

University Issues

Campuses take the 'War on Greeks' to new levels

(CPS) — All Ann Dean knew was she was supposed to deliver a pizza to the Sigma Alpha Epsilon house at the University of Kansas.

But once at the door, she was greeted by an irate, intoxicated student who knocked the two pizzas out of her hand, threw one at her and began screaming racial insults at her.

The frightened Dean ran to get help.

The unnamed student's fraternity brothers were mortified and embarrassed. They suspended the student for "conduct unbecoming of a gentlemen."

But now the whole SAE house is in trouble, threatened with suspension and the object of picketing campaign by KU minority groups, because one of its members went off the deep end.

"Fraternities," observed David Skena, student government president and a member of the SAE chapter at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, "are held much more accountable than either the university or the individual."

Indeed, as the nationwide crackdown on fraternity misbehaviors enters its fourth year, some schools are punishing frats not only for dangerous fraternity practices and policies, but also for the unrelated action of individual students who may belong to a fraternity.

Earlier in March, for instance, officials at Santa Clara University in California suspended the entire

Sigma Phi Epsilon chapter because a member wrote an article in the house's internal newsletter that included racist and sexist comments.

KU, in turn, has sentenced SAE President Bryce Petty and other student leaders to undergo cultural diversity training. A panel made up of students, staff and faculty is deciding if the SAE house as a whole should be punished.

Some fear that KU and Santa Clara incidents signal a growing willingness among campus officials to escalate their war on greeks by holding the whole fraternity system responsible for the actions of individual members.

"I have a real problem with the notion of collective responsibility," said Alan Kors, a history professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

"I couldn't imagine applying it elsewhere. If someone from the Women's Center threw an egg at an anti-abortion speaker, the university is not going to hold the whole center responsible."

At Santa Clara, the newsletter "was written by an individual member of the fraternity and got circulated. Certainly, it wasn't the chapter's effort," said Ken Maddox, executive director of Sig Ep, headquartered in Richmond, Va. The national office has suspended the Santa Clara chapter because of the incident.

Nevertheless, the whole house is to blame because the offending item "was in a fraternity newslet-

ter, on fraternity letterhead," said Barbara Brodsky, assistant director of student activities there.

Kors suspects it's all part of the nationwide crackdown on greeks. "The notion of collective responsibility is often used as an agency of opposition to fraternities."

Unless evidence exists that shows everybody has a part in the action, holding a group responsible is "demonstrably false, unfair and I suspect, illegal," Kors maintained.

The notion of guilt by association is patently unfair, says Jonathan Brant, head of the National Interfraternity Conference, which is based in Indiana. Fraternity members "have diverse behaviors and attitudes just like the rest of the university."

Maddox figures being blamed for the actions of one person come with the territory.

"We tout our individual success and we must live with our individual failures," said Maddox, noting that Tau Kappa Epsilon, for one, regularly uses the ace of its most famous alum, Ronald Reagan, in promotional material.

Also, many people simply love to hate greeks. "Fraternities are one of the most discernible groups," Maddox said. "They're high profile, and they're perceived to be privileged."

Whether it's "right" or not, it's fairly normal to hold an entire group responsible for a sole member's aberrance, says University of Ore-

gon psychology Professor Myrom Rothbart, who specializes in stereotyping and group behavior.

"Oftentimes the most extreme activity of any group will be taken as the norm. That activity can be extremely good or extremely bad."

Those outside the group, Rothbart continued, "tend to see the group in a very homogeneous manner. We don't differentiate." Fraternity members say they're tired of being singled out.

"Greeks are an easy target to blame societal problems on," said Bucknell's Skena. "More greek organizations are addressing them more thoughtfully than other groups."

He added, "I don't see any town meetings about racism and changing gender relations."

Bucknell's Board of Trustees will decide in May whether to abolish the school's fraternities and sororities. Its faculty voted last fall to dismantle the greek system calling it "racist, elitist, sexist and anti-intellectual."

In January, Middlebury College trustees ordered fraternities to go coed or be eliminated. Bowdoin College and Wesleyan University also are pressuring their fraternities to go coed.

Critics of greek organizations who say they should be banned cite the hundreds of hazing deaths, instances of group sex and individual rape, heavy drinking, unneighborly rowdiness and intolerant behavior

that have stemmed from house's policies and lack of supervision with distressing frequency.

