

# Yale Daily News

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## Hirst: Talk to Toad's in dollars

By [Adam Lior Hirst](#)  
Commentary

Toad's has taken its place alongside the Cato Institute as a leading exemplar of libertarian, pro-business, free-markets-make-free-men capitalism. It is a for-profit business, after all. But in its efforts over the past week, with particular attention to its proposal to create a 400-square-foot rooftop terrace and its dreadful decision to allow Buju Banton to perform tonight, we can reflect on the good and ill of an economic system in which the primary morality is profit.

As the News reported last week, Toad's Place had sought to establish a large rooftop terrace. The proposal would allow Toad's the potential to increase its maximum occupancy by 40 persons and to provide a contrast to typical Toad's fare, a scene at which, as the News put it, "party-goers can take a break from the music to lounge under the stars, sip tea and eat cookies." (Toad's is thinking of re-branding itself as the Elizabethan Club. Hm. Imagine if the Elizabethan Club thought to re-brand itself as Toad's...)

Student reaction to the proposal had been mixed, and Yale officials expressed concern about potential health and fire hazards. Still, Toad's believed the addition to be a profitable and safe venture and brought it to the Board of Zoning Appeals, which subsequently (narrowly) rejected the construction on the charge that it would strain neighborhood parking.

Upon learning this, I had a number of thoughts. First, the concern for neighborhood parking is dubious: The city parking director — the person who best knows what would strain neighborhood parking — had issued a report in which he anticipated no transportation problems.

There has been some chatter suggesting that the real and stated reasons for the rejection are not one and the same. Second, if New Haven can survive move-in day, with parents from out of state navigating the impossible one-way streets of New Haven, it can survive a few extra citizens, familiar with the surroundings, spending an evening near York Street. There is ample available parking, including a rarely full garage on Crown Street.

Third, Toad's is a private business and should be able to refurbish as it sees fit. Fourth and perhaps most importantly: Isn't a city teeming with young people a desired outcome, regarding public safety and economic development? What is the alternative outcome?

The lesson from this example is that regulation can be a good thing — it's good to know that the terrace is safe and transportation problems are non-existent — but over-regulation can stymie economic growth and increase unemployment. Government should let businesses make businesses decisions while it focuses its energies on providing the average citizen a "Square Deal." If Toad's wants to build a terrace, it should be allowed to build a terrace. If a success, it will be boon to Toad's and the community; if a failure, it will be a bust to Toad's.

The same principle of responsibility applies to Toad's decision to allow Buju Banton to perform: If Toad's wants to invite Buju Banton to perform, it should be prepared for a boycott from those in the LGBTQ community and those who sympathize with their cause. Banton's lyrics denigrate gays and lesbians; this is not a man that caters to the passions of Toad's Yale clientele, right?

There are some who will pay little attention to mentions of Buju Banton's appearance at Toad's in this column or their Facebook news feeds. How could Banton be a popular act? Or, if he is a popular act, his music must not be homophobic; this is Yale, remember, the "gay Ivy."

But how does one reconcile this preconception with the popularity of certain performers famous for their misogynistic lyrics? More important, how many of Yale's poseur protesters — the collegiate antecedent of "limousine liberals" — will pass on Toad's in order to take a principled stand against perceived homophobia? Some may view this as an issue of free speech. And issues of free speech exist. The disgusting treatment of some entertainers towards Israeli filmmakers at the Toronto Film Festival is such an example. The Supreme Court's decision on the "Hillary: The Movie" case is another. The heckler's veto is employed too often, shutting up those with whom we disagree. Issues of free speech exist. This is not one of them. I urge my fellow Yalies to be supportive of Toad's terrace and at the same time act on principle when choosing which performers to support. Our economic system allows businesses the freedom to make decisions that increase their profits. Reasoned governmental regulation coupled with the ethical behavior of the American people provides a check against abuses.

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