



1990

Another Rainy Saturday in New Haven

e. christi cunningham

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/yjlf>



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

e. c. cunningham, *Another Rainy Saturday in New Haven*, 3 YALE J.L. & FEMINISM (1990).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/yjlf/vol3/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Yale Law School Legal Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Yale Journal of Law & Feminism by an authorized editor of Yale Law School Legal Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact julian.aiken@yale.edu.

Another Rainy Saturday in New Haven

e. christi cunningham[†]

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.

[†] e. christi cunningham is a second-year student at Yale Law School, a member of the *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, and a Black woman with a chip on her shoulder. This poem is dedicated to Susan, Adrienne, and Yasmin.

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 stranger venting racial hatred*

1991]

Another Rainy Saturday in New Haven

3

Listen

to the Silence of YLS

I know you can hear it

I can hardly hear anything else.

