP as well. Anybody who surfs the internet in Singapore would know that.

I’m not even that personally opposed to KJ even though any keen observer of Singapore politics whose head is not stuck up his arse would see that he doesn’t have a political future. I thought his bringing to account Temasek’s financial performance was very useful, although a little hard for many Singaporeans to connect with.

So the question that I leave you with is: does the promotion of democracy mean that you disrespect the outcome of democratic elections because the parties voted in were not "democratic" enough?

Other than that, I would have to say that your latest post is a great source of amusement. Please keep it up!

[jim sleeper](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy) REPLY TO [sieteocho](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy#comment-1122582355)

This is a perfect demonstration of the sinuous apologetics to which close observers of Singapore have become accustomed. Always, there are jabs at the U.S.'s corruptions -- the Democratic Party, the Electoral College -- as if these somehow mitigated criticism of Singapore's Worker's Party and electoral system. Never is there acknowledgment that American critics of Singapore's regime are just as vigorously and publicly critical of American corruptions -- a stance which Singapore's apologists do not themselves take vigorously against the PAP.

Always, there are cheap debating points: Is the Worker's Party really okay because J.B. Jeyaretnam, the father of the current opposition Reform Party's leader, led the Worker's Party decades ago, before he was driven out mercilessly and crushed by the PAP and his party was reorganized?

And there is weird speculation here about the CIA undermining Singaporean interests when, actually, the PAP government is as congenial to the CIA as were the governments that that agency installed in Iran and Guatemala. Here, Lee Kwan Yew did everything our foreign-policy Cold Warriors and "realists" could have desired.

The Brookings Institution, a prestigious American think thank headed by former deputy secretary of state Strobe Talbott, has just established a Lee Kwan Yew chair, suggesting that the regime in Singapore is closer to being a model for Talbott and other elite American policy intellectuals than it is to being a caution. I have argued at length why it should be a caution, not only in the above post, but elsewhere, sometimes also here at openDemocracy as well as on U.S. sites.

[http://www.opendemocracy.net/j...](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/how-yale-becomes-more-confucian-rather-than-singapore-more-civic-republican)

Here, at 13,000 words, is my assessment of what Yale itself has done wrong in undertaking this venture.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/...](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-has-gone-to-singapor_b_1476532.html)

[sieteocho](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy) [jim sleeper](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy#comment-1122786728)

You don't really get it do you? If the same criticisms of "democracy" in Singapore can be directed towards the USA wouldn't that be grounds for saying that New Haven isn't really a suitable place to site Yale University?

As for the PAP having a hand in driving JBJ out of the Worker's Party, that's total nonsense. Everybody knows that Low Thia Khiang is a bigger threat to the PAP than JBJ ever was at any point in his life.

It's pretty understandable if you were to say that PAP hasn't exactly been too friendly to democracy over the years. But when you go out and criticise the second party like that, cast aspersion on a combined total of 72% of the Singaporean vote, that tells me you have absolutely no respect for the freedom of choice of Singaporeans. SDP and RP are not even the 3rd party in Singapore. In short, it isn't really democracy unless people rise up and vote for the guy you want them to vote for.

[jim sleeper](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy) [sieteocho](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy#comment-1124047878)

My last response said what needed to be said in an exchange of this kind, but I do think that it would be helpful for me to sign off by commenting on your first paragraph here: The most important argument in most of my posts and published pieces on this topic has been that something IS wrong with liberal education in New Haven and that Yale's headlong rush into such an ambitious collaboration with Singapore is a reflection of it. A subsidiary point -- confirmed, I'm sorry to see, by this exchange -- is that we Americans are still free to criticize our own universities and government in ways Singaporeans really are not. Fear leaves no fingerprints; it produces silence -- and apologists for the silence.

**22.**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places.html?ref=opinion&_r=0>

[New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com/)

## [http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/opinion/article/sundayreview-logo-small.png](http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html)

###### Published: Sept. 1, 2013

**Liberal Education in Authoritarian Places**

Andrew Holbrooke/Corbis

**New York University’s campus in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates, opened in 2010**.

###### By JIM SLEEPER

CLASSES are beginning at New York University’s new [“portal” campus](http://shanghai.nyu.edu/en) in Shanghai — the latest attempt by an American university to export its teaching and prestige abroad.

But there is no actual campus yet for the inaugural cohort of 295 students, half of whom are Chinese, and half from the United States and other countries. A planned 15-story [academic building](http://shanghai.nyu.edu/about/academic-building) is still under construction. Classes are being held at East China Normal University, N.Y.U.’s partner in this joint venture. It’s an apt metaphor: a not-quite-real campus for a not-quite-real liberal education.

In April 2011, at a conference in Washington on “people-to-people exchange” between the United States and China, Hillary Rodham Clinton, then the secretary of state, praised N.Y.U.’s president, John Sexton, for his “vision to expand his university internationally while maintaining its reputation for excellence and academic freedom.”

But his meaning of “freedom” seems elastic. “I have no trouble distinguishing between rights of academic freedom and rights of political expression,” he [told](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-11-28/china-halts-u-s-college-freedom-at-class-door.html) Bloomberg News later that year. “These are two different things.” This was a startling statement, coming from a scholar of constitutional law.   
  
And along with the controversy over a stand-alone campus that N.Y.U. opened in Abu Dhabi in 2010, it contributed to Mr. Sexton’s [rising unpopularity](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/10/nyregion/john-sexton-is-tested-by-nyu-faculty.html) back home: the arts and science faculty, N.Y.U.’s largest, [voted “no confidence” in him](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/16/education/no-confidence-vote-for-head-of-nyu.html) in March. Both overseas campuses were financed primarily with foreign subsidies.

Mr. Sexton seemed oblivious to the experiences of Johns Hopkins University, whose School of Advanced International Studies has a longstanding center in Nanjing, China, that has faced restrictions on political discussion: the halting of an on-campus public screening of a documentary about the Tiananmen Square uprising of 1989 and a ban on off-campus distribution of a journal started by an American student with articles by classmates.

Diplomats have good reason to encourage educational collaborations with strategically vital nations. And higher education is under great strain in the United States — witness President Obama’s [plans](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/22/education/obamas-plan-aims-to-lower-cost-of-college.html) to make colleges more affordable and accountable by rating them — so the temptation to raise money by expanding into rapidly growing (or resource rich) countries is understandable.

But if you look past their soaring rhetoric, you’ll see globe-trotting university presidents and trustees who are defining down their expectations of what a liberal education means, much as corporations do when they look the other way at shoddy labor and environmental practices abroad. The difference, of course, is that a university’s mission is to question such arrangements, not to facilitate them.

I’m no opponent of collaborative research programs in law, business, medicine and technical training in countries that are wealthy or authoritarian or both. Many students in those countries may want to broaden their social and political horizons as well as their career skills. But pretending that freedom of inquiry can be separated from freedom of expression is naïve at best, cynical at worst.

There is perhaps no better example of such cynicism than at Yale, where I teach. Its decision to create a new undergraduate college in a joint venture with the National University of Singapore touched off one of the strongest controversies in the 20-year presidency of Richard C. Levin, who retired this summer as Yale’s president — a year after a nonbinding faculty resolution expressed grave reservations about the project.

Yale promised that the newly hired faculty at Yale-N.U.S. would “rethink liberal education from the ground up” in a campus built and financed by Singapore — an authoritarian city-state with severe restrictions on freedom of speech.

“We must look at ‘liberal’ in the sense of broad, rather than free,” Kay Kuok, a businesswoman who leads the Yale-N.U.S. governing board, told the government-controlled Straits Times. “It’s freedom of thought; I’m not necessarily saying freedom of expression.”

Mr. Levin [promised](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/articles/3391) that students would be free to form associations “as long as they are not intolerant of racial or religious groups.” But the Singapore campus’s president, Pericles Lewis, [said](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303933704577530524046581142.html) they would not be free to form explicitly political associations, much less stage protests of government policies, even on campus.

“In a host environment where free speech is constrained if not proscribed, faculty will censor themselves, and the cause of authentic liberal education, to the extent it can exist in such situations, will suffer,” the American Association of University Professors warned last year in a [letter](http://www.aaup.org/news/2012/open-letter-aaup-yale-community) criticizing the Singapore venture. The letter posed 16 questions that Yale hasn’t answered; it won’t even disclose to its faculty the full terms of the Singapore deal.

Reporters Without Borders this year ranked Singapore No. 149 out of 179 in press freedom — down from No. 135 last year. Faculty members at the Claremont Colleges, in California, and University of Warwick, in Britain, cited concerns about academic freedom when they rebuffed Singapore’s offers to fund liberal arts colleges there — before Yale accepted.

Academic freedom isn’t the only ideal at risk. In 2009, when the University of Wisconsin at Madison was invited by the Central Asian nation of Kazakhstan to help create a biotechnology program, the Americans proposed instead to design a school for the humanities and social sciences, one inspired by “the Wisconsin Idea,” a progressive vision of labor rights and open government. Something very different was built: a $2 billion university, run by a consortium that includes the University of Wisconsin, and named for the autocratic president Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, who has a representative on the board of trustees.   
  
Human Rights Watch and other groups have documented extensive labor rights violations in the United Arab Emirates, where migrant workers, who make up more than 70 percent of Abu Dhabi’s residents but enjoy few legal protections, are still building the N.Y.U. campus on Saadiyat Island, a luxury tourist and residential site.

When authoritarian regimes buy American universities’ prestige and talent, they “shortcut a process that took centuries to create,” Harry R. Lewis, a former dean of Harvard College, recently wrote in the South China Morning Post.

Universities’ mad scramble to expand reflects not so much grasping, imperialistic overreach as fundamental weakness: not only financial and market pressures, but also a drift in purpose and mission. University presidents have bought into an incorrect premise, espoused by thinkers like Fareed Zakaria and Kishore Mahbubani, that countries that liberalize economically will also liberalize politically. Universities need to recover a more “missionary,” freedom-seeking approach to their host countries, pedagogically and even politically. Or they should follow the model of Columbia and other universities that have created learning centers with much lighter footprints, not full-fledged campuses.

At its best, a liberal education imbues future citizen-leaders with the values and skills that are necessary to question, not merely serve, concentrations of power and profit. Universities that abandon this ideal are lending their good names to the decline of liberal education; turning themselves into career-networking centers for a global managerial work force that answers to no republican polity or moral code; and cheapening the value of the diplomas they hand out, at home and abroad.

Jim Sleeper is a [lecturer](http://politicalscience.yale.edu/people/james-sleeper) in political science at Yale and the [author](http://www.jimsleeper.com/) of “Liberal Racism.”

###### A version of this op-ed appears in print on September 1, 2013, on page SR4 of the New York edition with the headline: Liberal Education in authoritarian Places.