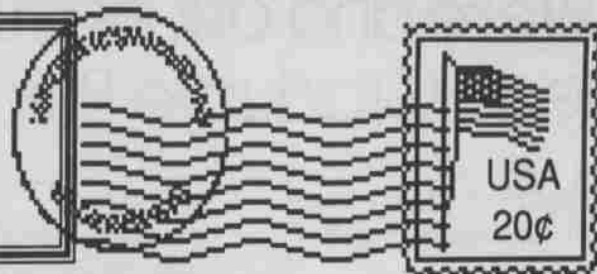
Most recently, West Virginia Wesleyan College President Thomas Courtice April 5 ordered Kappa Alpha fraternity to stop recruiting pledges for six months, and forbade the house's current pledges from becoming active members. Courtice, trying to rid the school of symbols of oppression, was angered when KA members wore Confederate garb and 2-inch rebel flag on their hats as part of "Old South" weekend. The costumes violated a campus moratorium on the use of such symbols.

At Florida Memorial College in Miami, 18 members of Kappa Alpha Psi were expelled amid a police investigation into allegation they committed sexual battery at a "liter sister" initiation party. At the party, women were asked to wear T-shirts without bras so the fraternity men could douse them with water in the shower for "purification."

And on April 11, University of Texas President William Cunningham suspended the Phi Gamma Delta and Delta Tau Delta fraternities for alleged racist behavior during activities for alumni and new students the previous weekend.

Fraternity members, says Sig Ep's Maddox, "reflect the values and mores of the university. It's their students we're talking about."

Letters to the Editor



Pat on the back

Kudos to Richard Tejidor for his perceptive response to the absurdity of Michael Clayton's belief that taxation can be justified (March 20, 1990).

Not only does Mr. Tejidor correctly demonstrate that taxation is theft, but the presence of taxation in society necessarily creates two antagonistic classes - taxpayers and taxconsumers. Taxpayers are the productive class who produce and exchange goods and services.

Taxconsumers (politicians, bureaucrats, defense contractors) are the parasitic class who tax, regulated and inflated while living off the productive class. It is not the ownership of capital, as the Marxists and Western liberals (college professors) espouse which divides society into classes, but it is the pres-

ence of taxation. On the free market, there is no such conflict between "capital and labor" for each individual is free to produce and exchange. Contrarily, taxation is forced "exchange."

Hurray for Mr. Tejidor who sees the obvious and fundamental reason why taxation can never be justified. To better understand what taxation is, Mr. Clayton should substitute Webster's definition of theft for taxation.

James Philbin

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Editor's note: This letter was originally run several issues ago, but had been altered. Philbin's actual version is the one running today.

Review of the 'Million Dollar Quartet'

With the release of The Million Dollar Quartet on CD, RCA has ushered in a new decade with an excellent and important contribution to the Elvis Presley catalog. Hopefully, future releases of Presley material will be of similar significance and not reissues of greatest hits packages.

In November 1956, after his second triumphant appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show, Elvis traveled back to his hometown of Memphis for a much deserved rest. On December 4, he wandered back to Sun Studios, Sam Phillips' tiny recording service, where the singer first cut his seminal rockabilly hits before reaching superstardom.

At the time of his arrival, Carl Perkins (creator of "Blue Suede Shoes") and Jerry Lee Lewis (who would in the next year briefly challenge Presley's throne as the King of Rock 'N' Roll with hits like

"Whole Lotta Shakin' Going On" and "Great Balls of Fire") were in the studio finishing up work on Perkins' next release for Sun. Elvis quickly joined in on the session and for the next few hours the three jammed on a number of their favorite gospel, country, and rock standards.

Whether the fourth member of the quartet actually participated is still a matter of much debate. Although photographs take at the time show Johnny Cash with the other three, his distinctive voice is undetectable throughout the proceedings.

The CD reveals Presley fully relaxed in the surroundings and the people he sings with. Near the end, Elvis jokes about how he is usually the last to leave jams of this type.

The material performed is mostly of a gospel and country flavor. Elvis' re-working of Otis Blackwell's "Paralyzed" is a par-

ticular interest. Before singing the song in a slower tempo, Elvis comments that he wished he had done the original recording in the more deliberate manner. Another highlight is all three rockers taking turns singing Chuck Berry's classic "Brown Eyed Handsome Man."

The Million Dollar Quartet is a must purchase for any Elvis devotee. It is also highly recommended for the uncommitted due to its fly-on-the-wall quality and as an insightful look at the influences that helped shape the King of Rock 'N' Roll's musical career. Let's hope RCA continues such innovative packaging. Offering the complete and dazzling 1968 NBC-TV Comeback Special on CD will only enhance such a policy.

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