

# Organizational Address by IP Chairman Carmen Lee

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On the floor of the Independent Party, the question “What do you believe?” is almost always answered the same way. Not with centrist philosophical pronouncements, or diatribes against the major political parties, but with the only appropriate answer: “About what?”

We like to tell people the Independent Party spans the political spectrum, from Marxists to Neo-cons. The truth is, our members stubbornly defy categorization. What we really all have in common is a resistance to prepackaged opinions, an insistence on piecing together our own political philosophies, issue by issue. We don't fit easily into any of the familiar labels of modern political punditry. Our only ideology is the pursuit of political truths through rhetorical conflict. We are dogmatic only about rejecting dogma.

You may have heard the other parties tonight exhort you to refine, refound, or reconsider your beliefs. You may even have heard debate mentioned once or twice. Yet we in the Independent Party believe that debate that can shake your convictions, question your assumptions, and-- god forbid -- *change your mind* can only come through genuine disagreement over fundamental principles. Actually, that's often the only thing we can agree on.

As the largest party in the Union, the IP brings together students from all walks of life at Yale on the issues they really care about. We are also unique in our efforts to reach out to other campus organizations, cosponsoring debates on everything from activism to racism. We are unafraid to question even the most sacred received wisdom because the respect we have for each other is unquestionable.

And so despite our large size, the IP forms a friendly, open community. Our members are involved in the spectrum of other campus activities, and our calendar is always full—though not always with arguments. At our annual Margarita Mixer, games nights, frequent Mory's toastings and alumni weekends, we both appreciate and poke fun at Yale social traditions. Once a semester, we make a pilgrimage to New York to meet with politicians, editors, scientists, and artists. Past guests have included John Bolton, Mario Cuomo, Al Sharpton and William F. Buckley.

To doubt your beliefs takes far more courage than to believe in the first place. Resist the claustrophobic categories of “liberal” and “conservative” popular in today's politics. Reject the partisan pressures that demand adherence to a mass-produced political platform. The Independent Party invites you to make up your own mind at next week's debate, Resolved: Evangelicalism Threatens America, on Tuesday at 7:30.