Below is a comment on this column by a young Singaporean on the independent website Tremeritus, which re-posted the column” <http://www.tremeritus.com/2013/09/04/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places/>

* BK:

[September 5, 2013 at 12:35 am](http://www.tremeritus.com/2013/09/04/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places/comment-page-1/#comment-1043661)  BK[(Quote)](javascript:void(null)" \o "Click here or select text to quote comment)

Personally, from the perspective of a Singaporean, Yale’s collaboration with us is good both at the intellectual and business level. As an educational hub, we must try to attract the best Universities to our land. It is about the business trend of the growing number of international students, and is about an industry that can provide for a good career and income for our people.

However, I do agree with Prof Sleeper, that one of the greatest learning experience for a young student must be to channel its idealism into the real world of politics. It is when we are young, with the time, the close proximity of friends, the languid nights of shop-talk, that all these questions and problems of society be debated honestly, openly, so that our students are better prepared to be active citizens.

It is also true that this Government has never build our education for active citizenry, but to cater to the industries, towards a career, towards making a living. An authoritarian government which places economic growth as a source for its power and legitimacy. Its justification for such a policy throws us back to the days of students unrest, high unemployment and a general population uncertain of its immediate future.

Our history in the 1950s and early 1960s, became immutable realities whether through trauma or deliberate strategy to justify all sorts of illiberal laws, some are carried over from colonial times and then later some additional ones with local flavor.

Some have questioned whether an active citizenry is necessary for good governance, is it better that discussions be left to the elites, and we just huddle under the effects of laws determined without an iota of our input? That we have no input to the laws of our land, only a right to its protection? But even we, found out what St Augustine of Hippo said: ‘an unjust law is no law at all’. Are we likely to be protected from an unjust law, or be oppressed by such a law?

Even a government such as ours cannot control everything, technology is key, the pitfalls of a government that legitimized itself based on economics performance inevitably must open itself to technology.

From my perspective, Yale is also a technology. And like the technology of printing, travel, the internet, these are tools that we the Citizens of Singapore will use to determine our political future. Yale, needs only to do what it does, which is what Prof Sleeper does, to passionately defend its traditions of intellectual freedom.

Let me say that Yale is in a land of people who are free, despite all the restrictions and the laws. It may sound contradictory, however, it will be reconciled by a citizenry that is enlarging its space both politically and legally.

There should be no fear of pedagogy, we have already educated ourselves there, there should be no fear of politics, we are advancing, and pay no attention to Fareed Zakaria & Kishore Mahbubani, they are just celebrities, we are the real thing.

###### Below are letters to the editor of the Times that ran on September 9:

###### [**http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/09/opinion/us-colleges-in-less-open-societies.html?\_r=0**](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/09/opinion/us-colleges-in-less-open-societies.html?_r=0)

# U.S. Colleges in Less Open Societies

**To the Editor:**

Re “[Liberal Education in Authoritarian Places](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places.html),” by Jim Sleeper (Sunday Review, Sept. 1):

I object to how this essay characterizes the political environment at Yale-N.U.S. College, which opened last month in Singapore as a joint venture between Yale and the National University of Singapore.

The guiding principle has been that a campus life full of critical discussion and debate is a central part of the educational experience. Students are already actively engaged in discussion of controversial topics inside the classroom and throughout the campus. They are also free to join off-campus branches of political parties. They may gather freely within the college facilities to hear speakers and express views openly. Under Singaporean law, demonstrations in public outdoor spaces do require advance notice and a special permit.

Paradoxically, Mr. Sleeper says he supports cooperating with authoritarian regimes on technical and professional education, but would have us restrict undergraduate liberal education to societies meeting his political standards. How does he expect those countries to become more open if their students are denied the benefits of a liberal education and the attendant discussion of political issues on campus?

While Mr. Sleeper seems to want to keep a liberal education from any supposed contamination by contact with different political regimes, progress actually depends on encounters with the unfamiliar, which are at the heart of a liberal education.

PERICLES LEWIS  
Singapore, Sept. 2, 2013

The writer is president and a professor of humanities at Yale-N.U.S. College.

**To the Editor:**

Jim Sleeper details the profound cynicism of leading universities that have sold their names and resources to authoritarian regimes under the guise of expanding the scope of their liberal educations. In fact, this cynicism being played out overseas is but the latest episode in a decade-long assault on the liberal arts here at home.

When I hear administrators speak of building “strategic ambiguity” into mission statements so that they can be massaged according to the drifting demands of the market, liberal education is deeply imperiled.

Meanwhile, lip service paid to a liberal education serves to mask the careerism endemic to contemporary universities.

A liberal education, in short, has ceased to be what it should be: free inquiries undertaken by free men and women concerning the most important matters of human life and striving.

TIMOTHY SEAN QUINN  
Cincinnati, Sept. 1, 2013

The writer is a professor of philosophy at Xavier University.

**To the Editor:**

We disagree with Jim Sleeper in both theory and reality. The fundamental mission of a liberal arts education is to lead students to build the capacity and readiness to critically analyze issues, assumptions and values. Through this educational approach students develop their own sense of what is significant for themselves, their societies and the world to achieve.

Contrary to Mr. Sleeper’s claims, what we are proving in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai is how powerful a liberal arts education is in developing these habits of mind across differing political, social and cultural environments.

America’s own promise of freedom has become more real for all citizens over the past 50 years, thanks in good part to a liberal arts education.

And we are confident that a liberal arts education has the potential to produce citizenship and leadership for a more inclusive, cooperative and peaceful planet.

It is puzzling to us that people who claim to believe in the effectiveness of a liberal arts education should have so little faith in its adaptability and strength.

AL BLOOM

JEFFREY LEHMAN

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Sept. 2, 2013

Mr. Bloom, past president of Swarthmore College, is vice chancellor of New York University Abu Dhabi. Mr. Lehman, past president of Cornell University, is vice chancellor of New York University Shanghai.

**NYU-ABU DHABI STUDENTS RESPOND, I TO THEM.**  
Editors at The Gazelle, the student newspaper of NYU in Abu Dhabi, published this account of students' and others' responses to my arguments. When I submitted a brief response, a Gazelle editor invited me to expand it into a longer letter that they featured as a column. He linked the longer openDemocracy essay from which my Times column had been condensed and which has more information about Abu Dhabi. Here is the newspaper’s column and my response: [**http://www.thegazelle.org/issue/14/features/liberal-arts/**](http://www.thegazelle.org/issue/14/features/liberal-arts/)

[**THE GAZELLE**](http://www.thegazelle.org/) **[](http://thegazelle.s3.amazonaws.com/gazelle/2013/02/Libarts.jpg)**

Photo by Alistair Blacklock/ The Gazelle

**September 22, 2013**

**Outside Criticism Sparks Dialogue on Liberal Education**

**By** [**Zoe Hu**](http://www.thegazelle.org/issue/author/zoe-hu/)

*Photo by Alistair Blacklock/ The Gazelle*

In his recent [op-ed piece](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places.html?pagewanted=all) for The New York Times, journalist Jim Sleeper opened his argument with a biting metaphor, describing NYU Shanghai’s unfinished campus as a symbol for the incomplete education that the university is offering its students.

The university inaugurated its first class only a month ago, but Sleeper argued that NYUSH has already failed — not because of any blunder in administration or curricula, but rather due to its very existence.

According to Sleeper, a liberal education cannot survive in countries with an authoritarian government. The goals of such an institution, he said, are doomed to perish among the thorny gnarls of the political, social and legal restrictions of such a state.

“[You’ll] see globe-trotting university presidents and trustees who are defining down their expectations of what a liberal education means, much as corporations do when they look the other way at shoddy labor and environmental practices abroad,” wrote Sleeper, referencing NYU Abu Dhabi, [John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies](http://www.sais-jhu.edu/) in China and [Yale-NUS](http://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/) in Singapore with increasing skepticism.

The piece was frankly titled with the words “Liberal Education in Authoritarian Places” suspended over a photo of NYUAD’s current campus, a building that many students have come to see as the purple-and-silver heart of the city’s downtown area. The op-ed is just one out [of](http://observer.com/2013/02/louvre-guggenheim-and-nyu-accept-millions-from-abu-dhabi-but-remain-silent-on-human-rights/) [the](http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/03/the-emir-of-nyu-john-sextons-abu-dhabi-debacle/273982/) [many](http://nymag.com/news/intelligencer/nyu-abu-dhabi-2013-5/) [articles](http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2013/03/04/should-top-u-s-colleges-expand-overseas.html) that have criticized NYU’s presence abroad.

Yet NYU Public Affairs deemed this particular article pressing enough to warrant a response, which it [published](http://publicaffairsblog.nyu.edu/2013/09/foreign-exchange.html#more) on its blog on Sept. 17. Through personalized letters to the editor, Vice Chancellor Al Bloom, professor Cyrus Patel and professor Matthew Silverstein defended NYUAD and the concept of a liberal arts education outside the West.

“It is puzzling to us that people who claim to believe in the effectiveness of a liberal arts education should have so little faith in its adaptability and strength,” wrote Bloom.

Senior Alexander Wang read The New York Times article and the Public Affairs post, both of which led him to think about the varying definitions of a liberal arts education abroad. There are certainly differences in opinion — what Bloom calls a quest for “a more inclusive, cooperative and peaceful planet,” Sleeper sees as a “mad scramble to expand.”

However, Wang believes that assuming the normative definition of a liberal arts education — a definition that is coded with Western and U.S. standards — is limiting.

“There are certain parts of the world where I think — and China is maybe a better example than Abu Dhabi — you can’t have that Western model [of liberal education],” said Wang. “My sense from Al Bloom’s response is that if you believe in the mission of a liberal arts education … [as] something that does have a global reach, then you need to accept that it’s a concept that is under constant revision.”

In his article, Sleeper also fixated on the political restrictions of the countries he listed, suggesting that the quality of a university is compromised by such regulation.

Patel was quick to respond to such allegations, while also addressing Sleeper’s sly allusion to possible human rights violations in the construction of the Saadiyat campus.

“Rachel Aviv notes in her profile of NYU’s president, John Sexton, in [the Sept. 9 issue of The] New Yorker that ‘none of the professors or students I talked to said that they felt restrictions on what they could study,’” Patel wrote. “Abu Dhabi insists that good working conditions and benefits are the rule on the construction site of its future campus, a fact recognized by the Middle East director of Human Rights Watch in Ms. Aviv’s article.”

Wang also maintains that freedom in the realms of academia and research exists in the UAE.

“I feel that a lot of my research interests and activist interests have revolved around topics that are maybe sensitive and I’ve never felt any pressure from [administration], faculty, anybody to quash those interests,” said Wang.

Wang added, however, that there are differences in social, legal and cultural standards to consider when researching in the UAE. These unique circumstances may require changing one’s academic methods, but don’t necessarily compromise the validity of the research.

“There is some necessity of keeping in mind the cultural, and also legal, norms of operating in this research environment,” said Wang. “At the same time, I don’t think that necessarily limits the kind of inquiry that you can make, but instead shows that you can’t use an American style of social research all over the world.”

Sophomore Geo Kamus expressed a similar sentiment in regard to social outreach and activism.

