

The Spirit of Sigma Chi has long asserted that diversity and brotherhood are complementary. Rooted in the Fraternity's founding, *The Spirit* says individuals can share meaningful bonds while maintaining their individuality.

Making the promise of *The Spirit of Sigma Chi* a reality is one of the Fraternity's greatest challenges.

Future members of Sigma Chi will come from a diverse pool. Current birthrates are shaping a future where white males will not predominate. To prosper, the Fraternity and society at-large must adapt to increasing cultural and racial diversity.

This issue of *The Magazine of Sigma Chi* explores the essential union between fraternity and diversity, looking at several facets of the topic.

Profiles of Morris Dees and Stetson Kennedy highlight two men who fight for social justice. Other articles explore the differences between U.S. and Canadian perspectives, spotlight three brothers whose physical situations don't fit the typical mold and discuss the controversy over 'Political Correctness.'

"PR Nightmares" warns that chapters violating the sensitivities of others may suffer. Another article highlights a sampling of brothers working abroad. The Fraternity's own struggle for enlightenment is reviewed, and this issue's On Campus section explores diversity and multiculturalism through reports from Sigma Chi's active chapters.

Blooming throughout these articles is the theme that Sigma Chi evolves and doesn't fit narrow stereotypes.

To survive, Sigma Chi must continue bucking stereotypes and building an inclusive order—heeding *The Spirit of Sigma Chi*, in other words. This issue is offered to fuel that process.

Crusading for Human Rights

by Walter Hutchens

In mid-century, before the American Civil Rights Movement rumbled fully to life, Stetson Kennedy, Florida '39, infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan and flailed it from within.

Kennedy exposed Klan secrets and piped information to the press, law enforcement officials and anyone who would listen.

"At that time people all over the world were fighting in the front lines in defense of democracy . . . so the prospect [of personal danger] did not seem a sufficient reason to hold back," Kennedy recounts in his book *The Klan Unmasked*.

He didn't hold back. He went after the Klan so ferociously he became a victim of its terrorism.

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Kennedy's home in Switzerland, Fla. seems a haven now, but in earlier years the property was repeatedly torched by arsonists.

"They would wait for a favorable wind, walk along the fence line at night and set fire to the grass on my side of the fence, hoping the wind would take the fire to the house," Kennedy explained to *The Magazine* during a recent interview.

"At the time I had only black neighbors. They would come to the rescue, and we'd put out the fire before it got to the house," he recalled.

"S.K.—You are finished; we have just begun—KKK," threatened a message Kennedy found on the property's outskirts after one blaze.

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But Kennedy wasn't finished then and isn't now.

His lifelong fight to expose injustice has garnered both accolades and death threats.

"Kennedy's ass is worth \$1,000 per pound, FOB Atlanta," a Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan said years ago.

More recently, the *Tampa Tribune* called him a "crusader for human rights."

At 75, he appears on nationally-televised talk shows and speaks on college campuses. He recently splashed into headlines again by turning up new evidence in a 20-year old civil rights murder case. Four of his books—*The Klan Unmasked*; *Palmetto Country*; *Southern Exposure* and *Jim Crow Guide: The Way it Was*—are in print from the University of Florida presses.



Stetson Kennedy, Florida '39, left his "white flannels behind in Miami and went to Atlanta in search of a white robe" when he infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan. Here Kennedy shows a Klan recognition sign to reporters.

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Backlash has snapped at Kennedy more than once.

After living abroad for eight years, he returned to find "the property totally razed. They'd gone to the trouble of digging up my orange grove, some 50-100 trees. There was absolutely nothing left," he said.

On one occasion when arsonists struck, folksinger Woodie Guthrie was Kennedy's guest. Roused from the outdoor hammock he slept in, Guthrie joined the night-long battle against the flames.

Once Kennedy was summoned to a Klan meeting where the "chief ass-tearer" alleged a spy was among the assembled members. Tempers flared; the Klansmen swore to kill the turncoat. Kennedy started to bolt for the door.

Fortunately, he didn't. The Klan official was bluffing. He didn't know who the spy was and hoped the "alien" would reveal himself by fleeing.

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One tactic Kennedy used against the Klan made its 'inner sanctum' the subject of considerable ridicule: he sent Superman after the Grand Dragon.

Kennedy provided script writers for the popular Superman radio show "with complete information about the Klan's set-up, ritual and the roles played by Cyclopes, Terrors, Ghouls

and Titans [Klan offices]." The Grand Dragon, the Klan's top leader, was the principal villain for a series of episodes.

By portraying the Klan as Superman's enemy, the shows promoted understanding that the Klan is a vile and hate-filled organization.

The programs also managed to "get the Klan's secret password into the mouths of kids," Kennedy recounts gleefully in his book.

Each time the Klan changed its password, Kennedy called the show's producers, and the writers would work the new password into the script. The bigots of the "Invisible Empire" could not fathom how Superman was discovering their secrets.

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Kennedy scored other, less whimsical anti-Klan blows. He diminished Klan assets by alerting federal tax officials to income subject to unresolved tax liens. He also testified in criminal trials against hate-group members.

But success made it more difficult for Kennedy to keep his identity concealed. He eventually had to back out of the informant role.

He didn't stop fighting the Klan and other hate-groups, however. "I spoke to hundreds of meetings sponsored by labor unions, churches and synagogues, Young Men's Christian Associations, the NAACP, Anti-



Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, American Jewish Congress, progressive veterans' groups, and also lectured at the University of Chicago, Ohio State, Atlanta University, Roosevelt College, City College of New York, Antioch, Wilberforce and the New School for Social Research," Kennedy recalls in *The Klan Unmasked*.

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Kennedy's other books drew attention, too.

French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre originally published Kennedy's *Jim Crow Guide*. No American publisher would touch it when it was written.

Surveying the systems of overtly racist laws and unwritten customs that "constituted an American apartheid," the book is a mocking travel guide.

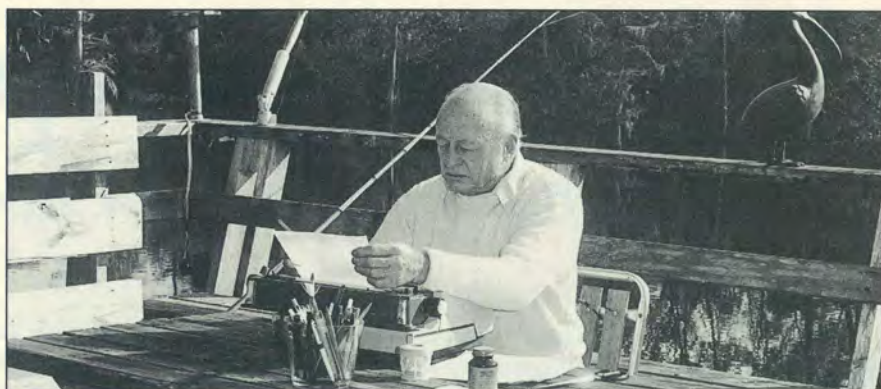
The book was "intended as a flare to light up the scene, with highlights on the barbed-wire entanglements and Jim Crow segregation signs to be encountered along the way of life in the U.S.A."

Jim Crow laws regulated eating, sleeping, travel and marriage based upon race. Such statutes have been eradicated, but in the new afterword to his book Kennedy wrote, "Purging our nation of apartheid was a great leap forward, but I put it to you that where once we had segregated racism, we now have desegregated racism."

Southern Exposure, published before *The Klan Unmasked*, sparked attention for its provocatively-titled chapter "Total Equality, and How to Get It."

