

## Another Rainy Saturday in New Haven

e. christi cunningham<sup>†</sup>

During the first weeks of the fall semester of 1990, a Yale law student was sexually assaulted. In response to this attack, some person or group of people put anonymous hate letters in the mailboxes of ten African-American law students. Dean Calabresi published the following edited version of the hate letter in a statement to the law school:

*Last Sunday [a crime was committed off campus involving] one of our classmates . . . . This crime was done by two black men . . . . Now do you know why we call you NIGGERS?*

### *Yale Students for Racism*

There was no response from either the faculty or the students. The law school, which is usually a hub of political activism and concern, was unmoved. The wall in the law school, which is typically covered with statements and political posters of all varieties ranging from the trivial to the profound, was empty. To many members of the Black Law Students Association, it appeared that the faculty and students were unconcerned about the threat that the anonymous letters presented to African-American students and the sexual attack suffered by one of our classmates. These events were quickly followed by several other racial incidents suffered by Black law students in settings outside of the law school. These incidents likewise went unanswered.

Although discussion of the incidents eventually culminated in a one-day student moratorium on classes that included racism workshops and rallies, *Another Rainy Saturday in New Haven* was the first public statement made in response to the Dean's publication of the events.

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## Another Rainy Saturday in New Haven

Listen

to the Silence

*Now do you know why we call you NIGGERS?*

It resonates

with the grinding and churning  
of the day to day of everyday at YLS

*Now do you know?*

It harmonizes

with the bustling and humming  
of note-writing, class-attending, interviewing YLS

*why?*

It patters

in the background like rain  
on another New Haven Saturday

It thunders

louder than the cowardly whine  
of anonymous hate mail

The deafening Silence of the Committee Against Bigotry, a barren wall,  
the unheard masses of YLS

*we call you NIGGERS*

Listen

to the Silence

I know you can hear it  
with her pain it's a duet  
with my rage it's a trio

or maybe it's a chorus

*Now do you know why we call you NIGGERS?*

maybe it's a group effort (the Silence, I mean)

*Last Sunday [a crime was committed]*

*Yesterday the following was placed in the mailboxes of a  
large group of African-American students*

*Thursday two first-years were randomly stopped and  
frisked by New Haven police (the two  
students just happened to be Black men)*

*Friday a Black first-year woman, accompanied by eight  
other Black women, was physically  
assaulted by a stanger venting racial hatred*

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Listen

to the Silence of YLS

I know you can hear it

I can hardly hear anything else.