“We have several outreach organizations within NYUAD that attempt to address [Human Rights] situations in a culturally sensitive manner,” said Kamus. “I don’t think breaking the laws and addressing these issues without first respecting the [political] framework that we’re given is effective. As we’re representing an American institution, for us to just demand and impose what we think is right is unproductive.”

In his response on the post, Silverstein not only justified NYU’s expansion but also highlighted the benefits of shifting the liberal arts across cultures.

“If anything, NYUAD students are receiving an even broader education than is typically found in the U.S.,” wrote Silverstein. “Despite the diversity found at many top liberal arts colleges, there remains a strong American center of gravity.”

Sophomore Lingliang Zhang agreed with this sentiment, mentioning open-minded classroom settings as great catalysts for interesting, constructive dialogue.

“[At NYUAD] there’s more diversity in opinions,” said Zhang. “I also feel that we can better understand the ideals of what it means to have free speech or academic freedom in a context where those things aren’t taken as a given.”

Despite this, Zhang has also been in classes where professors have been less inclined to open the classroom to discussion. He referred to teachers from New York in particular, who are more accustomed to teaching massive, lecture-style courses.

Wang also mentioned the university’s diversity of opinions, recalling one class that launched into in-depth discussion about the separation between church and state.

“During that class discussion, we had so many people who came from different religious but also secular traditions where this separation between church and state is not necessarily a given,” said Wang. “And I think having students who come from those actual traditions, as opposed to studying them in abstract, really changes the nature of the discussion.”

A native Philadelphian passionate about social and political matters, Wang went from working on the Obama campaign and organizing protests in his small town of 3,000 people to living in Abu Dhabi, where he met students hailing from traditions vastly different from his own.

“Coming here was a huge shift,” said Wang. “[It] has made me think that this idea of freedom is something that’s so culturally coded. It’s very difficult for me to think that other students who come from non-American contexts, where they haven’t had the experiences I’ve had of protest or rallies, are somehow less free.”

*Zoe Hu is features editor. Email her at* [*thegazelle.org@gmail.com*](mailto:thegazelle.org@gmail.com)*.*

<http://www.thegazelle.org/issue/15/opinion/sleeper/>

**september 28, 2013**

**Letter to the Editor: Liberal Education**

[**James Sleeper**](http://www.thegazelle.org/issue/author/jim-sleeper/)

**Re “**[**Outside criticism sparks dialogue on liberal education**](http://www.thegazelle.org/issue/14/features/liberal-arts/)**,” by Zoe Hu, Sept. 22:**

Ms. Hu’s article cites Vice Chancellor Al Bloom’s puzzlement that people like me “who claim to believe in the effectiveness of a liberal arts education should have so little faith in its adaptability and strength.” Reading that, I thought of the title of one of my essays, “[With Friends Like These, Who’ll Defend Liberal Education?](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/dissent/v059/59.4.sleeper.html)” There I criticize John Sexton’s manifesto for his “Global Network University.”

Are NYU administrators who claim to advance liberal education really its true friends? Or are bright, well-intentioned students who believe them being misled? Words like diversity and engagement aren’t answers, if diversity lacks depth and engagement lacks tension. People with liberal educations don’t only keep in mind other people’s customs and norms; they interrogate and challenge them — as well as their own.

To put it differently, a true liberal education shows you that the world isn’t a flat place where everyone respects everyone else and goes shopping. It teaches that the world has abysses, opening at our feet and in our hearts, and it confronts them through what the political philosopher Michael Oakeshott called “[The Great Conversation](http://www.kirkcenter.org/index.php/bookman/article/a-stirring-defense/)” across the ages about enduring challenges to politics and the human spirit.

Every culture and religion has ways of naming and coping with those challenges, but many of those cultures and religions are being disrupted or dissolved by global tides of financialization, corporatist control of work and consumer marketing. Today’s casino-like financing of what is termed “development” would have horrified Adam Smith, as would the kind of marketing that’s ever more intrusive and intimate, groping and goosing the supposedly sovereign consumer as a narrowly self-interested, impulse-driven individual.

Liberal education asks us to take a step back from all this and think of ourselves as citizens who can decide together, through deliberation, not dollar-chasing, on courses of action that will advance certain social goods in common that we cannot achieve by ourselves. Instead of rushing to ride and serve the juggernaut in exchange for a nice salary, liberal education asks us to engage in rigorously critical thinking and in deep reading and conversing with literatures that plumb the depths I’ve mentioned.  Doing that might even help to renew certain aspects of the ancient cultures and religions that are being disrupted. A liberal education in college education should enhance your capacity both to criticize and to renew society while you’re traveling whatever professional or other path you choose.

Liberal education also teaches us to be tolerant, but not relativist: As our search for truth broadens and deepens, we don’t accept that any system is as good as any other. We interrogate and sometimes challenge a lot of what passes for multi-cultural engagement, especially if it’s driven mainly by a desire to ride the golden riptides that are dissolving both old cultures and our republics and democracies.

Acquiring this kind of liberal education during four years in college takes hard work – even in the United States, when a student is also struggling to pay for an apartment in Manhattan’s East Village with a roommate from a very different culture or social class. If liberal education’s self-professed champions in New York aren’t teaching students from affluent suburbs to engage classmates from the South Bronx, they won’t teach real cross-cultural, cross-class engagement just by changing the scenery.

Let me propose that you’re getting a real liberal education in Abu Dhabi if: first, you’re learning Arabic there in the heart of the Middle East; second, you’re learning, for example, about the physical and legal conditions in which roughly 70 percent of Abu Dhabi’s residents who are migrant workers live; third, you’re taking all this to the touchstone of the humanist Great Conversation about lasting challenges to politics and the human spirit; and finally, you’re acting on it in one of the outreach organizations that sophomore Geo Kamus mentioned in his article, [Volunteerism in Abu Dhabi Broadens Perspectives](http://www.thegazelle.org/issue/5/opinion/kldcmw/).

If you’re doing that, great. But it can’t be just talk.

In saying this, by the way, I’m not “fixated” or “sly,” as The Gazelle’s article states. I’m posing a real challenge! I say more about Abu Dhabi in an [essay](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy) published on openDemocracy.net from which my [Times article](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places.html?pagewanted=all) was condensed.

*James Sleeper is a lecturer of Political Science at Yale University. Email him at james.sleeper@yale.edu.*

**23.**

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/at-yale-college-the-sound_b_3881509.html>

also posted on the Singapore website Tremeritus:   
<http://www.tremeritus.com/2013/09/08/at-yale-college-the-sounds-of-silence/>

**[college](https://blogger.huffingtonpost.com/college/)**

**At Yale College, the Sounds of Silence**

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University

Sept. 9, 2013

You can learn a lot about a college faculty and student body from their reactions to criticism, and I've learned plenty after publishing three short essays over Labor Day weekend, including one [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/hidden-truths-about-ameri_b_3853172.html), that criticized American colleges' extensive collaborations with authoritarian regimes abroad.

One of those collaborations is Yale's co-founding of a new, undergraduate liberal-arts ["Yale-NUS College"](http://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/) with the National University of Singapore, the tiny, tightly run, deceptively glittering corporate city-state off the southern coast of Malaysia.

What I've learned from the reactions to my essays here and in [*The New York Times*](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places.html?ref=opinion&_r=0) and the distinguished U.K. website [openDemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy) may not be what you expect.

On the one hand, I found more than a hundred mostly heartening e-mail messages in my Yale mailbox, most from strangers, some from Yale alumni, many from academics at other institutions, but all from beyond Yale College itself. Harry Lewis, the far-sighted Dean of Harvard College from 1995-2003 , praised the essays [on his blog](http://harry-lewis.blogspot.com/2013/09/the-charade-of-liberal-arts-campuses-in.html), where he condemned "the hypocrisy of claiming to run an institution devoted to the liberal arts in the place where political discourse is severely constrained."

But from Yale College itself came the thundering silence of a certain kind of self-censorship that unintentionally confirms Lewis' observation: Even student editors at the supposedly independent *Yale Daily News* and the weekly *Herald* declined a short column by me that concludes this long one, beginning below with the words, "As the new Yale-NUS College opened in a shower of happy talk."

That column foresees not scandal or open conflict for Yale in Singapore but an all-too smooth convergence of American and Asian modes of what *The Economist* magazine calls "state capitalism:" In that convergence, Singapore's authoritarian variant will loosen up a bit politically, or at least cosmetically, while our own still-somewhat-libertarian but increasingly corporate variant will tighten up, intensifying its surveillance and ensnarement of citizens in coils of statutory and corporate fine print and plying them with degrading, after-hours escapes that drain civic spirit.

Here then, in addition to the original column below, is what I'd have liked to say directly to Yale students and faculty who are sleepwalking into these arrangements.

Two of the most common defenses of Yale's venture that I've heard recently are:

1) Now that the new Yale-NUS College, a self-described "autonomous unit of the National University of Singapore," has welcomed its first students, critics like me should stop warning darkly that Yale has given its name, its commitment to liberal education, and some of its best pedagogical and administrative efforts to an insidious morphing of liberal education's mission -- to interrogate and sometimes challenge concentrations of power and wealth -- into mere career training that facilitates and gilds those concentrations.

Now that the Good Ship Yale-NUS has already sailed, say its apologists, investors, and hangers-on in New Haven, critics like me should wish its faculty reformers and idealistic students *bon voyage* in heading off to create "a community of learning, founded by two great universities, in Asia, for the world," as Yale-NUS styles itself.

2) This fledgling community's real vessel, Singapore, has flaws, its defenders admit, but that's no reason to class it with the more repressive Abu Dhabi, Kazakhstan, or China, as I did. And it's no reason, they say, to liken Yale's venture to those of other American universities that have engaged those regimes in ways and for reasons that look much more commercial and cheap than Yale's engagement.

Well! The short answer to the first defense is that Yalies in America aren't really standing on shore waving good-bye. The whole university is on this voyage, too, and while the first-class passengers of Yale-NUS itself are getting to know one another, some of us are noticing the icebergs looming ahead.

A longer answer would scrap these metaphors about ships that have sailed, trains that have left the station, and horses that are out of the barn. It would explain instead how Yale itself has been changing as a new world has inundated and twisted liberal education in New Haven since long before the university's governors thought of trying to reform it elsewhere.

The changes we're undergoing are frightening because America's republican civil society, which Yale helped for centuries to secure its promised rights at least some of the time and even to nourish Americans' famous civic-republican optimism and good will, is collapsing.

Although advances for non-whites, women and gays have been real and absolutely necessary, have you noticed that most other inequalities have deepened? Have you wondered why the "counterculture" of the 1960s become an over-the-counter culture of lethal rampages at Black Friday store openings; road rage; cage fighting; gun massacres; a deluge of porn and violent entertainment; and an ever-more intimate, intrusive groping of our persons driven commercially, algorithmically, and therefore mindlessly, with even the state now getting into the act through massive surveillance and incarceration and rulings that equate those algorithmically driven profits with the speech of citizens that the First Amendment was written to protect and empower, not surround and drown?