The book is an interpretive landscape of the post World War II American South. In it Kennedy urged "working folks to arm themselves with a ballot in one hand and union card in the other and march together toward an unsegregated, democratic, prosperous Southland."

"It didn't happen quite that way," Kennedy writes in the 1990 edition's



Human rights activist, folklorist and author Stetson Kennedy hung his Klan robe in effigy at a rally of the hate-group in Macon, Ga. (right). Kennedy now lives and writes in his native Florida (above).

foreword. He writes that he sees progress since he first turned the spotlight on his home region and now feels we need a 'Global Exposure' to highlight ecological problems and other international challenges.

Palmetto Country, Kennedy's first book, was compiled from material he collected touring Florida for the Federal Writers' Project, the division of the Works Progress Administration that employed writers and artists and produced guidebooks to each state. The book has been called a "verbal time capsule of the state a half century ago." It is filled with the oral history, folktales, songs and anecdotes that characterized the state's folk culture in the late 1930s.

Kennedy headed the folklore, oral history and social-ethnic unit of the Federal Writers' Project from 1937-42. He is a founding member of the Florida Folklore Society and was its president in 1989.

Jim Crow Guide and *The Klan Unmasked* have been published in a number of languages.

Kennedy's current work-in-progress is a large 'naturalist manifesto.'

"This has been a lifelong preoccupation of mine," Kennedy said. "Many of our society's problems stem from considering ourselves apart from and above nature. When we take a fresh look from nature's point of view, we see some of the things we're doing wrong and what we ought to be doing that we're not."

Another book, *After Appomattox*, is scheduled for publication in 1992.

The Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University and Tallahassee, Fla. television station WFSU are seeking funding for a documentary about Kennedy's life.

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Even before reaching Gamma Theta chapter, Kennedy was active in the Greek system. In high school he orga-

nized a chapter of a secondary school fraternity called Sigma Phi Omega. Kennedy wrote the group's national creed and organized an inter-chapter humanitarian contest that recognized the chapter with the best yearly record of charitable endeavors. In college, Kennedy wrote a column for the school paper and published stories and poems in *The Florida Review*. He also began the Intercollegiate Peace Council in 1936. The group "met secretly, behind drawn shades, at black colleges such as Bethune-Cookman in Daytona Beach," Kennedy told the *Tampa Tribune*.

"The debate about the fraternities and their legitimacy in the high schools and universities was already raging in the '30s. I intruded into the discussion to some extent," Kennedy told *The Magazine*.

"Needless to say, the concept of universal brotherhood is one that grabs me in a big way, but out on the lake where I live, I've noticed that each generation of hatchlings forms a group that preserves its identity. There is a 1992 Mallard duck class that tends to stay together throughout life. In nature, a good many things born at the same time and place form themselves into a mutual support group. That's one way of looking at the fraternity question. The fact that fraternities exist to the extent they do and seem to be self-perpetuating indicates to me there is some need in the community or campus.

"That is not to say the rest of the student body doesn't have the same need and ought to have comparable means of banding together and doing things together, but, to my mind, that satisfies the question of whether or not a need is being served."

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Ripped Apart

The Battle to Integrate Sigma Chi

by Fred Yoder

Grand Historian Doug Carlson says the most frequent question undergraduates ask him is if Sigma Chi has roots in the Ku Klux Klan.

The answer?

"Absolutely, positively not," he says. "The Founders would turn over in their graves! It's a bizarre rumor; I don't know where it got started."

While Sigma Chi has no ties with any hate-groups like the Klan, racial enlightenment does have a checkered history within the Fraternity, as it does in society at-large. In 1870 Sigma Chi added racially-restrictive membership clauses that weren't removed until 1971.

Carlson chronicles the Fraternity's struggle toward racial equality, "the membership selection issue," in his *History of the Sigma Chi Fraternity 1955-1980*. (See inside front cover.)

Following are the facts about Sigma Chi's past, drawn in part from Carlson's *History*.

From the late 1950s through the early 1970s, Sigma Chi was torn over the "membership selection issue." For 100 years, the Fraternity excluded African-Americans. Other minorities were sometimes accepted, but more often excluded because of their race or religion. The 1960s, in particular, was a decade of bitter division within the Fraternity, as more brothers became convinced that changes were necessary to preserve the Fraternity and its ideals. The International Headquarters received many letters from alumni attempting to resign their memberships to protest the Fraternity's racially-exclusive policies. Had the controversy lingered unresolved much longer, the Fraternity probably would have been torn apart. Between 1959 and 1969, 11 chapters surrendered their charters or had them revoked because

form, stamped "approved." Fraternity laws also required unanimous approval of pledges by chapter members and General Fraternity Executive Committee members.

The pressure for change first surfaced at the 1948 Grand Chapter. Hubert Reynolds, Colgate '36, then a resident of China, proposed that the Grand Chapter eliminate the word "white" from the Constitution. The proposal was referred to a committee, which recommended further study but no immediate action.

By the 1959 Grand Chapter, campus pressure was growing and a new proposal was presented to remove the word "white" from the Constitution. When votes fell far short of the 75 percent approval required, Gamma Mu chapter at Wesleyan University in Connecticut surrendered its charter in protest.

Connected to the membership dispute was a strong push by university officials for "local autonomy" for campus chapters. Local autonomy meant that no one outside of the chapter's student membership could have any say in membership selection matters or, in some cases, in any decisions regarding the chapter. In 1960, the Grand Council added a requirement to

the Statutes that granted alumni the authority to vote on pledges and initiates in their respective chapters. In May of 1960, Dartmouth College, which had insisted on local autonomy for six years, stated it would wait no longer for Sigma Chi, and the 67-year-old Eta Eta chapter was forced to surrender its charter.

With pressure increasing from university officials, the threat of losing a number of chapters loomed large as delegates to the 1961 Grand Chapter debated the re-submitted proposal to remove the word "white" from Fraternity laws. Even those opposed to any change in practices were persuaded that a change in terminology was required. The proposal was approved by 94 percent of the delegates.

However, removal of the word "white" by no means freed chapters to initiate non-white students. In exchange for removing the word, the following provisions were added to the laws:

- ◆ Grand Council members were given the authority to anonymously "blackball" or withhold approval from any man in any chapter, without having to state a reason.

- ◆ Every chapter was required "to refrain from proposing for membership any person who for any reason is likely to be considered personally unacceptable as a brother by any chapter or any member anywhere."

Between 1959 and 1969, 11 chapters surrendered their charters or had them revoked

of the Fraternity's stance. Three of them never returned. Although the Seven Founders made no statements restricting membership selection, a "whites only" clause appeared in the Constitution in 1870. Over time, many other policies were instituted to ensure that only certain types of men could join. At one point, chapters were required to submit to their Grand Praetor and the Headquarters a pledge report form on each man which included a photo and his race, religion and family national origin. Initiation was not permitted until the chapter received each

◆ The above provisions and others concerning membership selection could be changed only by a vote of 90 percent of Grand Chapter delegates, rather than the previously-required 75 percent, and changes could only be made at a regularly-scheduled biennial convention.

The demise of several chapters was temporarily averted, but the dispute continued to escalate. Lists with the name, race and religion of every pledge were circulated to Grand Council members. The absence of this information resulted in blackballing.

Chapters were told not to initiate without approved pledge report forms. Even when there was no hold on a pledge class, delays in processing the mountains of paperwork in the mail resulted in frequent chaos. Phone lines at Headquarters were often jammed with chapters on the brink of initiation, asking if their forms were approved. At times, initiations were postponed.

