YALE BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
127 WALL STREET - NEW HAVEN, CT 06511

CONSTITUTION

Article I: Name

The name of this organization shall be the "Yale Black Law Students Association" (hereinafter referred to as "YBLSA").

Article II: Affiliation

YBLSA shall be affiliated with the National Black Law Students Association (hereinafter referred to as "NBLSA"). As an affiliate of NBLSA, YBLSA will act as the national organization's Yale chapter. YBLSA will maintain communication with national and regional branches and make an effort to attend conferences and participate in NBLSA campaigns and events.

Article III: Purposes

It shall be the purposes of YBLSA:

a) To articulate and promote the professional needs and goals of Black law students at Yale Law School;

b) To foster professional competence among Black law students at Yale Law School;

c) To examine and cultivate a greater awareness of the relationship of Black law students and Black attorneys to the American legal system;

d) To influence the legal community to bring about meaningful change in and through the legal system to meet the needs of the Black community;

e) To facilitate successful recruitment and matriculation of Black law students, particularly at the Yale Law School;

f) To create and maintain active relationships between YBLSA and the larger law school and university communities, as well as the broader New Haven community; and

g) To facilitate social interaction and camaraderie among Black law students.

Article IV: Membership

Section 1: Types of Membership
General membership in YBLSA may consist of all matriculated students at Yale Law School, who are committed to the purpose of this organization as stated in Article III of this constitution.

Active membership in YBLSA shall be bestowed upon all dues-paying general members of YBLSA.

Associate membership in YBLSA shall be extended to all faculty and staff of Yale Law School.

The general, active and associate members of YBLSA shall constitute the general body of YBLSA.

Section 2: Rights and Responsibilities of Members

General and associate members of YBLSA are entitled to participate in all activities sponsored by YBLSA, provided that where nonmembers are charged an entrance fee to a YBLSA activity, general and associate members shall also be charged the entrance fee. General and associate members of YBLSA shall not vote on YBLSA business or in YBLSA elections, and shall not hold any office in YBLSA.

Active members of YBLSA are entitled to participate in all activities sponsored by YBLSA, are entitled to hold office in YBLSA, and are entitled to vote on YBLSA business and in YBLSA elections.

All YBLSA members are expected to regularly attend general body meetings of YBLSA and support activities engaged in by YBLSA.

Article V: Officers

The Executive Officers of YBLSA shall be the:

a) President

b) Vice-President

c) Secretary

d) Treasurer

e) Parliamentarian

f) 3L Representative
The Executive Officers of YBLSA shall be elected annually for a term of one year to commence at the Spring Election. The Chairpersons of the Standing Committees also shall be elected annually for a term of one year to commence at the Spring Election.

The Executive Board of YBLSA shall be composed of the YBLSA Executive Officers and Chairpersons of the Standing Committees.

**Article VI: Meetings**

The general body of YBLSA shall meet at the discretion of the executive board, but shall meet at least once every month during the school year. Special meetings shall be called upon the directive of the President, or upon the directive of any three Executive Board members or ten active members.

The Executive Board of YBLSA shall meet at the discretion of the officers, but shall meet at least once per month during the school year. Special meetings shall be called upon the directive of the Vice-President or upon the directive of any three Executive Board members.

**Article VII: Quorum, Voting and Proposals**

A quorum shall consist of one-third plus one of the active members of YBLSA. A simple majority vote of the quorum shall approve proposed YBLSA activities or events presented to the general body.

A simple majority of all active members will be required to approve proposed official organizational statements.

General Members will have a means by which they can initiate proposals to be presented for a vote. All proposals will be subject to budget approval.

**Article VIII: Impeachment and Vacancies**

Any officer, liaison or standing committee chairperson of YBLSA may be impeached by YBLSA for failure to properly execute his or her duties as enumerated in the Constitution and/or By-Laws of YBLSA, or for failure to follow a directive given by the general body or the executive board.

When an officer or committee chairperson position becomes vacant, due to impeachment, resignation or the new creation of an ad-hoc committee, the President will have the power to appoint an active member of the Association to that post. Such appointments are subject to the recommendations and approval of the Executive Board.
Article IX: Amendments and Policy Changes

This Constitution may be amended at any regular general body meeting of YBLSA upon a two-thirds vote of all active members, provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the general body.