To pursue these questions requires a good liberal education. But the dark currents I've just mentioned have influenced decisions about Yale's corporation, curriculum, and character, morphing the college from the crucible of citizen leaders that it has been at its best into a career-networking center for doomed national-security grand strategists and a cultural galleria for global managers who no longer care for or answer to any republican polity or moral code.

I sketched this bleak transformation some time ago in a [very long post here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/yale-has-gone-to-singapor_b_1476532.html) entitled, "Yale Has Gone To Singapore, But Can it Come Back?" Suffice it to say here now that conservatives who've blamed American civil society's decline on the hapless left are discovering that they can no longer reconcile their yearning for ordered, even sacred liberty with their own knee-jerk obeisance to every "free market" whim of the casino-finance, corporate-welfare consumer-marketing juggernaut that they have championed even as it's been dissolving their cherished republican virtues and sovereignty.

They can't keep pointing fingers at the "cultural elite," as Yale's would-be grand strategist and former Foreign-Service servant Charles Hill did recently in [a journal](http://www.the-american-interest.com/article-bd.cfm?piece=1473) edited by Francis Fukuyama, without ever questioning or even mentioning what's really driving that juggernaut.

For their part, neoliberals such as Richard Levin, Yale's recent president and the co-founder of Yale-NUS and his successor Peter Salovey act as if they needn't worry about these developments.They've swallowed the doctrine of former Yale trustee Fareed Zakaria that economic liberalization in authoritarian state-capitalist societies such as Singapore's will spur political liberalization, with a little help from catalysts of change like Yale-NUS itself.

The danger there isn't that Yale's neoliberals are sailing blithely toward a collision with the slick pirates and thugs that operate behind Singapore's glittering facade. It's that the Americans' arrival is only accelerating the inextricable entanglement of both parties to the "state capitalism" that *The Economist* described as prone to cronyism and authoritarianism of the kind we've seen metastasizing in the U.S. since 2008.

In this new entanglement, Singapore's regime will liberalize a little: Yale Professor of Pinkwashing George Chauncey will teach a course on gay history at Yale-NUS this year, and he won't be imprisoned or deported for it! And that will make it easier for the keepers of our own corporate state to rationalize its growing surveillance and ensnarement of American citizens in coils of corporate and statutory fine print right here at home, thanks to the NSA, the *Citizens United* ruling, mass incarceration, and more.

The two societies are heading not toward conflict, then, but toward convergence in a clueless co-dependency on the same juggernaut that's already dissolving the American republic and that will break the empty materialism and increasingly hollow command of Singapore's rulers, who tout "Asian" values but are really just Asian Mad Men clinging desperately to some Ivy on their long way down.   
  
A year ago I gave [a talk](http://www.washingtonspectator.org/index.php/Blog/entry/yale-singapore-and-the-business-of-liberal-arts-a-galloping-culture-of-self-censorship.html) to some Yale students in which I acknowledged -- indeed, insisted -- that not all protest and "free expression" advances freedom and that First Amendment absolutists who push every envelope forget that the people and institutions they're hitting with nasty super-PAC ads and political "gotcha" videos aren't wholly wrong or bad and are often more vulnerable than even their critics want them to be.

But I also insisted on the harder truth is that discretion and caution at Yale have been carried way too far. A galloping culture of self-censorship is enveloping not only administrators and faculty but even students, who should be learning the arts and disciplines of truth-telling from liberal education at least as thoroughly as they're learning the disciplines of power-wielding and wealth making from *neo*liberal education as we find it in the Jackson Institute and Grand Strategy programs and more than a few economics and political-science courses.

In Singapore and in some business corporations, self-censorship is prompted by fear of established power. It takes on subtle modulations and guises in daily work and classroom life, and its stress is relieved after hours in the destructive escapes I mentioned above. Yale students' almost-pathological politeness in class is prompted not by fear of state or corporate power, as in Singapore, however, but by power's allure:

The self-censorship of seduction here complements the self-censorship of fear over there. Some students here silence themselves almost enthusiastically -- except when they're chirping the conventional wisdom -- because they crave the insider status that's accorded only to those who prove they can be trusted never to suggest that the emperor has no clothes.  
  
Socrates suggested just that about the elders of Athens, who sent him to his death. So did Nathan Hale (Yale Class of 1773) about the only established and "legitimate" government of British America by spying on its movements, for which he was hanged after saying, "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country." So has Edward Snowden, who has lifted a veil of denial about our own national-security state.

Young men and women at Yale who've known only neoliberal education may think they're honoring Hale, the patriot of a nascent republic, by saluting the commanders and apologists of what it has now become - "Professors" Stanley McChrystal, John Negroponte, Ryan Crocker, David Brooks and other such recent administrative imports to the faculty. The sad truth is that most of these celebrity "professors" and their most loyal students would have hanged Hale and are ready to hang the Hales of our time.

Self-censorship that's prompted by power's allure and seductions rests on a terrible delusion. It hastens the decay of republican trust and freedom, both inside and outside the halls of power. It has a long and quite embarrassing history at Yale, from whose secret societies, such as Skull & Bones, emerged young planners of blunder after ignorant blunder in American foreign policy, from installing the Shah of Iran and stage-managing the Bay of Pigs fiasco to promoting the Vietnam War and its many pathetic successors in our own time.

Those young planners also made an exact replica of the statue of Nathan Hale that stands on Yale's Old Campus, and they installed it in front of the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley, Virginia. Hale, after all, was the first heroic American spy. But he did it for a fledgling republic, not for what riders of the golden tides of casino-finance, corporate welfare, and ever-more intrusive marketing have made of the United States in our time.

Hale was caught, perhaps because he was too bold at the wrong moment. There's a legitimate difference between being discreet, as anyone trying to exercise power and keep a trust must sometimes be, and being silenced-- a difference, that is, between exercising sound judgment not to do or say something, and accepting blindly that something is simply "not done." Agreeing to take certain things off the table does enhance discussion and freedom of thought at times.

But when Yale promised that the newly hired faculty of Yale-NUS will "rethink liberal education from the ground up" in a campus built and financed by Singapore, it forgot that who pays the piper calls the tune. "We must look at 'liberal' in the sense of broad, rather than free," said Kay Kuok, a businesswoman who leads the Yale-N.U.S. governing board, to the government-controlled Straits Times. "It's freedom of thought; I'm not necessarily saying freedom of expression."

By collaborating with Singapore, Yale is doing no better than its old secret societies did at teaching when and how to draw distinctions between discretion and self-censorship. They erred too much toward the latter.

The Yale administration, which believes and insists that it's acting on behalf of liberal education as surely as architects of the Vietnam and Iraq wars believed and insisted they were acting for freedom and democracy, has signed a pact, its terms undisclosed, with a power that, beneath its façade of meticulous, sanctimonious legalism, intimidates anyone who would write what I've written here or give the talk I gave a year ago in a public place.

That brings me to the second most common defense of Yale's collaboration with Singapore: that it isn't nearly as bad as Kazakhstan, China, or Abu Dhabi, because it's highly literate, prosperous, clean, safe, and evolving toward a more liberal society just as ours is moving in the opposite direction.

But Bob Dylan's "Hurricane," which reviles law-enforcement agencies and courts for setting up and convicting the boxer Hurricane Carter, could never be produced or performed publicly in Singapore. He would be convicted of "scandalizing the judiciary" and imprisoned or exiled. Political websites troublesome to the government must post $50,000 bonds which they lose if they don't immediately remove any item the government finds troublesome.

The 40 percent of the island's population who are migrant workers are ruthlessly suppressed and deported if they ruffle the country's vaunted anti-strike practices, as the *Wall Street Journal* [has just described](http://blogs.wsj.com/searealtime/2013/08/31/singapore-strike-the-full-story/) in a five-part series on migrant Chinese bus drivers' efforts to secure decency and dignity in their work.

No wonder that in British parliamentary hearings two years ago on how Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation had broken the law to harass the parents of a murdered child and perverted government and the liberal public sphere, the mogul's "most revealing moment," [wrote](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/20/opinion/20dowd.html) *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, "was when he volunteered his admiration of Singapore, calling it the most 'open and clear society in the world.' Its leaders are so lavishly paid, he said, that 'there's no temptation, and it is the cleanest society you'd find anywhere.'

"It was instructive that Murdoch chose to praise a polished, deeply authoritarian police state," Dowd added. "Maybe that's how corporations would live if they didn't have to believe in people."   
  
Two days ago I asked [Kenneth Jeyaretnam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Jeyaretnam), secretary general of Singapore's small opposition Reform Party, a graduate of Cambridge University with double first class honors in economics and a member of the Amsterdam Institute of Finance, how he would gauge the evolution of economic and political liberalization in Singapore.

"I don't know whether Singapore can claim for much longer to be freer than China, as in some respects the Chinese seem less cowed and more willing to protest," Jeyaretnam says. "It is much more difficult for the central government there to control such a vast country. While Maoist China was more murderous than even Stalinist Russia, China today is much freer than the Soviet Union was till Gorbachev.

"I think what is so shocking," he adds, "is that Singapore, a highly educated and literate society with a high standard of living, should have so little freedom. The middle classes have more to lose in material terms than people in Kazakhstan or China. The costs of individual political action are high, with most people unable to see immediate gain from democratization.

"Despite the veneer of economic freedom, Singaporeans perceive themselves in many ways as dependent on their government for housing (the government owns all the land), savings (the Central Provident Fund takes 30% of most people's income to apply it to compulsory savings for health care and education) and employment [in Government Linked Companies that dominate the domestic economy and muzzle the press]. It's a bit like Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*.

"People have always before them the example of how you can lose everything for engaging in disapproved political activity, as did my father [opposition leader J.B. Jeyaretnam, who was ruthlessly harassed and crushed by the ruling party] or to a lesser extent Chee Soon Juan [secretary-general of the Singapore Democratic Party, whose persecution I described [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/as-yales-blunder-deepens-_b_1569495.html) before helping to bring him and Jeyaretnam to New Haven, where they spoke [last year](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/singaporeans-win-for-free_b_2249430.html)].

"While the government runs huge surpluses (representing foregone consumption) the people don't see the benefit of those surpluses and the [ruling] People's Action Party try to hide it from them as much as possible... Instead economic pressure is kept on the citizens by the threat they can be replaced with cheap migrant labor."

Jeyaretnam thinks that Americans, "instead of deferring to countries like China and Singapore and seeing them as orderly, energetic, and rising, should see them as essentially parasites on a free global economic system. They do not have to be innovative because they just have to be efficient at adopting innovations from other free and democratic countries."

Let me conclude now with the short column, only slightly revised here, that the *Yale Daily News* and *Yale Herald* declined to publish:

As the new Yale-NUS College opened in a shower of happy talk last month, I chatted on Yale's New Haven campus with visiting Yale-NUS students who seemed bright, energetic, and only slightly awed as they sampled residential college life in the United States before settling into a Singapore campus that's still under construction in every sense.