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In 1962 the Executive Committee revoked Gamma Omicron chapter's charter for initiating two Jewish students who had been denied approval. Spurred by the fact that Colgate University prohibited any such off-campus authority, the chapter, finding no reason to deny the two men membership, proceeded with the initiation with the support of its alumni advisors.

The Executive Committee debated the action over the next year, first reinstating, then revoking the charter in April 1963, over the objections of Grand Consul William P. Huffman. Gamma Omicron chapter did not return until 1971.

Columbia University, which had been pressing for change since the late 1950s, had also adopted regulations requiring local fraternity autonomy. As a result, the 70-year-old Nu Nu chapter surrendered its charter in October 1964.

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In 1965, the most dramatic event of the entire struggle unfolded at the Alpha Omega chapter at Stanford University. Expressing disenchantment with Sigma Chi procedures, the chapter was prepared to pledge and initiate an African-American student, knowing such an act would be disapproved.

The Executive Committee suspended Alpha Omega's charter, claiming the chapter "has been contemptuous of the Fraternity and its Ritual and forms of fraternal procedure."

Alpha Omega's chapter officers carried the issue as far into public view as possible. Networking with university officials, the university and chapter together sent a letter to officials on other campuses with Sigma Chi chapters, calling attention to the Fraternity's membership procedures and lack of chapter autonomy on such matters.

The controversy between Sigma Chi and Alpha Omega chapter thrust the membership selection issue into the lime-light across North America. Several national magazines covered the fray. Brothers on both sides were upset that Alpha Omega's aggressiveness publicly embarrassed the Fraternity.

Sigma Chi received many more letters and edicts from officials on other campuses. Three weeks before the 1965 Grand Chapter in Denver, shock waves from Stanford

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reached the University of Colorado. The university's Board of Regents revoked Beta Mu chapter's rushing and pledging privileges because of Sigma Chi's racial discrimination at Stanford. The Colorado chapter remained open, but under difficult and uncertain conditions.

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Fallout from the membership selection issue created an uproar at the 1965 Grand Chapter, attracting coverage from local and national news media. Representatives from the suspended Stanford chapter sought their charter's restoration, but Fraternity leaders insisted racial discrimination was not the reason for the charter's suspension and the action was upheld.

Whitman College delegates proposed permitting chapters whose universities required local autonomy to disregard the Fraternity's membership selection regulations, but the proposal was defeated.

However, a resolution to remove photos and any mention of race, religion or national origin from pledge report forms was approved by a 90 to 72 vote. As an action of the Grand Chapter, it constituted a mandate, although several Grand Council members insisted that each Grand Praetor continue providing that information on all pledges in his province.

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In August 1965, the General Fraternity filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in Denver against the regents of the University of Colorado, claiming the Colorado chapter had been denied due process of law and that the Fraternity's rights as a private association had been violated. The court eventually ruled against Sigma Chi on all counts, upholding the regents' authority to impose regulations upon student organizations and setting a precedent for future cases.

In December 1965, the 51-year-old Beta Nu chapter at Brown University surrendered its charter because of university rules against restrictive membership clauses. The group continued as a local until its return in 1973.

Phi chapter at Lafayette College surrendered its charter in February 1966 when a pledge of Korean descent was denied approval. Campus administrators, who insisted on local autonomy, had threatened to bar Sigma Chi if the student was not initiated.

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The Stanford dispute continued to haunt the Fraternity. The chapter's charter was reinstated in April 1966, but in November 1966, Alpha Omega chapter leaders announced, first to the news media and then to the Fraternity, that the chapter was disaffiliating because of its conflict with Sigma Chi's membership policies. The Executive Committee again revoked the Alpha Omega charter in January 1967.

Beta Mu chapter at Colorado closed in 1971, after a decline in membership caused at least partly by of the long-running racial controversy.

Gamma Epsilon chapter at Whitman College, which had been pushing for local autonomy, surrendered its charter in December 1967 after learning that a pledge of Asian descent was denied approval.

The membership controversy also contributed to the temporary loss of Alpha Beta chapter at the University of California-Berkeley. Grand Consul Floyd R. Baker and his wife visited Alpha Beta chapter late in 1967. The campus had become a hotbed of student activism, and the Sigma Chi blowup at nearby Stanford was a big campus topic. Some chapter members spoke aggressively about the issue and behaved rudely toward the Bakers. Shortly thereafter, the Executive Committee agreed with Baker that Berkeley was not a suitable location for a Sig chapter and removed the charter in January 1968.

The controversy was again hotly debated at the 1969 Grand Chapter. A vote to eliminate alumni approval from the selection process and another to lower the 90 percent approval necessary for change received majority votes, but less than the required 90 percent. Delegates adopted a resolution that no information concerning the race of any candidate should be requested or supplied. The action, however, was not widely viewed as a mandate.

Davidson College administrators required local autonomy in fraternity membership selection and adopted a process whereby any student wishing to join a fraternity who was not selected in rush would be assigned to one at random. The Delta Lambda chapter also pledged an African-American student who was unlikely to gain approval. In October 1969, the chapter voted to surrender its charter, and has never sought its return.

Meanwhile, campus pressure on Greek chapters, though still visible, was abating. Many university leaders' attention was diverted to increasingly violent student unrest, propelled by reports from the Vietnam conflict. Confronted with students camping in dean's offices and torching campus buildings, many universities were forced to diminish efforts to change the membership practices of fraternities.

By that time, it seemed that every other major fraternity had changed restrictive rules or had adopted "waivers" for certain endangered chapters. Most allowed their chapters to initiate African-American and other minority students. Sigma Chi was the only holdout.

Within Sigma Chi, blackballs from both sides were spinning out of control. Some Grand Council members denied approval to entire classes if chapters furnished no information on race. Officers from those provinces then "dropped the ball" on pledge classes from the opposition's chapters. A few members "blanket blackballed" everyone. Grand Consul Norman C. Brewer Jr. issued a ruling prohibiting blanket blackballs, but some persisted.

The chaos convinced many brothers—even some who still opposed initiating non-white students—that real changes had to be made to keep the Fraternity from utter turmoil. Others were prepared to face turmoil rather than change.

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was surprisingly

simple.

an Executive Committee meeting on Jan. 2, 1970. The solution was surprisingly simple: Grand Pro Consul John Graham pointed out that since the laws did not require providing Grand Council members with any information about proposed members, the Fraternity could simply stop providing race, religion, national origin or any other details about pledges. Without that information, no one would be able to disapprove any pledge for those reasons. Executive Committee members still had to state their approval of each prospect, but they agreed to disapprove only if a candidate did not meet the criteria of the Fraternity's Jordan Standard, which contains no requirements regarding race, religion or national origin. Grand Consul Brewer embraced the proposal enthusiastically and all members of the Committee agreed.

As word of the decision circulated, a few opponents threatened impeachments. But the tide had turned decisively in favor of change. The fact that change had been accomplished under the direction of Brewer, a devoted "son of the South" further disarmed the opposition.

On February 8, 1970, the first African-American Sigma Chi brother, Michael A. Sims, **Rochester '73**, was initiated at Gamma Pi chapter.

Sims' class had pledged during the fall of 1969, and had become the subject of a blanket blackball by a Grand Council member. That disapproval was lifted before the initiation at the urging of then-Grand Praetor Donald Clapp, who supported the chapter's actions. Gamma Pi chapter, unaware of the changes that validated their action, believed Sims' initiation would be disapproved and that they were likely to lose the charter. They chose to proceed.