The Policies may be altered from year to year by the incoming Executive Board at their discretion. Proposed Policy changes for the upcoming academic year should be presented and explained to the general membership at the first General Body meeting of the academic year. Unchallenged policy changes will be implemented immediately and do not require an affirmative vote from the General Body. If any full and active BLSA member wishes to object and challenge any proposed change, they may call for the policy change to be debated and put to a vote. Challenged policy changes approved by the Executive Board can only be overturned by a two-thirds vote of all active members.

If the Executive Board seeks to make any changes to Policies during the academic year, those changes should be presented and explained to the General Membership at the soonest General Body Meeting. If necessity requires quicker action, the Executive Board may inform membership of the change via email and provide a brief period for response.

Article X: Election Procedure

A. General Elections for Executive Officers and Committee Chairs

1. Nominations will be solicited by the Parliamentarian (via email or other means) up to two weeks before the General Body meeting in which elections will take place. Active Association members may nominate themselves or any other active members for any open positions. All nominees will be given the opportunity to decline any and/or all nominations prior to the General Body election meeting. A final list of nominees will be sent out at least two days before the General Body election meeting.

2. At the election meeting, all candidates, in alphabetical order, will have the opportunity to make a very brief and informal statement. This statement will include a mention of their preferred position(s) (if nominated for more than one) and any remarks regarding their qualifications for the post(s). These statements will be limited to a length of two minutes.

3. After candidate statements are complete, the floor will be opened to the BLSA membership for questions. This question session will be moderated by the Parliamentarian. A question may be directed to any candidate or group of candidates as the questioner desires. The Q&A period will be limited to 30 minutes. In the event that there are more questions than time allows, time will be allotted to allow for the greatest number of different members to ask questions.
4. Votes will be submitted by written ballot. Positions will be voted in the following order: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Parliamentarian, 3L Representative, Committee Chairs. For the positions of President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary, a one-time runoff will be held in the event that there are more than two initial candidates. One round of voting will occur, the ballots will be counted, and the top two candidates will be announced; the membership will then vote again, choosing one of those two remaining candidates, and a winner will be selected.

5. Email voting: if members are unable to vote in person, they may email their votes directly to the Parliamentarian on the day of the election, up until the time of the election.

B. Special Election for 1L Representative:

1. Nominations for 1L rep will be solicited by the Parliamentarian, in person at the first General Body meeting of the academic year and/or via email shortly thereafter. Only active 1L members of YBLSA may nominate or be nominated for this position. All nominees will have the opportunity to decline their nomination before the election takes place.

2. The 1L Rep will be selected in an instant runoff election, in which only active 1L members of YBLSA may participate. Voters will rank their top four candidates in order of preference, from 1 through 4. The Parliamentarian will first tally up the first choice votes for all candidates. Assuming no one candidate receives more than 50% of the votes at this stage, the Parliamentarian will then eliminate the candidate with the lowest number of votes. Voters who indicated that candidate as their first choice will then have their second choice votes added into the tallies. The Parliamentarian will continue to proceed as such until one candidate has received more than 50% of the votes. That candidate will be 1L Rep.

3. The 1L Rep election will take place via written ballot, solicited in person and/or by email. The 1L Rep will be elected no sooner than the first General Body meeting of the academic year, and no later than six weeks into the start of the academic year, unless extraordinary circumstances necessitate deviation from this schedule.

Article XI: Adoption and Rescission

This Constitution shall be adopted or rescinded by YBLSA upon a two-thirds vote of all active members.

YBLSA Policies

I. EXECUTIVE OFFICER DUTIES
A. The President shall:
1. Exercise general managerial authority over the business and activities of YBLSA;
2. Call and preside over meetings of the General Body and the Executive Board with the Vice-President;
3. Create Ad hoc committees as necessary for the implementation of special events subject to the approval of the Executive Board;
4. Meet with the Executive Board monthly to discuss BLSA activities;
5. Develop an annual budget in conjunction with the Treasurer subject to the approval of a majority of the Executive Board;
6. Vote in General Body and Executive Board meetings in cases of a tie;
7. Appoint all Executive Board officers not elected by the Association membership; the Executive Board shall advise the President on these appointments;
8. Appoint all Committee Chairpersons not elected by the Association; the Executive Board shall advise the President on these appointments;
9. Present ideas and propose direction for the organization;
10. Coordinate the activities of the Executive Board to ensure implementation of all internal and external tasks;
11. Serve as non-voting ex-officio member of all YBLSA committees and subgroups;
12. Develop and finalize meeting agendas in accordance with the ideas and input of the Executive Board and membership;
13. Evaluate projects, programs, and initiatives proposed by Executive Board and membership;
14. Serve as YBLSA designated spokesperson and representative to outside entities, including other student groups, members of the media, and University officials;
15. Foster interaction with BLSA organizations at peer institutions;
16. Maintain communication with YBLSA faculty advisor(s);
17. Attend National and Regional BLSA conferences whenever financially and logistically feasible; and nominate any active member as a proxy to cast votes on behalf of the YLS BLSA chapter at Regional and Sub-regional BLSA meetings. The proxy’s attendance at these meetings is dependent on availability of YBLSA funds.
18. Compile a brief synopsis of his/her yearly activities and produce a transition report at the close of the term of office.