In criticizing the new college after talking with them I can't help but feel as if I'm strangling an adorable puppy with my bare hands. Even some Yale-NUS faculty have seemed adorably earnest in planning what their Curriculum Report calls "a collegiate city in words."

But Jeyaretnam's observations remind me that this puppy is growing in a strange pen, on a leash held by masters whose goals aren't liberal education's at all. Although Yale-NUS defenders insist that Singapore is changing and that, as the puppy grows, liberal education could be the tail that wags the dog, the changes that are really underway suggest that America is becoming more like Singapore than vise versa.

"We have been given an extraordinary opportunity," insists the [Yale-NUS Curriculum Report](http://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/images/doc/Yale-NUS-College-Curriculum-Report.pdf), "to create a learning community where "forces resisting change do not exist" and where "there are no questions that cannot be asked, no answers that cannot be discussed and debated."

Yale-NUS claims, with complete sincerity, it will try to "reinvent liberal education from the ground up.... for the world" with a Common Curriculum fostering "shared belonging... in a community" that will "instill habits of critical judgment and forbearing tolerance that arise from seeing peers struggle with problems one knows well oneself." Students will keep portfolios of their progress and hone their speaking and writing skills.   
  
We need that such reforms in America, not least at Yale College itself! But with liberal education buffeted by market riptides, reduced public funding, and social pressures that are nudging "critical judgment" and "community" toward careerism and conflict, Yale's leaders have crossed an ocean hoping to reform it abroad.

Yale's original founders did that, too. They crossed another ocean to [set an example](http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/charity.html) for sclerotic old England. They, too, covenanted to "make others' conditions our own; rejoice together, mourn together,... always having before our eyes our commission and community,... as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us."   
  
But those Puritans knew what today's neoliberal visionaries seem to have forgotten: Even a world "flattened" by commerce has abysses that open suddenly at our feet and in our hearts. A strong liberal education helps us to face them by entering into what the political philosopher Michael Oakeshott called "the Great Conversation" of the humanities about enduring challenges to politics and the spirit. Doing that prepares us to interrogate power's flows and concentrations, not just scramble to serve them.  
  
Certainly liberal education must make accommodations to power and wealth: In 1718, Yale's founders turned for support to Elihu Yale of the first multinational corporation, East India Company (which later acquired the island of Singapura for the British Crown).   
  
But can Yale's new visionaries balance accommodation with independence by signing a secret contract with forces of resistance to change? What if their city upon a hill has already been mortgaged to powers with other purposes?

What if it's really a career-networking center for a global managerial elite that surfs the casino-finance, corporate-welfare, consumer marketing riptides and answers to no republican polity or moral code?

Where then will any of us go to vindicate our rights not to be indentured in fine print ratified by legislators who've been bought? Where will we find a strong republic?   
  
Already, as Yale undergraduate Diana Rosen [observed](http://yaledailynews.com/crosscampus/2013/02/12/rosen-thoughts-on-yale-nus/) last winter, Yale College has compromised itself as a crucible of citizen-leadership by tweaking its own application process to generate thousands of ill-informed applicants to Yale-NUS to make the latter seem more selective.   
  
Already, this "autonomous unit of the National University of Singapore," which grants only NUS degrees, has promised future graduates a welcome to the Yale Alumni community -- a nifty fund-raising gambit for Yale, but also an identity shift driven by money, not "shared belonging... in a community."

Yale itself hasn't always been a community of Nathan Hales, as the misappropriation of his image by the CIA's Yale founders reminds us. But it has produced many of them, from Jonathan Edwards, who preceded him, through Dwight Macdonald, William Sloane Coffin, Jr,. John Lindsay, Howard Dean, and, just maybe, someone who's reading this now.

A college always needs reminding that, as Cindy Hwang, another Yale undergraduate, wrote recently in a remarkable report for [*Foreign Policy in Focus*](http://fpif.org/exporting-the-ivory-tower/) "accepting vast sums of money" from authoritarian regimes "puts liberal arts universities in a morally compromising situation," curbing freedoms to explore that require freedoms of expression.

Yet Yale's administration has denied its faculty a decisive say on this diversion of its college name and academic resources. Its hand-picked faculty "advisory committee" on Yale-NUS should have been elected by professors choosing among colleagues who explained their inclinations and insisted that the terms of Yale's contract with Singapore be disclosed.

Jeyaretnam's comments also remind us, as have observers of certain European countries in the century just past, that high literacy and ordered cleanliness don't guarantee liberty and that Singapore may be a mirror of what we ourselves are becoming.

The adorable puppy we're feeding there may be growing up to become a lapdog. Or it may be gulping down a tempting piece of meat inside of which is a barbed spring that will uncoil slowly and tear at its innards, leaving it looking sickened and frightened.

Avoiding either of those fates will require the vigilance of liberal educators and students who, since the times of Socrates and Nathan Hale, have found courage to strengthen truth in public life by challenging its compromises, not covering for them. Perhaps some student at Yale will find the courage to print or otherwise distribute these musings to the entire Yale community, as editors at the *Yale Daily News* and weekly *Herald* did not.

**24.**



<http://www.jeffjacoby.com/13756/wellesley-faculty-defend-an-endangered-colleague>

# Wellesley faculty defend an endangered 'colleague' – in China

**by Jeff Jacoby  
September 18, 2013**

XIA YELIANG knows that he may end up behind bars. He knows that his career in academia — he is a distinguished professor of economics at Peking University — may be about to end. He knows that he may become a social pariah, as friends and colleagues face mounting pressure to avoid him. He knows the anguish his wife may suffer for her loyalty to him.

|  |
| --- |
| http://www.jeffjacoby.com/jacoby/pics/large/1850.jpg  **Economist Xia Yeliang, a professor at Peking University, was among the first signers of Charter 08, a manifesto for human rights and democracy in China. Now he faces a faculty vote on whether he should be fired.** |

Like his friend Liu Xiaobo, the [2010 Nobel Peace laureate](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2010/xiaobo-facts.html) who has spent much of the past 25 years in Chinese prisons, Xia had few illusions about what he was getting into when he signed [Charter 08](http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/jan/15/chinas-charter-08/?pagination=false), a valiant manifesto calling for human rights and an end to one-party rule in China. Since then Xia has grown increasingly outspoken in his defense of liberty and his condemnation of Communist Party censorship and persecution. So when he learned that the economics faculty at his university intends to vote this month on [whether to expel him](http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1277838/liberal-peking-university-professor-threatened-expulsion), he understood which way the wind was blowing.

**"**I prepared myself for the worst long ago," Xia told me when I reached him by Skype on Tuesday at his home in Beijing. "If I want to see constitutional democracy come to China, I must accept this. If it happens, I will bravely face it. I will not surrender; I will not back down." In recent years he has been harassed, threatened, and followed by the police. Several times he has been detained for several days and interrogated ("Why did you sign the Charter? What is your relationship with Liu Xiaobo? What instructions have you been given by foreign agents?") A faculty vote to oust a colleague is virtually unknown in China — the last case Xia knows of happened 30 years ago. Which means, he says, that "this is not coming from Peking University. It is coming from the central leadership."

With political repression in China growing more severe, Xia doesn't expect his faculty colleagues to risk their necks for him. Some have approached him privately to commiserate, but few dare say anything openly for fear of endangering their own careers. Profiles in courage are rare in academia anywhere, let alone under a government that recently issued a directive [banning](http://www.examiner.com/article/china-bans-7-topics-university-classrooms-including-mistakes-of-communism) discussion of [seven "dangerous" Western topics](http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/china/130529/censorship-chinese-communist-party). Among the forbidden subjects: civil rights, judicial independence, and mistakes of communism.

Yet faculty members *have* come to Xia's defense. In Wellesley, Massachusetts.

At Wellesley College, more than 130 professors — almost 40 percent of the entire faculty — have signed an [open letter](http://www.boston.com/yourcampus/news/OpenLetterPekingUniversityXiaYeliang.pdf) vigorously defending Xia's right to express his political views without fear of retaliation. They weren't just spouting off. In June, Wellesley and Peking University launched a prestigious [academic partnership](http://www.wellesley.edu/wwp/peking/partnership) that will include faculty and student exchanges, joint research, and virtual collaborations. But if Xia is fired because he champions democratic liberties and criticizes the Chinese Communist Party, the Wellesley professors warn, they "would find it very difficult to engage in scholarly exchanges with Peking University." Confronted with such an inexcusable breach of academic freedom, they will ask Wellesley's administration to shut down the new program.

If that's what it comes to, Wellesley's president says she'll do it. "We will follow our faculty's lead," H. Kim Bottomly [told Inside Higher Ed](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/09/13/academic-freedom-concerns-may-jeopardize-wellesley-peking-partnership). If Wellesley's professors rebel at partnering with a university that engineers the punishment of a pro-democracy dissident, [the partnership will end](http://chronicle.com/article/Professor-Says-Peking-U-May/141593/).

|  |
| --- |
| http://www.jeffjacoby.com/jacoby/pics/large/1849.jpg  **The presidents of Wellesley College and Peking University signed off in June on an academic partnership that will involve faculty and student exchanges and joint research. Wellesley professors say that makes Peking economist Xia Yeliang their "colleague" — and makes it their duty to defend his academic freedom**. |

This isn't the first time that the faculty at a major US institution of higher education has objected to being morally stained by collaboration with an unfree, antidemocratic regime. Faculty members at Yale, for example, last year raised [concerns](http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2012/03/02/faculty-weigh-yale-nus/) about the "lack of respect for civil and political rights in Singapore," with whose harsh government Yale has teamed up to [create a new school](http://www.ync.nus.edu.sg/index.php/about.html). In a recent essay, Yale political scientist Jim Sleeper argues out that Western universities hungry for the status and dollars such joint ventures generate are pursuing the chimera of "[liberal education in authoritarian places](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/liberal-education-in-authoritarian-places.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)." Professors *should* object. What kind of message is sent when schools ostensibly dedicated to free minds and unfettered thought ally themselves with some of the world's most repressive regimes? "Pretending that freedom of inquiry can be separated from freedom of expression," Sleeper writes, "is naïve at best, cynical at worst.

Wellesley's faculty show one way to grapple with the moral dilemma: Treat every endangered dissident at a partnering institution as a colleague, and vocally demand the same freedom for him that they would demand for themselves. Wellesley's collaboration with Peking University makes the fate of Xia Yeliang directly relevant to every Wellesley professor. Xia's Chinese colleagues may be too intimidated to raise the roof in his defense. His American "colleagues" don't have that excuse — and, to their credit, they know it. (*Jeff Jacoby is a columnist for The Boston Globe*).