1971 Grand Chapter delegates voted to remove restrictive provisions from the Governing Laws. Voted out were the role of Executive Committee and Grand Council members in approving members, the provision that any candidate must be personally acceptable to anyone, and the necessity of 90 percent approval to change such provisions.

The distressing and divisive 12-year ordeal was over. The joy and relief at the 1971 Grand Chapter was immense.

On the next page, three African-American alumni, the legacy of the membership selection battle, share their experiences with multi-racial acceptance and sensitivity in Sigma Chi:

Al Page, **Case Western Reserve '83**, says he was first attracted to the Fraternity because "most of my friends were considering or were going Sigma Chi." He and another African-American student pledged and were initiated together. "We knew that the decision to pledge the two of us was a big one and they had a long meeting about it. The chapter was small in numbers, but 16 of us pledged. The chapter knew the white rushees would not have pledged if they turned us down."

Page was criticized for joining a predominantly white group. He received threatening mail and phone calls while pledging and when he later moved into the house. The callers told him the White Cross stood for the Ku Klux Klan and threatened "We'll get you—we know where you live." They sent press clippings about accusations of earlier racial discrimination at other Sigma Chi chapters. He says he first thought these acts were a joke, then became scared, but "I always thought I would join Sigma Chi."

Page became pledge class president and Consul. He attended several Leadership Workshops and Grand Chapters as an active delegate and alumnus faculty member. His recent appointment to the Leadership Training Board makes him the first African-American Grand Council member in Sigma Chi history.

Although he says he felt accepted and comfortable when he joined Sigma Chi, Page still encountered some racism. Soon after his initiation, he recalls, a visiting Grand Officer privately told the Chapter Advisor, "Don't take too many of them."

Page, the Associate Director of Leadership and Student Organizations at Syracuse University, says "the Fraternity can help chapters understand that we are not just a 'WASP' fraternity. We need to make the brothers more sensitive to others, including women, and show that we truly believe the ideals we have sworn to. That includes alumni. It's easy to convince the undergraduates, but not some of the alumni. I keep hearing that some chapters are afraid to pledge a black student because some alum has threatened to withhold donations if they do. More training and sensitivity are needed on the alumni level."

"I'm not sure if we should actively recruit minorities or not, but we do need to make them feel comfortable and welcome among us. We don't have to treat them any differently. Many of them are afraid to go through the rushing process."

Page says he is also concerned "that many people seem to assume that a lot of minority students want to join us. Black students don't necessarily want that. We must understand that soon the majority of the college population will be minority students," he says.

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Nathan Neal, **George Washington '83**, says he was not interested in pledging a fraternity until he attended a summer open house. He became friends with men pledging Sigma Chi and Sigma Phi Epsilon and enjoyed the fact that the Sigs played Spinners and Motown music. There were no African-American fraternities on his campus at the time, and Neal was the only African-American in his pledge class.

He once considered depledging, "because of all of the work and academic and time pressures involved." However, he says, "I took pledging very seriously, and was later voted outstanding pledge." As an active, he had five little brothers, and served as Kustos, Social Chairman, Rush Chairman, and Magister, which became "my most rewarding job."

"As a student, I felt well accepted at the university. I was concerned about how I would be accepted at other chapters. I experienced acceptance and resistance at another chapter I visited."

"I have been well received at the initiations at other province chapters and at local alumni gatherings," says Neal, a member of the Epsilon chapter house corporation board and a trial attorney in the narcotic and dangerous drug division of the U.S. Department of Justice. "I felt privileged to run for the office of Grand Praetor at the last Grand Chapter. I was well received while going through that, although I didn't win. I have developed great friendships all across the U.S." he says.

"We need to stress the value of learning from one another, as I learned from my white brothers," Neal says. "There is value in living together in close quarters, which works to overcome stereotypes. We need to seek out and recruit black students and others on their turf, to seek their fellowship. My chapter is trying to do that, and is conducting a service project with young black kids. We have to say to blacks, 'you are welcome to come to us.' By doing nothing, no one ever will come to us."

"The General Fraternity has to take the lead—we are a diverse organization. The Fraternity needs to say that we encourage recruitment of all students including Asians, Hispanics and African-Americans. It all starts with the Assistant Executive Secretaries, with what is said at Workshop. And we certainly need to get rid of the burning crosses and other offensive images" (such as the black lawn jockey he encountered at one chapter house).

"The actives look for role models, and chapters need help on what to say, including the fact that you don't really need to talk differently to black students. We have to get together at province meetings and every occasion to share our experiences and overcome the stereotypes."

"Sigma Chi will die if we are perceived as a lily-white organization," he says.

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Charles Wilcots, **California-Irvine '82**, says that when he was initiated, "there were fewer than 500 black students out of 10,000 at UCI, and very few in the Greek system. I did not rush until late in my sophomore year, but knew several Sigs. A majority of the campus leaders were Sigs, and I wanted to get involved with them. They were a diverse group which seemed to get along well."

Wilcots says that while rushing, some African-Americans made negative comments and shoved critical letters under his door. "I declined the bid the Sigs offered me, because of that. However, the brothers persisted, and made me feel a part of their group."

Because of the Sigs' determination and persistence, he accepted the bid in the spring. "Those black students who knew me supported my Fraternity decision," he noted.

Wilcots, the Associate Director of Residential Dining at his alma mater, served as Historian and was involved in several chapter projects as an undergraduate. He has been Chapter Advisor at Eta Sigma since 1986, and this summer served on the faculty of the Leadership Training Workshop. "The arms have all been open," he says.

Wilcots says "communication with one another is a major thing that should happen to develop understanding. My Eta Sigma chapter brothers are going beyond cultural barriers, and continue to be a diverse chapter, bringing in Asians, African-Americans and Hispanics. Chapter members discuss the issue during chapter meetings, including their own cultural differences and individual upbringings. I am pleased to see the Fraternity making steps forward in diversity," he says. "It's exciting to see." ■

PUBLIC RELATIONS NIGHTMARES

BY CHRIS CHEUVRONT

"You racist honky," an angry voice screams into the chapter house phone before hanging up.

As you stroll to class on a warm, breezy, autumn day, a stranger spits on you.

As you walk across campus wearing your Sigma Chi letters, heads turn and otherwise friendly students ignore you.

A professor asks you to leave class because your presence is causing a disturbance.

Your friends describe you as objective and loyal; your girlfriend describes you as sensitive. Why are strangers calling you sexist, racist and insensitive?

For several brothers, enduring such "imaginings" became part of their real extracurricular education during the past year as they grappled with the aftermath of public relations nightmares. In trial-by-fire education, chapter members learned that thinking *before* acting is the best prevention for such reactions, even if intentions are not malicious.

At the University of New Mexico, the Beta Xi chapter held an Italian Wedding theme party in September 1990 with a sorority. During the party, a man and woman representing members of "feuding mafia families" were united in marriage through a mock wedding ceremony. During the "wedding," a Fraternity brother and chapter alumnus read an inappropriate poem that sparked a major campus debate and labelled the Sigma Chis as sexist.

"We didn't mean any harm," Consul David Peters said.

Peters, who will graduate in December 1992, said that although the poem may have been insensitive toward women, the chapter did not intend it that way.

A few nights after the Italian wedding party, enraged students held a protest outside the chapter house. According to Peters, alumni and lawyers advised chapter members to evacuate the chapter house during the protest.