B. The Vice-President shall:
1. Serve as internal manager to the Executive Board and oversee all intra-board relations;
2. Oversee the functioning of all committees of the Association and serve as nonvoting member;
3. Meet with each Committee monthly to discuss committee matters; this meeting may be held in conjunction with a meeting of the entire Executive Board or separately;
4. Manage and initiate a chain of communication for matters that require
immediate attention in the absence of a scheduled meeting of either the Executive Board or the General Body; the Vice-President shall exercise independent discretion in determining whether a matter should be brought before the Executive Board or the General Body;
5. Provide access to the BLSA office for members;
6. Co-Chair General Body and Executive Board meetings with the President and preside in the absence of the President;
7. Assume the Presidency in the event that the office of President becomes vacant;
8. Serve as the Association liaison and representative in the absence of the President;
9. Cast votes on behalf of the YLS BLSA chapter at Regional and Sub-regional BLSA meetings;
10. Report to the General Body and the Executive Board on the proceedings at Regional and Sub-regional BLSA meetings;
11. Solicit and encourage participation by the Association in Regional BLSA and other outside organizational events; this includes, but is not limited to, fundraisers and community service events;
12. Draft and deliver chapter reports to be presented at Regional and Sub-regional BLSA meetings, consulting with the Executive Board on the contents of those reports; and Contact the Regional Director, in the event that no representative is sent to a Regional BLSA meeting, and distribute any pertinent information to the General Body.
13. Create and revise YBLSA Constitution;
14. Oversee updates of the YBLSA website;
15. Perform other functions and duties the Executive Board may assign; and
16. Compile a brief synopsis of his/her yearly activities and produce an official transition report at the close of the term of office.

C. The Secretary shall:
1. Serve as the record keeper and administrator for the Association, including filing Association documents, typing Association correspondence, and sustaining general maintenance of the Association;
2. Record and provide minutes of every Association meeting;
3. Reserve rooms for all Association meetings;
4. Advertise all Association meetings;
5. Distribute the agenda for all General and Executive Board meetings;
6. Develop, with the Executive Board, an operational calendar of BLSA events;
7. Present an updated calendar of BLSA events to General Members at every General Body Meeting;
8. Coordinate Executive Board meetings, including meeting sites;
9. Update and maintain the BLSA membership list and email list serve;
10. Perform other functions and duties as the Executive Board may assign; and
11. Compile a brief synopsis of his/her yearly activities and produce an official transition report at the close of the term of office.

D. The Treasurer shall:
1. Handle all funds of YBLSA and ensure that they are deposited in such facility, and in such a manner, as the Board may designate;
2. Assure that entries are regularly made in the financial records, accounting for all funds received and disbursed by YBLSA;
3. Determine, with Executive Board, allocation of YBLSA funds;
4. Present general overview of budget to YBLSA membership;
5. Report on the financial resources of YBLSA at each Executive Board meeting;
6. Develop an annual budget in conjunction with the President subject to the approval of a majority of the Executive Board;
7. Review annual committee budgets with each Committee Chairperson once the budget is approved;
8. Collect dues from YBLSA membership and ensure that each member has paid their dues;
9. Research methods of obtaining funding for the Association;
10. Oversee solicitation of funds for YBLSA from outside entities, including but not limited to law firms;
11. Perform other functions and duties the Executive Board may assign; and
12. Compile a brief synopsis of his/her yearly activities and produce an official transition report at the close of the term of office.