**25.**   
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/who-really-runs-american-_b_4037801.html>

Also at History News Network (HNN): <http://hnn.us/article/153516>

October 3, 2013

# [college](https://blogger.huffingtonpost.com/college/)

# Who Really Runs American Universities? And Who Should?

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper) [Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper) Lecturer in Political Science, Yale 

[Derek Bok](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derek_Bok) was named president of Harvard not once but twice: in 1971, after anti-Vietnam War protests of 1969 had left students' blood on his predecessor Nathan Pusey's hands and had shut down the university in 1970; and again in 2006, after a faculty vote of no-confidence in the obstreperous Lawrence Summers prompted the obstreperous Wall Street Journal to claim that Harvard's faculty has "as much intellectual diversity as the [North Korean] Pyongyang parliament."

Each time, Bok worked to heal bitter divisions that threatened to make the university ungovernable. Each time, he worked to renew American liberal education's essential but always fragile mission: not only to serve the liberal capitalist republic on whose Constitution and munificence academic freedom depends, but also to question and sometimes even challenge the very corporate and state powers on whose restraint academic and political freedom also depend.

Each time, Bok succeeded in that high-wire act. "Awesome" is a word I wish my students at Yale would outgrow, but I've talked with Bok just often enough since 1998 to know that it characterizes his balancing of an adherence to high principle, an alertness to paradox, and an adroitness in leadership. And now, at 83, he has published Higher Education in America, a magisterial yet often contrarian assessment of challenges facing university governance, teaching, and, indeed, survival.

Wesleyan University President Michael Roth has just reviewed Bok's new book briefly [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-roth/review-of-derek-boks-high_b_3855201.html) in Huffington Post, but my purpose is different. I want to tell a couple of stories about Bok that aren't in the book and to quote some passages that Yale's new president, Peter Salovey, and its new provost, Ben Polak, and their deans and functionaries should read, as should faculty at Yale and other institutions who are working to defend academic freedom against manifold encroachments from people who would destroy it in order to save it.

Bok shows why defending academic freedom requires hard judgment calls, such as one he doesn't mention in the book: Shortly after becoming president in 1971, he unilaterally tenured the eminent political theorist and European Jewish emigre [Judith Shklar](http://www.amphilsoc.org/sites/default/files/proceedings/480413.pdf), naming her the John Cowles Professor of Government in a department where she'd been languishing for nearly 15 years as an untenured lecturer.

A Harvard president has a "constitutional" right to do that. But was Bok's move an unwarranted encroachment on scholarly self-governance and peer review? Or a long overdue blow against a sexism that hadn't openly declared itself?

These questions take on new inflections if you imagine Lawrence Summers tenuring someone he favored in a foot-dragging department. Bok was able to do it only after he pondered peculiarities of the case that I won't go into here and because enough faculty trusted his balance of high principle, alertness to paradox, and nuance in leadership to accept, even welcome, his decision.

Such was Bok's credibility that not only did he serve as president for 20 continuous years, until 1991; he was called back for a year in 2006 to put Harvard together after the division and debacle of the Summers years.

If American universities are to survive what's happening to this country, many brave, sound judgments will have to be made by faculty and administrators, often working together, but often by challenging one another. They'll have to find ways to steer liberal eduction through cultural, economic, and political riptides without degrading it into a commodity, a grand strategy, or an ornament for a global managerial class that answers to no republican polity or moral code.

With students and even faculty scrambling to serve the casino-like financing of a consumer-groping global juggernaut that's delivering millions from grinding poverty into soulless depravity, who'll ensure that universities keep asking the right questions about it and finding answers that haven't been over-determined by profiteering or political pressure?

Bok doesn't tell old stories to guide the perplexed. He offers wise judgments and summarizes new research to show liberal educators what to watch out for and how to be better navigators in shifting cross-currents.   
  
Thus the same Derek Bok who elevated Judith Shklar and learned that "Presidents may have a better sense of the real-world constraints and the institution's needs" also writes that "professors frequently have a clearer appreciation of academic values than do top leadership." And he warns that presidents who "believe that they will be judged almost entirely by their success in 'growing' the institution... are more likely to resort to dubious methods of raising money and to overlook nascent threats to academic values."

"It is executive authority, after all, not [faculty] governance, that was primarily responsible for such debacles as the well-known excesses of big-time college athletics and the costly failure of for-profit internet ventures undertaken by several prominent universities around the beginning of the century," he adds. He even finds it "difficult to accept the view of trustees and former presidents who claim that [shared administrative-faculty governance of universities] are dysfunctional and that faculty participation should diminish. Professors have obvious interest in theinternal affairs of universities and their support for decisions affecting teaching and research is so essential to success that there is no real alternative to shared governance."

Shared governance isn't achieved if administrators appoint faculty "amen corners" of professorial courtiers who don't communicate openly with colleagues and aren't much trusted by them. Such appointments break the faith and trust that universities depend on.

Yale's president Richard Levin and four of its trustees [broke that faith when they unilaterally committed Yale's name](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/how-yales-singapore-ventu_b_1352729.html) and its administrative and pedagogical resources to a joint venture with the corporatist, manifestly repressive city-state of Singapore. They broke it further by appointing an "advisory committee" of ambitious professors in New Haven to mediate the deal.  
  
Two earlier Yale presidents who savored academic leadership's paradoxes and nuances without sacrificing its principles were A. Whitney Griswold, a descendant of colonial Connecticut governors who crusaded for liberal education against both McCarthyism and Communism during the Cold War, and his successor Kingman Brewster, Jr., a direct descendant of the Elder William Brewster, the Plymouth Pilgrims' minister, who defended liberal education against both would-be revolutionaries in the streets and conservative reactionaries among Yale alumni who had somehow missed out on liberal education itself.

Doing that took not only immense personal strength but a deep sense of liberal education's mission and the university's soul. Brewster once deflated one of his relatives' preening about their distinguished lineage by joking that he was glad that "you and I had the wisdom to choose such a magnificent ancestor."

It was out of that sort of confidence that, in 1968, as Columbia University exploded in a police bust of anti-war demonstrators assailing an administration as clueless as Harvard's would be a year later, Brewster called his old Harvard Law School colleague Archibald Cox, the future Watergate special prosecutor, to propose an emergency strategy session at a secret picnic spot between New Haven and Cambridge.

Cox brought along Bok, who was just then becoming the new dean of Harvard Law School, to the hillside meeting with Brewster near Mystic Seaport, on the Connecticut coast. Bok recalls that Brewster arrived in a limousine bearing a butler who set out a table with white linen service and crystal - another instance of Brewsteresque panache that presaged an intensely serious discussion from which he emerged to become the Ivy president whose adroit balancing of high principle and alertness to paradox prevented Yale from exploding during the 1970 murder and conspiracy trials of several Black Panthers, including Bobby Seale, in New Haven.

Brewster's public statement, given atop a metaphorical powder keg, that he was "skeptical of the ability of Black revolutionaries to achieve a fair trial anywhere in the U.S." disarmed some self-styled revolutionaries who were hankering to blow up Yale. But it made him a lightning rod for alumni and other conservative critics whose bitter resentments of the anti-war and black power demonstrators might have fallen even more heavily upon students who were supporting the trial defendants. His strategic opening of the campus, instead of barricading it, may have saved it from being stormed, occupied, and violently vacated, as Harvard's and Columbia's had been.

Although Bok didn't need to head off such violence as Harvard's president, he did have to cope with its aftermath. And although he doesn't write about that in this book, academic leaders and scholars will devour his judicious renderings of challenges facing liberal education's mission now, a mission that is both conservative and radical: As universities struggle toseparate educational fads and mirages from reforms that truly strengthen their capacity to preserve and extend knowledge, they learn to resist the seductions and manic demands of profiteering that stampedes faddists toward dead ends.

Among such dead ends, Bok warns, is the predatory sub-priming of higher education by some for-profit universities.

He notes that only 20 percent of American undergraduates attend four-year, residential colleges and that many of the rest are older, have dependents, and are desperate to find careers. While some profit-driven schools may serve them, too many for-profits play on young people's yearnings, drawing them into inappropriate environments and insupportable debts.

In the process, universities are transformed from crucibles of a shared civilization and civic cultures into over-the-counter cultures, and students are taught not to be citizens who can deepen their commitments to society while in college, but to be consumers who are out only for themselves.

To keep from drifting toward such degradation of society and individuals, universities need wiser "investors," some of them public, some private, some intellectual, some economic - civic-minded leaders who "are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it," as Thomas Jefferson wrote in founding the University of Virginia in 1819.

Bok shows that neither a top-down, business-corporate model nor a statist one will encourage universities to "tolerate any error" or to liberate reason to combat it. Doing that requires the artistry and courage of a Whitney Griswold, a Kingman Brewster, or a Derek Bok - not necessarily an American aristocrat, as they were, but anyone who can measure up to the challenges Bok surveys in Higher Education in America.

Repeatedly he urges an understanding of undergraduate liberal education as a resource for citizens who can think critically and give voice effectively to their concerns while listening to the concerns of others - even when they're "citizens of the world" more than of a particular country. As Bok poses the challenge, "How can colleges prepare their students for a world in which their lives are likely to be linked increasingly with countries and cultures far different from their own?"

If, for example, New York University wants to prepare its students by opening portal campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai, shouldn't it first have proved that it can prepare a student from the affluent New York suburb of Scarsdale to "link increasingly" to a student from the South Bronx, where NYU abandoned a handsome campus years ago? Shouldn't Yale show that it can link its students to those of the radically different cultures and social classes living only a few blocks away?

Or are campuses abroad [more a dodge than an engagement](http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/globe-trotting-universities-serve-diplomacy-and-markets-not-democracy) of the differences that will really matter in the global village? Bok stops short of endorsing them without strong cautions. He cites enormous political risks and their drain on energies and resources that are increasingly needed at home. And he tells me that he takes a dim view of Singapore, where Yale has co-founded a Yale-National University of Singapore College.

"I had my own run-in with [Singapore's authoritarian founder] Lee Kuan Yew some years ago," he told me, "when the government in Singapore jailed the young head of the Harvard Club for 'consorting with the wrong people.' I wrote in protest to Lee and was surprised to receive a letter of several typewritten pages from him trying to persuade me that Asian values are different from those in the United States."

Lee's concoction of "Asian values" has been widely discredited -- and he himself has tempered it -- as a deterrent to Western moralists who dare to judge repressive societies. But as authoritarian rulers try to ride the golden riptides of global finance, communications, labor migration, and consumer marketing, they're expanding state coercion to shore up the social cohesion their societies once drew from the Confucian, Islamic, or even Western colonial traditions that are dissolving amid huge new inequalities and degrading and criminal behavior.

The Economist magazine casts "a sceptical eye" on this variant of state-capitalist control, which it says was pioneered by Singapore's Lee, whom it characterized as "a tireless advocate of 'Asian values,' by which he meant a mixture of family values and authoritarianism."

Such rulers want liberal education to help them finesse the brutality and hypocrisy of their bargains with "go go" economic development in the name of increasing prosperity (and increasing inequality and cultural instability.) They want American colleges' imprimaturs and the "critical thinking" and felicity in writing and speaking that a liberal education may provide to regime managers and spokesmen.  
  