"It was not a good feeling to have to evacuate our home," Peters said.

Paul Brown, Quaestor at the time of the Italian Wedding skit, said he was offended to be called a sexist and experienced frustration over brothers being dismissed from class and spit upon.

"It is frustrating being labelled wrongly. It was especially disheartening to be called insensitive and sexist after taking the initiative to apologize for the incident," he said.

The General Fraternity put the chapter on show-cause status a few months after the event.

"We also received hate mail," he said.

Besides angering several women's groups on campus, the chapter's offensive poem provoked the University to levy sanctions against the chapter, prohibiting members from participating in all rush, social and intramural activities. Daniel Holton, '91, Consul at the time of the event, called the sanctions "extreme" and told news reporters the chapter would appeal its punishment. After settling with the University, Peters said the most significant lesson he and chaptermates learned from the event was to think before acting.

"Now we analyze all party themes to make sure nothing about the theme can be construed as racist, sexist or otherwise offensive," he explained.

"Unfortunately, sometimes it takes an incident like this to make us aware that what we deem harmless may be offensive to others," he added.

"Since the event, we have instituted educational programs in our chapter dealing with dating, date rape and hate speech between males and females," Brown said.

Brown, like Peters, advises chapters to think before doing anything.

"Consider other people's views. Respect others," he advised.

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You grab a campus newspaper on your way to your morning class; you are shocked to read about your chapter on the front page and stunned to read the editorial page which is full of letters from

students and faculty criticizing your chapter.

As you and your chaptermates watch Monday Night Football, a student hurtles a brick through the front windows of the chapter house. The next night, another student throws a brick through another window.

At the University of Alabama, the Iota Iota chapter pledge class attended a pledge swap with the Kappa Delta Sorority pledges on October 3, 1991. According to Pro Consul Chris Ridgway, '93, the party's theme, "Who Rides the Bus to Work," was not intended as racially insensitive, although media reports about the event claim otherwise.

Ridgway said pledges dressed as lawyers, construction workers and businessmen for the party. He said one pledge dressed as Steve Martin from the movie *The Jerk* and sported a T-shirt with a sign that read "I was born a poor black child," the opening line of the movie. Some were offended by the costume, and the incident made campus and Associated Press news. Reports of the pledge swap appeared in newspapers across the country, from California to Washington D.C. and several concerned brothers called the General Fraternity Headquarters about the event. Stunned by the intense media coverage, the chapter found itself in a racial controversy that spurred an NAACP candlelight vigil protesting campus racism.

Ridgway said the chapter has faced incredible anti-Sigma Chi attitudes as a result of media coverage of the event. He said many groups, after reading reports of the incident in the campus paper *The Crimson White*, refused to listen to the chapter when members tried to explain the event. According to Ridgway, campus journalists inaccurately reported the incident.

"Many of us had to deal with irate alumni members," said House Manager Garret Graves. Because of reports about the event and its appearance in newspapers across the country, many alumni called the chapter to express their anger, he said. According to Graves, inaccuracies in the media reports made it harder for him and others to calm the angry alums and explain what had actually occurred.

"Some alumni told us they were going to use their connections at Headquarters to get our charter revoked," Graves said.

"It was aggravating," he continued. "Our pledges meant absolutely no harm, and reports of the situation were out of hand."

"It was frustrating being labelled racist," Graves said.

Ridgway and Graves said the chapter invited the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity chapter, a predominantly black fraternity, to a dinner/discussion at the Sigma Chi chapter house. Ridgway said he asked the fraternity members not to disclose news of the dinner to the media because the Sigma Chi chapter wished to avoid media hoopla about the gathering.

"They were the only group willing to talk to us," Graves said.

Brothers describe their harrowing experiences

The Alpha Phi Alpha members who attended the discussion said they were angry at the chapter for staging what they believed to be a racist event, Graves explained. He said the Sigs tried to dissipate the other men's anger by explaining what had actually occurred. Graves said this discussion lead to an understanding between the two chapters; in fact, the discussion set the stage for a more amiable relationship. He said the groups gather informally to play basketball or just "hang out" at each other's chapter houses now.

"Alpha Phi Alpha is a very good fraternity," Ridgway praised. "They helped us out a lot in this situation."

According to Ridgway, Alpha Phi Alpha members served as a liaison between the Sigma Chi chapter and the Pan Greek Council, the black women's sorority council on campus.

"They had more legitimacy with the Pan Greek Council than we did," Ridgway explained.

"We held the discussion because we wanted to explain the situation to the Alpha Phi Alphas," Ridgway said. "We did not organize the discussion for media recognition."

Besides patching up relations with the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, the chapter also met with Pan Greek Council and NAACP members. He said some NAACP members were extremely angry with the chapter, but eventually the groups reached an understanding as a result of dialogue and active listening.

Ridgway said the chapter also proposed a motion to the Interfraternity Council requiring all Greek groups to present party theme ideas to the Council for approval. The goal of this regulation, he said, is to help other chapters avoid similar situations.

"Take the opportunity to promote racial awareness whenever you can," advised Ridgway.

Ridgway advised chapters to act responsibly and proactively by getting involved with racial awareness programming before a situation requires it.

"Just do something with another group [like the Alpha Phi Alphas]," he said.

"It does not have to be community service or PR-oriented just to get attention. Do things with other groups because you want to."

▶ ▶ ▶

You call home to talk to your parents and your mother informs you that she has read about your chapter in the local newspaper. In fact, she tells you that her friends in Washington D.C. have read about your chapter, too, and that your grandparents in San Francisco were sad to read about your chapter's activities in their local newspaper. "We expected more from our son," she tells you, disappointed.



In the past year, members of the Psi Psi chapter at Syracuse University have been accused of rape twice. Each charge was ultimately dropped, but the allegations have made the chapter more sensitive to gender issues.

In February 1991, a woman claimed a brother raped her, according to a police report.

Negative publicity buries chapters alive

Two days after she reported the incident to police, the woman recanted her allegations.

"This situation has damaged the reputation of Sigma Chi, its members and the Greek system as a whole," Consul Toby San Luis said after the woman dropped the charge. Although this case should not be used as an example to doubt any woman's allegations of rape, it tested the chapter's anti-sexual assault policy. Chapter participation in previous sexual assault workshops lent it some credibility during the ordeal. According to San Luis, the chapter has gained heightened awareness about actions of Greek members and gender sensitivity.

"These situations have given our chapter a heightened awareness that Greeks must be more positive in their actions," he said, citing the Animal House image that plagues the Greek system.

San Luis said the chapter has reorganized its social calendar and increased its alcohol awareness programming.

"Alcohol plays a major role in sexual assaults," he said.

Besides attending alcohol awareness meetings, San Luis also said the chapter brought in speakers who addressed the risks of underage drinking, penalties associated with presenting false identification and driving under the influence of alcohol. He said a sorority attended the last presentation to the chapter.

"We are also working with the Syracuse University Rape Center," he said.

The two groups are coordinating rape seminars structured by the Center.

"Interaction with and respect for the opposite sex is important," he said. To build such respect, according to San Luis, chapter officers must address the subject in chapter meetings, all chapter members must attend seminars and get involved in gender issue programming.

▶ ▶ ▶

Because of what you believed to be a harmless occurrence at a chapter-sponsored event, several campus groups lobby for the suspension of your chapter's activities.

News of your intention to attend a campus event is enough for organizers of the event to cancel it.