E. The Parliamentarian shall:
1. Serve as an advisor and counsel to the Executive Board on parliamentary procedure (e.g., application and interpretation of procedural rules governing YBLSA);
2. Facilitate discussions within Association meetings pursuant to the dictates of The Modern Edition of Robert's Rules of Order, or the most recent version, thereof;
3. Ensure order and decorum within Association meetings;
4. Maintain a copy of The Modern Edition of Robert's Rules of Order, or the most recent version, thereof, at all Association meetings;
5. Serve as the Chairperson of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee with the Vice-President;
6. Serve as the lead advisor in interpreting the Constitution;
7. Maintain an accurate and updated copy of the Constitution and Policies for reference at each General Body and Executive Board meeting;
8. Update the Constitution and Policies per changes decided;
9. Coordinate YBLSA election and voting procedures and preside over all YBLSA elections;
10. Determine the presence of a quorum at all Association meetings;
11. Perform other functions and duties the Executive Board may assign; and
12. Compile a brief synopsis of his/her yearly activities and produce an official transition report at the close of the term of office.

F. The 3L Representative shall:
1. Serve as a voting member of the Executive Board;
2. Serve as a liaison for his or her class and present their issues and concerns to
the Executive Board;
3. Provide institutional knowledge and advice to the board;
4. Plan activities and events for his or her class; and
5. Compile a brief synopsis of his or her yearly activities and produce a transition report at the close of the term of office.

G. The 1L Representative shall:
1. Serve as a voting member of the Executive Board;
2. Serve as a liaison for his or her class and present their issues and concerns to the Executive Board;
3. Provide institutional knowledge and advice to the board;
4. Plan activities and events for his or her class; and
5. Compile a brief synopsis of his or her yearly activities and produce a transition report at the close of the term of office.

II. COMMITTEE DUTIES

A. GENERAL DUTIES:
1. All Committee Chairpersons are to be elected by the active members of the Association.
2. In the event that sudden vacancies or the creation of ad hoc committees necessitates selection of Committee Chairpersons by means other than election, these posts will be filled by Presidential appointment, subject to the recommendations and approval of the Executive Board.
3. Generally speaking, Committee Chairpersons should not hold other offices in the Association, although exceptions may arise.
4. The Standing Committees of the Association shall be: Academic Development Committee, Alumni Affairs Committee; Black History Month Committee; Constitution & Policies Committee; Community Service Committee; Political Action Committee; Recruitment & Professional Development Committee, and Social Committee. The Frederick Douglass Moot Court Committee shall be a standing ad-hoc committee;
5. Additional ad hoc committees may be created as necessary by the President for the implementation of special events subject to the approval of the Executive Board; the membership may propose ad hoc committees to be considered for creation by the President and broader Executive Board;
6. Each of these Committees shall have one vote on the General Board exercised by the Chairperson of that Committee. Each of the Committee Chairpersons has one vote on the Executive Board.
7. Each Committee shall be chaired by one or more persons. Chairpersons may appoint additional Assistant Chairpersons at their discretion. Generally speaking Assistant Chairpersons may not hold other offices in the Association, although exceptions may arise.
8. Committees shall be comprised of at least two persons.
9. Committee Chairpersons shall submit a schedule of events to the Secretary on a monthly basis to be put on the calendar.
10. All Committee Chairpersons shall meet at least once a month collectively to
coordinate schedules and provide reports and updates of past, prospective, and future events of each Committee. This meeting may be held in conjunction with a full Executive Board meeting or separately and will be presided over by the President and/or Vice-President.

11. Committee Chairpersons shall submit an annual budget which detail expected costs to be incurred by the Committee to the Treasurer at least a month before the annual budget deadline of May 15th.

12. All Committee Chairpersons shall make every effort to stay within their annual budget and submit receipts from events in a timely fashion to the Treasurer.

13. All Committee Chairpersons shall compile a brief synopsis of the committee’s yearly activities and produce an official transition report at the close of the term of office to the new officers.

B. COMMITTEE SPECIFIC DUTIES:

C. Duties of the Standing Committees of the Association include but are not limited to the following:

1. Academic Development Committee:
   a) To plan events throughout the year that focus on supporting BLSA members’ academic endeavors at Yale Law School, including but not limited to: a Bluebooking session, brief and memo sessions, exam preparation sessions, sessions to facilitate discussion between upperclassmen and first year students regarding professor and course selection, a Substantial/SAW writing session, and discussions on current works of legal scholarship of interest to BLSA members; and
   b) To host academic legal scholarship workshops between students and faculty and encourage the production of legal scholarship by BLSA members.