But Bok told me that "Nothing in that experience [with Lee Kwan Yew] would tempt me to try to establish a Harvard College in Singapore." His commitment is to improving teaching and learning for undergraduates, and while no one questions that many students in burgeoning new Asian markets are energetic and terrifically bright, their regimes are bent on channeling what they learn. Universities have more than enough such "channeling" to contend with in the United States, whose civil society and politics are collapsing before our eyes for want of civic-republican leadership training of the kind that American colleges used to provide.

Bok worries that even most professors are unaware of a large, growing body of rigorous research that discredits their rosy assumptions about what their students are actually learning. Only "efforts from outside the faculty itself" will "make professors aware that the methods of instruction they are using or the assumptions on which their course requirements rely are open to serious question in light of emerging evidence."

The technological opportunities and social pressures, and, with them, the habits and expectations of undergraduates, have changed so much in recent decades that they retain far less from lectures and spend less time studying than their lecturers assume.

University departments haven't taken a hard look at what they're actually teaching to undergraduates who'll never become scholars but who need to enhance critical thinking and communicating as citizens and professionals - abilities that, the best research now shows, aren't enhanced by most of their courses:

"Only a small fraction of the questions asked on exams in liberal arts colleges and research universities demanded critical thinking; most questions simply called upon lower levels of skills of memory and comprehension of material."

"The key to educational reform lies in gathering evidence that will convince the faculty that current teaching methods are not accomplishing the results that professors assume.... Once that is acknowledged, the underlying values of the faculty will usually compel them to seek corrective actions. The critical questions, then, are whether academic leaders will actively seek to identify existing weaknesses and how they can best go about doing so."

Bok cites devastating, depressing studies of what undergraduates actually take away from coursework, especially in their majors. Here the same Bok who recognizes the indispensability of faculty to university governance notes that professors need to be prodded by others - including enlightened college presidents -- to stop using "academic freedom" and "autonomy" to cover for self-interested methodological preoccupations that compromise their teaching of undergraduates who won't follow them into labyrinths of research.

"The rationale for the discipline-based liberal arts major is far from clear," he notes, challenging departments to develop learning objectives for students who won't become academics. And he suggests breaking up lectures into interactive and applied group exercises.

He's remarkably - and, again, perhaps, paradoxically -- open to pedagogical possibilities in emerging technologies, as long as we don't inflate them for mercenary reasons: "As technology develops, [online] encounters will come to seem more and more similar to classes in which all participants are sitting in the same room." Even "computer games, along with avatars in virtual words and other vivid simulations, create additional opportunities for engrossing learning activities...."

I haven't done even rough justice here to Higher Education in America. It has sections on professional schools, research protocols and trends, and more. Bok has also written other books on universities in the marketplace, undergraduate education, and affirmative action.

But university leaders and faculty who want to save liberal education from corporatization and to rescue undergraduates' preparation for citizenship from consumerism should read this book and put more energy in to shared governance as he portrays it and has mastered it, with all its tensions and warts.

**26.**   
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/singapore-migrants-riot-w_b_4422393.html>

also at TR Emeritus, a Singapore website: <http://www.tremeritus.com/2013/12/12/migrants-riot-websites-chill-but-yale-nus-stays-warm/>

also at openDemocracy.net: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/jim-sleeper/singapore-migrants-riot-websites-chill-but-yale-in-singapore-keeps-warm-0>

December 11, 2013

# [politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/politics/)

# Singapore Migrants Riot, Websites Chill, but Yale-in-Singapore Keeps Warm

[Jim Sleeper](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper)

**JIM SLEEPER**

Lecturer in Political Science, Yale University

Yesterday a South China Morning Post account of a riot by Indian and Bangladeshi migrant workers in Singapore [noted](http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1376682/27-arrested-after-little-india-riot-singapore) that "Singapore is persisting with a four-year campaign to reduce its reliance on foreign workers, after years of open immigration policy led to voter discontent over increased competition for housing, jobs and education. The move has led to a labour shortage and pushed up wages, prompting some companies to seek cheaper locations."

A [video](http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/singapore/story/little-india-riot-27-nabbed-more-expected-be-arrested-hours-and-days-f) of the riot posted by the government-controlled Straits Times predictably emphasized lawlessness and re-establishing control, but not the riot's likely causes, other than to vow that the government will "investigate" them.

But last summer the Wall Street Journal ran a [5-part series](http://blogs.wsj.com/searealtime/2013/08/31/singapore-strike-the-full-story/) on a strike by migrant Chinese bus drivers in Singapore who felt they'd been cheated in wages and forced to live in miserable conditions. More than 25 of them were promptly deported.

Also last summer, workers building the Yale-National University of Singapore College's new campus were kept on the job even as air pollution rose beyond acceptable safety standards, again focusing attention on working conditions in Singapore.

You might think that someone in the government would have learned something by now without requiring a new commission to "investigate" the causes.

Kenneth Jeyaretnam, secretary-general of the tiny opposition Reform Party, tells me that although government-controlled media and spokesmen blame the riot "on the availability of alcohol and racial stereotyping of Indians as peculiarly susceptible to alcohol,... the real reason is that the PAP's growth strategy is bound up with the exploitation of cheap labour rather than raising wages of SIngaporeans. These workers apparently earn as little as US$14 per day which is not much more than they were getting thirty years ago! Plus they are exploited by middlemen and deeply in debt. ...No wonder they feel they have nothing to lose."  
  
And no wonder the riot has produced the frantic yet already-stale government response, including using Gurkhas, who are basically foreign mercenaries, to quell this disturbance by other foreigners. Inevitably, we'll also hear renewed calls for "Singapore for Singaporeans."

The pattern in Singapore isn't as egregious as in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, more than 60 percent of whose populations are migrant workers living in virtual indentured servitude. But Singapore's ruling party will be increasingly hard put to keep the lid on this discontent, and while that explains recent efforts to reduce the proportion of migrant laborers in the population, it also suggests how difficult it will be to reduce income inequality without turning the new world order's go-go investors into "Going, going, gone" ones.

Not only isn't the government saying much about these dimensions of the Little India riot. It's also warning internet sites not to spread rumors about the riots, and it has been intensifying its crackdown on internet sites, notes Cherian George the distinguished Singaporean scholar of press freedom whose rejection for tenure at Nanyang Technical University was protested internationally.

"After trying to impose unnecessarily onerous registration requirements on two sites, one of them, Breakfastnetwork.sg, has decided not to comply," [George writes.](http://blog.freedomfromthepress.info/2013/12/10/online-freedom-time-to-revise-the-singapore-report-card/) "The [Singapore government's] Media Development Authority's response: 'Since Breakfast Network has decided not to submit the registration form, and will therefore not be complying with the registration notification, MDA will require that Breakfast Network cease its online service.'"

George judges that the government's self-described "light touch" regulation of the internet has now been superseded by a heavier hand.

The fallout from these abuses of labor and freedom of speech casts a long shadow on Yale-NUS' hopes to become an international hub for liberal education. Nearly 70 percent of the new college's students may be Singaporeans, if you include permanent residents of Singapore who aren't citizens (the official figure is that 62 percent of Yale-NUS students are Singaporeans). People keep asking why Yale has lent its name and energy to this venture.

Why did Yale even inflate the numbers of Yale-NUS applicants from around the world last year by enabling all applicants to Yale College in New Haven to apply simultaneously to Yale-NUS by doing nothing more than checking a box? The answers to such questions are still secret, in that Yale and NUS keep secret the terms of their agreement, signed and sealed before Yale's faculty had any say in it.

The Yale College Faculty in New Havenvoted this week to establish an elected faculty Senate for the first time in the institution's 312-year history. At the meeting, the distinguished Southeast Asian Studies scholar James Scott rose to remind resistant, prevaricating administrators that establishing a Senate must entail a power shift, not least because Yale-NUS was created without faculty deliberation or decision-making.

Yale's new president, Peter Salovey, should not appoint a faculty committee to scope out the new senate's powers. The faculty should elect colleagues who indicate their philosophical and policy inclinations. Yes, dear professorial moderates: The governance of universities involves differences between faculty and administration about who should have power to decide certain questions, as retired Harvard President Derek Bok has made amply clear in his new Higher Education in America and as he told me in an [interview](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/who-really-runs-american-_b_4037801.html) that I reported here in Huffington Post.

The question of who deliberates and decides is important, as Singaporeans themselves know well. Americans shouldn't be learning and copying from Singapore in this matter. Yet they are, and this is what Salovey must prove Yale will not do.

Singapore has its own history and challenges. In facing them it has made itself an attractive "port of call" and *entrepot* for ships coming from and going to other places. But Singapore's own problems are going to get bigger. Even its successes owe much to its geopolitical situation and its tiny size, which make it too politically anomalous to be a model for large liberal-democratic republics.

In other words, we critics of Yale's venture in this increasingly troubled island aren't preoccupied with Singapore's sins but with Yale's misjudgments in accommodating itself so readily to them in a joint venture bearing its name. As we challenge those accommodations, we are not being moralistic and passing judgment on Singapore, as its defensive apologists often accuse us critics of doing. We are criticizing the judgment of Levin and four current or recent Yale trustees -- Charles Goodyear IV, Charles Ellis, G. Leonard Baker, who have been longtime investors and advisers in Singapore, and Fareed Zakaria, the former Yale trustee who has touted Singapore as a model for economic liberalization that produces political liberalization.

We want to know what these leaders thought they were doing. We sense that they launched Yale on a grand misadventure that -- like the repeal of American lawsthat had preventedbankers from behaving like casino operators, or like the launching of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan - seemed noble and even triumphant at first but looked myopic and worse before long.

Recall the original enthusiasm for the Iraq venture as a leader in democracy promotion and nation-building. So swept up in the nobility of that venture was the columnist David Brooks that he promoted it while teaching at Yale in the fall semester of 2002, in an article for the Yale Herald, and that he kept his son Joshua up late to watch the statue of Saddam Hussein being torn down by U.S. troops in Baghdad in March of 2003. In 2004, Brooks, supporting George W. Bush, announced on PBS that Bush's opponent John Kerry hadn't been able to pass "the Joshua test" because he'd been introduced to Joshua but hadn't connected with him, "and anyone who can't connect with at 10-year-old boy can't connect with the American electorate."

How wonderful the Iraq War and Bush's re-election seemed to Brooks and many others teaching at Yale back then! How mercilessly they tweaked feckless liberals who wrote angry columns denouncing both ventures! But Brooks may have gotten a bit more than he'd wished for when Joshua graduated high school and joined the Marines and soon afterward [entered the University of Indiana](http://www.indystar.com/article/20120311/OPINION03/203110303/5Qs-David-Brooks), Class of 2014. Brooks reports that Joshua has loved Indiana, but the father, whose love-hate obsession with the Ivy League is well-known, was back at Yale last year teaching a course on "Humility."   
  
Far be it from me and other critics of Yale's venture in Singapore to predict consequences similar to those of American elites' other recent misadventures. I have not predicted explosive scandals, strikes, or other conflicts at Yale-NUS. What I do fear is that, at the same time thatdisturbances like the Chinese bus drivers' strike and the Little India riot unfold, we're witnessing an increasingly seductive, tight convergence of state-capitalist modes of social control in the lives of more privileged residents of both the U.S. and Singapore.