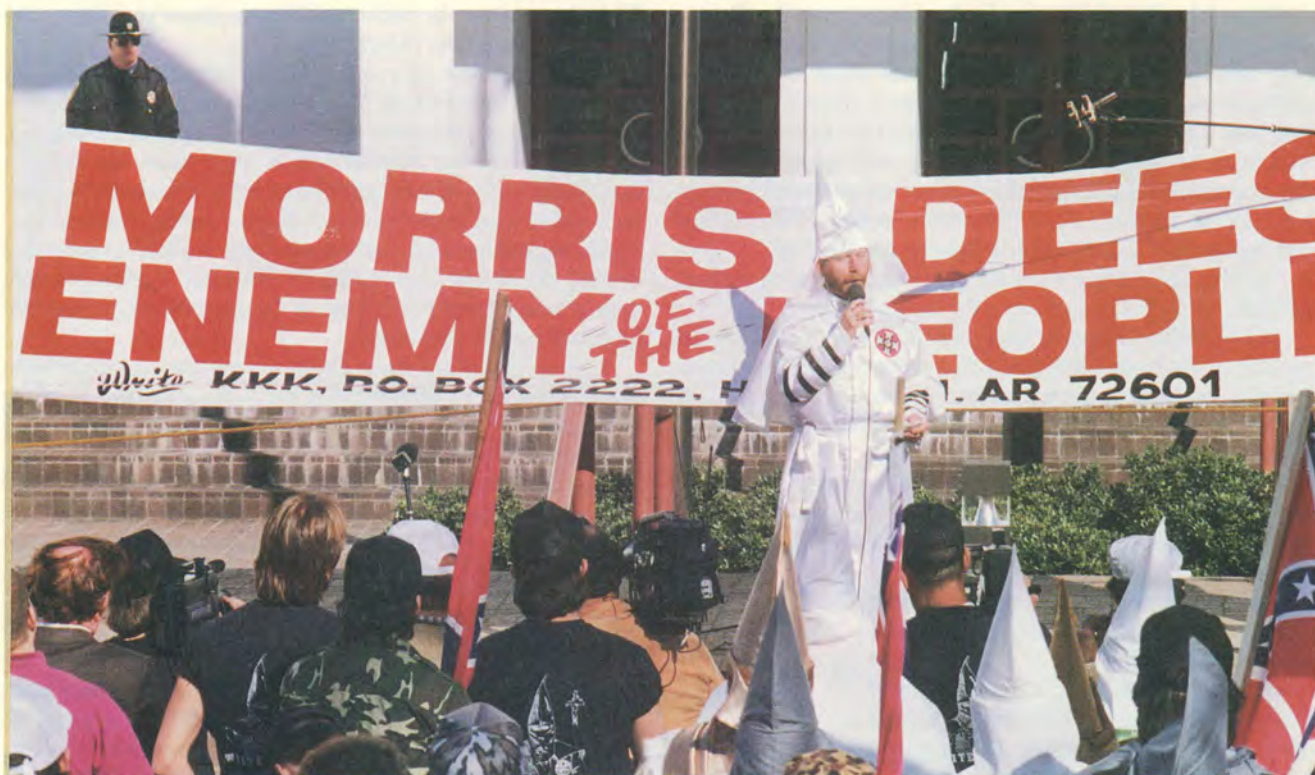
Because of the actions of some of your brothers and other Greeks, your friends turn on you.



In April 4, 1991 at the Iota Xi chapter at George Mason University, sorority women dressed a brother in women's clothing, put a curly black wig atop his head, strapped a pillow to his posterior and painted his face black before sending him on stage during a Derby Days event. The incident, which was reported in the April 29, 1991 issue of *Newsweek* and in newspapers across the country, became the focus of a court battle between the chapter and the university and put the brothers through a harrowing ordeal.

Some minority groups signed a petition calling for the chapter's suspension from campus activities, and dean of students

(continued on pg. 64)



Found hanging by his neck from a tree, Michael Donald was not the first black man to die in a racially-motivated attack.

But Donald's gruesome murder did not go unnoticed. It came to the attention of Morris Dees, a civil rights lawyer and social justice advocate who heads the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Ala. With the Center's resources behind him, Dees dove into the case. A long-time opponent of hate groups, he used the Donald case to attack the Ku Klux Klan.

The murder was committed by two young Klan members, one of whom testified they killed Donald "simply because he was black."

Three nights before the murder, the two had attended a meeting of the United Klans of America (UKA), Unit 900.

A highly-publicized trial in the area had just concluded with judgment against a white person. When a clipping about the trial was read at the meeting, ugly, resentful sentiments were unleashed.

"A nigger ought to be hung by the neck until dead to put them in their place," said one Klan member. "We gonna kill [one]," said another. Another Klansman spewed that blacks are so stupid all of them should be killed.

The members of Unit 900 who abducted, beat and murdered Michael Donald a few days after the hate-filled meeting wanted "to show the strength of the Klan . . . to show that they were still here . . ."

Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center fight racism every day.

By Walter Hutchens

United Klans of America members had previously killed four children by bombing the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham in 1963, beaten Freedom Riders (civil rights advocates testing the Supreme Court's decision desegregating bus terminals) in Birmingham and Montgomery in 1961 and murdered civil rights worker Viola Luizzo as she drove marchers from Selma to Montgomery in 1965.

Dees argued that the Klan should be liable for the Donald murder in the same way corporations can be liable for their agents' actions. After criminal judgments were rendered against the killers, Dees filed a civil suit against them, additional Klan members and the United Klans of America organization.

At trial he demonstrated the Klan's historical pattern of violence and showed culpability up the Klan chain of command—from local officers to national ones. He said the murder represented a conspiracy to carry out the white supremacist goals of the UKA.

An all-white jury in Mobile, Ala., agreed with him, awarding a \$7 million judgment. The judgment broke the back of the United Klans of America; the deed to its headquarters was turned over to the Southern Poverty Law Center and proceeds from its sale were given to Michael Donald's mother.

"No amount of money is going to bring back Michael or make my heart ache any less," she told Dees. But from the beginning she'd said her purpose in the lawsuit would be to "let the world know."

And the world has taken notice. Since shutting down the UKA, Dees and the Center have gained wide national recognition.

An autobiography, *A Season for Justice: The Life and Times of Civil Rights Lawyer Morris Dees*, was published in 1991. NBC's two-hour movie *Line of Fire: The Morris Dees Story* ran earlier in the year. And many contributors have been enlisted to keep the Center's work going.



Dees' work hasn't attracted just positive attention, though. He has been on the hit list of The Order, the hard-core hate group that murdered progressive Denver talk show host Alan Berg. In 1983 the Center's offices were set ablaze by an arsonist. In 1985 police in Fayetteville, Ark. arrested White Patriot Party conspirators plotting to assassinate him.

Forced by all this to maintain intense personal security, Dees' office at the Center is reinforced to withstand a bombing attack.

Yet when *The Magazine* recently caught up with him there, he was relaxed and affable.

"I'm proud of my association with Sigma Chi," he said, "I consider it an honor."

Dees pledged Sigma Chi at the University of Alabama in 1955.

"I was going to be a Sigma Chi almost from the day I was born," he said. "Quite frankly, it was the only fraternity I had ever heard much about."

A friend of Dees' father, Montgomery attorney Charles Pinkston, **Alabama '31**, recommended Morris to the Iota Iota chapter. C.B. Carlton, '57, a two-time Consul of the chapter, rushed Dees.

"I got involved the day I got up there," Dees said. "Carlton came over to my apartment and said 'we want you to join Sigma Chi.'"