2. Alumni Affairs Committee:
   a) To organize events that connect YBLSA Alumni with the Association
   b) To serve as a liaison between Yale Law School and Alumni of the Association, providing Alumni with current news and information about events of the Association and Yale Law School;
   c) To create and maintain a database of information about Alumni of the Association and create and maintain a YBLSA Alumni Directory;
   d) To coordinate YBLSA Alumni events during Alumni Weekend.
   e) To host an annual Alumni Dinner that recognizes the achievements and contributions of outstanding African-Americans.

3. Black History Month Committee:
   a) To promote participation and interest in Black History within the Association and at the Yale Law School;
   b) To schedule, plan, and implement the Black History Month celebration events for the Association;
c) To facilitate co-sponsorships with other relevant groups about Black History;
d) To submit a calendar of Black History Month events to the Secretary by mid-January of each year; and
e) To distribute a calendar and/or advertise Black History Month events to the Yale Law School community.

4. **Community Service Committee:**
a) To execute any National BLSA mandatory community service programs that may arise;
b) To create and organize community service programs unique to the Association; and
c) To facilitate and encourage Association involvement in community service programs impacting the broader New Haven community.

5. **Political Action Committee:**
a) To discuss and create strategies which advance the political goals and interests of the Association (e.g. minority/black faculty hiring);
b) To plan events publicizing/facilitating discussion of the political topics of interest to the Association;
c) To formulate position statements to be formally adopted by the General Body through established voting procedures; and
d) To advocate the interests of the Association to the Yale Law School administration and other organizations and institutions.

6. **Recruitment & Professional Development Committee:**
a) To plan events throughout the year that focus on retaining BLSA members which may include, but are not limited to: job search sessions, law firm panels and discussions, career opportunities discussions, pre-FIP panels, and other pertinent sessions for BLSA members;
b) To organize and disseminate information for the purpose of recruiting potential applicants;
c) To work with the Admissions office of Yale Law School in contacting admitted students;
d) To plan Admit weekend activities; and
e) To create and compile materials that would be of use in the recruitment of students of African descent.

7. **Social Committee:**
a) To plan the BLSA 1L Welcome Event at the beginning of the academic year;
b) To coordinate the Association’s BLSA Buddy Program, making all possible efforts to pair first year students with second or third year students prior to or within a week of orientation, for the purpose of advising and easing the transition to law school;
c) To plan social gatherings for the Association including, but not limited to, game nights, study breaks, parties, the third year send-off, and other events
addressing the interests and concerns of members of the Association;

d) To create and organize social and networking activities with other
diversity or relevant groups at Yale Law School; and

e) To create and organize social and networking events with local/regional
BLSA chapters.

8. **Ad Hoc Committee: NBLSA Moot Court & Mock Trial Committee:**

a) To promote participation and interest in the NBLSA Moot Court & Mock
Trial Competition and Committee within the Association;

b) To facilitate procurement of current year problem, regulation, team
registration, travel needs, and accommodations for competition
participants;

 c) To communicate, consult and seek guidance from the Yale Law School
Faculty and Administration throughout the competition cycle and the
academic year;

d) To design, develop, and execute a workshop for interested potential
competition participants in the areas of brief writing, legal research, and
oral advocacy; and

e) To coach and support participants at the regional and national levels
where necessary.

*Additional Ad Hoc Committees may be created by the President and/or suggested by the membership,
subject to Executive Board approval. See YBLSA Policies II (A)(5).*

**III. General Membership Proposal Procedures**

Any active General Member seeking to propose an activity or event may contact the
Vice-President and/or the Chairs of any Committees related to the topic of their
proposal. If the appropriate Committee is unwilling or unable to sponsor the event
directly, the proposing member should be given the opportunity to present the proposal
to the General Body for a vote, either at the next General Body meeting or via email.
During the discussion period, Committee Chairs, the Executive Board and other BLSA
Members should have ample opportunity to speak in favor or in opposition of the
proposal.

General Body members proposing an official organizational statement should contact the
Executive Board to discuss the idea. If necessary, the proposal should then be presented
to the General Body for discussion and vote.

Pursuant to Article VII of the YBLSA Constitution, all proposals will be subject to budget
approval.