I mean the kind of social control described in William Dobson's The Dictator's Learning Curve, which shows how self-censorship spreads when "fear leaves no fingerprints." I also mean the softer control symbolized in a recent decision by The Brookings Institution, a once-noble Washington think tank headed by a Yale graduate and former deputy secretary of state, Strobe Talbott, to accept hundreds of millions of dollars from Singaporean sources eager to burnish the cloudy reputation of the country's founder, Lee Kuan Yew, by [naming a chair](http://www.brookings.edu/about/media-relations/news-releases/2013/1025-lee-kuan-yew-chair-southeast-asia) in Southeast Asian Studies for Lee - the first time Brookings has named a chair for a political leader rather than simply for a donor.

Normally I'd favor naming academic posts and buildings for public figures, rather than donors whose only distinction is their largesse. But the public leaders should represent the values of the institution that's honoring them. The elder Lee has quite a few smooth, even slick, neoliberal American apologists these days, and his role in Singapore's founding and development is well known. But he hasn't enough democratic nerve ends in his body - he doesn't even believe in "one man, one vote" - to be honored even by the cash-hungry Brookings.(I'll find another occasion to unpack Lee's record (and his apologists' rationalizations) as well as the Brookings money.)

Harvard's Bok isn't one of Lee's apologists. "I had my own run-in with Lee kuan Yew some years ago when the government in Singapore jailed the young head of the Harvard Club for consorting with the wrong people. I wrote in protest to Lee and was surprised to receive a letter of several typewritten pages from him trying to persuade me that Asian values are different from those in the United States" -- a notion so discredited in contexts like this, as I've explained [here](http://washsp.ec/Hw9IFI#.UnPGmJ4l_gc.gmail), that Lee himself has since backed off of it. "Nothing in that experience would tempt me to try to establish a Harvard College in Singapore," Bok wrote me.

I sketched my worries about the all-too-smooth convergences between Singapore and the U.S. in a column that ran both [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-sleeper/at-yale-college-the-sound_b_3881509.html) and in the independent Singapore website [Tremeritus](http://www.tremeritus.com/2013/09/08/at-yale-college-the-sounds-of-silence/) three months ago, so I won't repeat the rest of those worries here.

I and most critics of Yale-NUS hope that its hand-picked, inaugural class of 157 students and its equally smart, idealistic faculty will have experiences as rewarding as those that Yale journalists visiting Yale-NUS in its first month of classes described in celebratory reports [here](http://thepolitic.org/worlds-apart/) and [here](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/articles/3771).

But I urge every Yale-NUS student to read about Mae Holland, the bright, wide-eyed protagonist of Dave Eggers' new, 1984'ish novel The Circle, (here's an [excerpt](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/magazine/dave-eggers-fiction.html?_r=0) that ran in the New York Times.) And I hope that they'll do something that neither she nor anyone else in the novel was able to do: use liberal education to ensure that they aren't skipping too lightly up a garden path, as she did, into an enticing but soulless Orwellian circle of neoliberal enslavement that the columnist Joe Nocera captured so acutely in a [short piece on Eggers' dystopia.](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/15/opinion/nocera-a-world-without-privacy.html?_r=0)

Singapore's Little India riot and other disturbances may fire the imaginations and deliberations of Yale-NUS students and faculty. So should the Yale-in-New Haven faculty's decision to establish a Senate whose actual power and freedom they'll have to secure with energetic participation, not with the mere appearances of the rule of law that Singapore's government presents to the world. Yet the Yale administration sometimes seems to be trying to learn from Singapore how to do the same thing in its own university's governance in America.

Americans who haven't given up on liberal democracy -- as I suspect increasingly that the more pathological of our leaders secretly have -- should pay close attention to what's going on behind Singapore's glittering facade before they praise Yale's role in plunging Yale-NUS' idealistic young students and faculty into a reinvention of liberal education there. Why not join in a struggle to reinvent it right here, in an ailing American republic and amid global riptides that are turning liberal education into a commodity and management skill?

**27.**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/12/education/american-colleges-finding-ideals-are-tested-abroad.html?_r=0>

December 11, 2013

# U.S. Colleges Finding Ideals Tested Abroad

###### By [TAMAR LEWIN](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/l/tamar_lewin/index.html)

WELLESLEY, Mass. — Members of the Wellesley College faculty reacted strongly when word spread that [Peking University](http://english.pku.edu.cn/) might fire Prof. Xia Yeliang, a critic of the Chinese government. Professor Xia, an economist, had visited Wellesley over the summer after the college signed a partnership agreement with Peking University.

In September, 130 Wellesley faculty members sent an open letter to Peking University’s president, warning that if Professor Xia was dismissed for his political views, they would seek reconsideration of the partnership. The next month, [Professor Xia was fired](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/26/world/asia/chinese-university-defends-outspoken-teachers-firing.html). Peking University said it was because of his teaching, not his politics, but many at Wellesley doubted that. Still, after much debate, the faculty voted to keep the partnership, as the college president preferred.

Like American corporations, American colleges and universities have been extending their brands overseas, building campuses, study centers and partnerships, often in countries with autocratic governments. Unlike corporations, universities claim to place ideals and principles, especially academic freedom, over income. But as professors abroad face consequences for what they say, most universities are doing little more than wringing their hands. Unlike foreign programs that used to be faculty-driven, most of the newer ones are driven by administrations and money.

“Globalization raises all kinds of issues that didn’t come up when it was just kids spending junior year in France,” said [Susan Reverby](https://www.wellesley.edu/wgst/faculty/reverby), one of the Wellesley professors supporting Professor Xia. “What does it mean to let our name be used? Where do we draw a line in the sand? Does a partnership with another university make their faculty our colleagues, obliging us to stand up for them? Do we wait for another Tiananmen Square?”

Wellesley is hardly alone in wrestling with these issues. Many American universities have partnerships with Peking University, but few reacted to Professor Xia’s dismissal.

“We went into our relationship with Peking University with the knowledge that American standards of academic freedom are the product of 100 years of evolution,” said [Richard Saller](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/classics/cgi-bin/web/people/faculty/richard-saller), dean of the school of Humanities and Sciences at Stanford University, which opened a [$7 million center](http://scpku.stanford.edu/) at Peking University last year. “We think engagement is a better strategy than taking such moral high ground that we can’t engage with some of these universities.”

This week, another prominent professor, Zhang Xuezhong, who teaches at the East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai, [lost his job](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/11/world/asia/chinese-professor-who-advocated-free-speech-is-fired.html) after refusing to apologize for writing that the Communist Party was hostile to the rule of law. That university has many partnerships with foreign institutions, including an exchange program with the law school at Willamette University in Oregon and an executive M.B.A. program offered with the University of Wisconsin law school.

With so many universities seeking a foothold in China — New York University opened a Shanghai campus this year and Duke will open one in Kunshan next year — concern is growing over China’s record of censorship. Earlier this year, the Chinese government banned [classroom discussion of seven topics,](http://chronicle.com/article/China-Bans-7-Topics-in/139407/) including human rights and the past mistakes of the Chinese Communist Party.

Of course, similar issues arise elsewhere. Last year, just as Yale was starting a liberal arts college in partnership with the National University of Singapore, the Yale faculty, despite the university president’s objections, passed a resolution expressing concern about Singapore’s “recent history of lack of respect for civil and political rights.”

“There’s a million unanswered questions about Yale and Singapore,” Christopher Miller, a Yale professor, said. “We don’t know how much of the Singapore specialty of self-censorship has taken place. I continue to think the whole setup is inappropriate, and deeply regret that this was set up where it was and the way it was.”

Last month, Frederick M. Lawrence, the president of Brandeis University, suspended a 15-year partnership with [Al Quds University](http://www.alquds.edu/en), a Palestinian university in Jerusalem, after campus demonstrators in black military garb raised a Nazi-like salute, and the president of Al Quds, asked to condemn the demonstration, responded with a letter that Mr. Lawrence deemed “unacceptable and inflammatory.” Syracuse University followed suit. But Bard College, which offers dual degrees with Al Quds, is staying.

Many American colleges argue that their presence abroad helps to spread liberal values and push other societies toward openness, whereas leaving would accomplish little.

“I think engagement is more important than rules right now,” said Allan Goodman, the president of the Institute of International Education. “It’s in our institute’s DNA to advocate engagement, because that process is what brings change.”

Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, cautioned that universities must be prepared to revoke partnerships that violate basic principles of freedom. “I do see value in liberal education, but you have to ask on what terms,” he said. “If a country like China wants to legitimize a cramped version of liberal education by attracting prestigious Western universities, there’s a real possibility of those universities compromising the values on which they were built because they’re so eager to get into China.”

Some universities, including Columbia, have created study centers rather than branch campuses, in part to avoid commitments that would be hard to break.

At Wellesley, the faculty protest did have some effect: Wellesley’s president announced that a faculty group would develop recommendations “for the parameters and elements of the partnership” to be approved by the full faculty. And Professor Xia is being invited to spend two years as a visiting fellow at the Freedom Project, a program at the college.

But given that Chinese universities have many Communist Party representatives in their administration, Thomas Cushman, the sociology professor who leads that project, is still deeply concerned. “We’re not telling them to adopt the Bill of Rights,” he said. “We’re asking what it means for Wellesley to work with a regime that instills fear in people. I’m concerned that a formal relationship could affect how we work here — that maybe in our exchange program, we’d only send people who talk about safe subjects.” '

When American universities establish campuses abroad, they usually have explicit agreements guaranteeing free speech for faculty and students within the cloister of the campus — but implicitly accepting local limits on off-campus expression. “As I believe would be true in any country,” Duke’s provost, Peter Lange, said, “your behavior there is governed by the laws of that country.”

That understanding also holds at New York University’s campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai, both paid for by those governments. While John Sexton, the university’s president, sees it as the first global university, that vision has many critics. The faculty has voted no confidence in Dr. Sexton partly over this issue.

In 2011, after the arrest of three dissidents in the United Arab Emirates, Human Rights Watch called on N.Y.U. to protest: “Is N.Y.U. going to advertise the magnificence of studying in Abu Dhabi while the government persecutes an academic for his political beliefs?” Sarah Leah Whitson, the group’s Middle East director, said then.

The university responded that in Abu Dhabi or elsewhere, it did not get involved in matters outside its academic mission.

In September, the N.Y.U. chapter of the American Association of University Professors wrote to the trustees, describing their concerns about the overseas campuses. “Accepting vast sums of money from foreign governments puts N.Y.U. and every scholar affiliated with the university in a morally compromising situation,” it said. “In such situations, academic freedom is usually the first casualty.”

While working inside a bubble in a country hostile to free speech, the letter said, faculty’s important public role is stifled.

The trustees did not respond, said Andrew Ross, the head of the university’s A.A.U.P. chapter.