Although already married and a father while in college, Dees maintained some involvement with the chapter even through law school.

"I didn't drink in those days, but I would always get me a derby, get on the [Homecoming] float and ride with everybody," he said. "I did that right on through law school."

As an undergraduate, Dees "ate over [at the house] every Sunday."

"Sometimes I ate breakfast there. I lived in the married student apartments, so I would park in the parking lot behind the house, eat breakfast and go on to school."

Still in contact with many friends from the chapter, Dees said he sometimes works on lawsuits with Alex Newton, **Alabama '52**.

"I have been to the new [Sigma Chi house at Alabama] many times," Dees said. "When they have open house for alumni—football games up there, homecoming—I always go."

A successful entrepreneur while in college, Dees often visited other Sigma Chi chapters.



Morris Dees.

"During college I was traveling a lot, selling ads on student directories, and I always stayed in the Sigma Chi houses."

"Desk blotters," he explained. "I did them in about eight or nine colleges in the South. I went to Chattanooga; the University of Tennessee; the University of Mississippi. It was one of the things I did to make money in college."

Make money he did. Besides a warrior-like dedication to social justice, Dees has a Midas touch.

The Center, founded in 1971, has built a generous endowment. Annual contributions run into the millions. The business acumen Dees showed in college seeded the financial independence that has helped make his other crusades possible.

Just nine years after finishing law school, Dees sold a publishing company he started in college to Times-Mirror for \$6 million.

That windfall's origin was hardly spectacular, though: During college, "Momma sent me a fruitcake for my birthday," Dees recounts in *A Season for Justice*. "I hadn't returned since

leaving in September and was really homesick. So were a lot of other students, and their moms, I suspected, longed to make them feel good on special occasions. Why couldn't I write each student's parents and offer to deliver a freshly baked birthday cake?"

Dees started Bama Birthday Cake Service the following school year.

"The response was terrific. Over 20 percent of the parents ordered our cakes . . . I sold 350 cakes a month and netted three dollars for each."

But Dees says "the real bonanza was the education I got in direct mail."

Direct mail campaigns launched and now help sustain the Center.

Dees has also lent his fund-raising expertise to three U.S. presidential campaigns. In 1972 Dees was finance director for George McGovern. The senator from South Dakota was defeated, but the campaign set precedents in political fund-raising. More than \$24 million was raised, and the campaign finished with a surplus. After that election, Congress passed laws capping individual gifts at \$1,000. Dees was finance director for Jimmy Carter in 1976 and held the same position for Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy in 1980. He was disappointed by the feeble popular support for Kennedy's candidacy and doesn't plan to take an active role in the upcoming presidential election.



But he didn't stumble into presidential campaigns and headlines overnight.

Since business had gone so well, he thought twice about leaving it when he graduated from law school in 1960.

Striking a compromise, he decided to keep a hand in business and work at law. He moved to Montgomery, the state's capital, and set up a law practice with his college business partner.

"While I was worried about collection matters and getting our practice off the ground," Dees recounts in his autobiography, "the civil rights movement was taking flight."

At the time he didn't suspect the cause of civil rights would drastically alter his life. He was drawn into the movement unexpectedly.

An old white neighbor was accused of assault during an episode of violence against Freedom Riders. Dees agreed to help the man. Walking out of court after defending him, Dees was approached and challenged by a black man.



Dees holds Henok Seraw, son of an Ethiopian man murdered by skinheads in Portland, Ore. A civil suit against the skinheads, the White Aryan Resistance organization and its leader Tom Metzger resulted in an award of \$12.5 million in damages.

"How can you represent people like that?" the man asked Dees. "Don't you think black people have rights?"

The confrontation forced Dees to examine his personal stance. The civil rights movement had been unfolding around him. He'd written some sympathetic letters to newspapers, and he'd been an

outspoken voice for progress in his church. But growing up in rural Alabama and attending the University of Alabama while it was all-white, he'd not really questioned his belief in segregation.

"I thought I believed in the system because everyone believed in it," he recalls in the book.

"But looking in the face of my accuser, I felt the anger of a black person for the first time. . . . I vowed then and there nobody would ever doubt [my commitment to equality] again."

It would be hard to doubt it now. Besides the Donald case, Dees and the Center have taken on hate groups other than the Klan, shutting down white supremacist paramilitary camps and winning a \$12.5 million judgment against Tom Metzger and the White Aryan Resistance organization he heads. The Metzger judgment came after the beating death of an Ethiopian man in Portland, Ore. Other Center lawsuits have helped marginalized persons gain economic and political rights.

"But the big emphasis of the Center now is on education, not litigation," Dees explained.

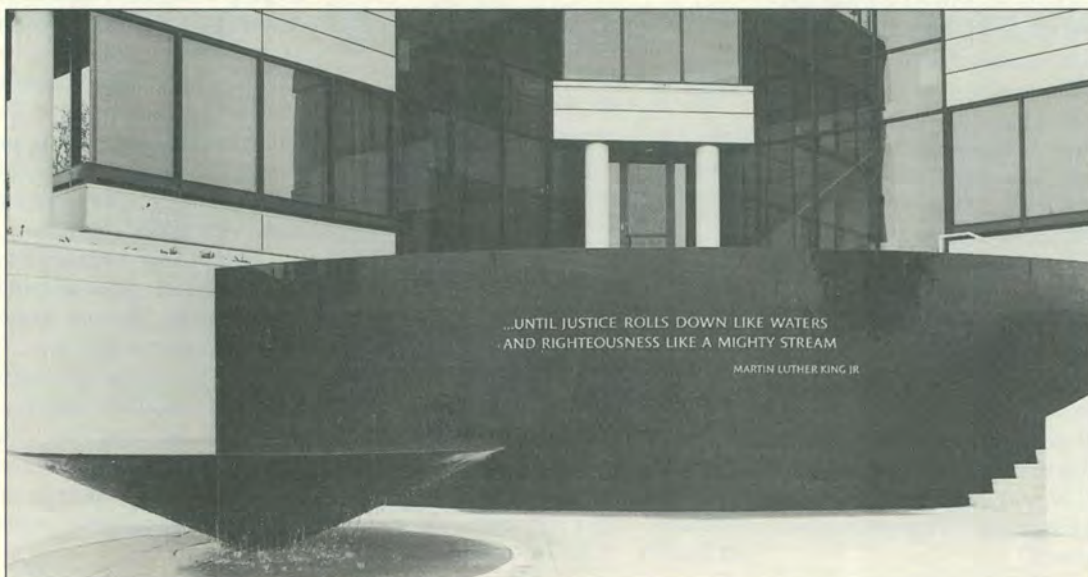
"Most of our effort is now concentrated on teaching and helping teachers."

The Center has launched a magazine called *Teaching Tolerance* to give teachers a vehicle for sharing ideas on teaching diversity. The magazine is part of a kit that includes a lesson-length movie on the civil rights movement and a booklet about the the movement's history.

Besides education and litigation, the Center runs Klanwatch, a project begun in 1980 to monitor hate groups. Serving as an intelligence-gathering service for law enforcement officials, Klanwatch tracks racial violence and hate group activities across the United States, cataloging the information in a large electronic database.

So, Dees has left far behind for-profit ventures and anything even resembling an ordinary Southern law practice. Intolerance and racial violence, however, neither began nor ended with the UKA, so Dees feels he must fight on.

"Until justice rolls down like waters" is the motto chiseled into the stone monument in front of the Center's offices. Designed by Maya Lin—the same sculptor who designed the Viet Nam Veterans 'Wall' memorial in Washington, D.C.—the monument honors those killed in the civil rights movement. As long as Dees manages not to become one of them, he plans to fight on, embodying in his daily life a Sigma Chi's struggle to achieve friendship, justice and learning. ■



Sigs in the 'Global Village'

Fully told, their story would sprawl for pages.

They are the Sigma Chis caught up in the economic and humanitarian integration of the world. These brothers understand what it means to call the world a "global village."

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11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Walter Hutchens, Editor

Phillip V. Sanchez, **Calif. State-Fresno '53**, is representative of them. A former U.S. Ambassador to Honduras and Colombia, Sanchez is now publisher of *Noticias del Mundo*, a chain of Spanish-language daily newspapers in the U.S.

Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity under Richard Nixon, Sanchez is a Significant Sig, former Consul, Chapter Advisor and Grand Praetor.

Another Sig diplomat, Edward W. "Skip" Gnehm, **George Washington '65**, is the U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait. Appointed by President Bush just before the recent Gulf war, Gnehm previously served in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Vietnam and Nepal.

Besides high-profile diplomats, other Sigs know multiculturalism is more than a philosophical abstraction.

Jeff MacCorkle, **Cornell '88**, works in the Peoples Republic of China for Fuqua World Trade Corporation in Beijing.

"It's been a terrific job for me as I love to travel," MacCorkle told *The Magazine*.

"There is a pretty respectable network of Sigs from Cornell in the Far East. Several in Hong Kong, a few in Japan and me in China. We have gotten together a couple of times in Hong Kong and traveled throughout South East Asia on one occasion," MacCorkle said.

Another Sig in Asia is Jay Branegan, **Cornell '72**, Hong Kong correspondent for *Time* magazine.

Many other Sigs have worked or are working outside North America:

- John E. Justice, **West Virginia '69** is chief of intelligence collection management at NATO Headquarters for the Allied Force, Northern Europe. He lives in Hosle, Norway.

- Kim Tijerina, **Texas A&M '80**, resides in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. He is employed by Completion Tool Company. Despite the dis-

tance, he is a dues-paying member of the Houston Alumni Chapter and receives the chapter's newsletter.

- Ron Pilon, **Bradley '52**, recently spoke to the Peoria Alumni Chapter about his experiences working as sales representative for Caterpillar, Inc. in what was then the Soviet Union. Pilon is now a manager of special projects in marketing support services for Cat.

- Dr. James F. Kleckner, **Lehigh '45**, practiced ophthalmology in Saudi Arabia from 1987-88. Last summer he spoke to the Los Angeles Alumni Chapter about his experience, praising Saudi Arabia's capital city of Riyadh, saying "their labs were larger and more modern than our own."

- Another ophthalmologist, William Simcoe, **Oklahoma State '53**, has traveled around the world teaching eye surgery.

- Barent Springsted Jr., **Westminster '65**, works in Bangkok, Thailand for the Phoenix Pulp and Paper Company. He served two years with the Peace Corps in Thailand after college.

- Gregg Purnell, **Baylor '79**, has been in Papua New Guinea translating the Bible.

- Past Grand Praetor Robert Kershaw, **Butler & Michigan State '41**, recently served as a volunteer for International Executive Service Corps, helping a Dokki, Egypt fast food restaurant improve its operations. It was his third project for the organization.

- Gerald H. Kangas, **Willamette '56**, is General manager and CEO of United Saudi Commercial Bank. He lives in Riyadh.

These brothers are a mere sample of the total number of Sigs with international occupations. The abundance of such brothers suggests it is indeed a shrinking world and that Sigs who prepare themselves for it are wise. ■

New Position Available at Headquarters

To enhance alumni services, a new Fraternity staff position has been created. The position involves support of alumni and alumni chapters, development of new programs and fund-raising.

The ideal candidate will have substantial post-college work experience, be ready for extensive travel and have superb oral and written communication skills. Experience as a volunteer in the Fraternity is desirable; membership in Sigma Chi is required. The position is based in Evanston, Ill.

Direct inquiries and recommendations to: Mark Anderson, President, Sigma Chi Corporation; Sigma Chi Fraternity; 1714 Hinman Ave.; Evanston, IL 60201. ■

BEHIND THE

PC

CONTROVERSY

By Shelley Benson

Sig Students, University Administrators Examine The Phenomenon

PC—or political correctness—can be described as a sensitivity toward the rights and cultures of all people. Or, it can be described as a controversy, dividing the campus community and challenging the interpretation of First Amendment rights. What political correctness is depends on who you talk to, and perhaps on where your sympathies lie.

Some view the PC movement, which has surfaced primarily in the United States, as a non-issue, created by the media and having no effect on today's colleges and universities. Others view it as a "new McCarthyism," rather than a basic ethical awareness.

Just as the definition of political correctness is ambiguous, so is its evolving vocabulary. Terms such as "African-American" and "person of color" have replaced black, and the term "physically-challenged" is now often used instead of handicapped. Although these new terms were created to dissolve prejudice and negative stereotypes, an active understanding and respect for non-dominant cultures and people is a more vital component of being politically correct.

PC advocates believe recognizing and understanding different cultures is essential to functioning in a multicultural society. This includes respecting the rights and beliefs of different races, cultures, genders and religions, and also includes persons with different abilities, appearances and sexual orientations.

Opponents of political correctness are not necessarily opposed to marginalized persons or groups, but they view PC as a way of dividing, rather than uniting, society. They believe that by accentuating differences or imposing specific beliefs, we jeopardize the chances for a truly equal and integrated society.

Anti-PC'ers often view political correctness as a threat to freedom of speech and expression. They believe PC advocates are acting as "thought police," dictating what people should think and express. In turn, they fear the PC phenomenon will become a "New McCarthyism," singling out individuals with different opinions as the United States government did to accused Communist sympathizers in the middle part of this century.

Amidst the attempts to debate and define PC, the phenomenon has directly affected several students and campus organizations. These individuals have found themselves fac-

ing public scrutiny, as well as the federal legal system.

- A Brown University student was expelled for shouting racial and anti-Semitic epithets and obscenities in a dormitory courtyard.

- A federal district judge found a hate-speech code at the University of Wisconsin unconstitutional.

Each case illustrates the tension between the desire to create an inclusive and comfortable community and the need to preserve First Amendment rights.

Oscar E. Remick, **Alma '54**, President of Westminster College in New Wilmington, Penn. believes universities must create an atmosphere of expected civility.

"The university must, by declaration and example, honor the human dignity on which the educational enterprise is based," he said. "As universities determine who will be admitted to their programs, they must also set the parameters for the kinds of behavior expected and those proscribed."

"I find abhorrent the shouting of racial epithets, or any other kind of dehumanizing names, at anyone," he continued.

"In the case mentioned, Brown could expel the student, assuming due process was carefully honored, and assuming that in all appropriate publications the standards of behavior were clearly spelled out and the consequences of violation indicated."

Remick also believes the court was correct in overturning the University of Wisconsin hate-speech code simply because of the way the policy was formulated. The term *hate speech* implies a direct restriction of speech, as opposed to a code prohibiting actions.

Vartan Gregorian, President of Brown University, voiced a similar speech-versus-action explanation in the May issue of the university's alumni magazine. He said, "The University's code of conduct does not prohibit speech; it prohibits actions, including behavior that 'shows flagrant disrespect for the well-being of others or is unreasonably disruptive of the University community.'"

"There is extreme pressure between the First Amendment and sensitivity," said Charles V. Goodman, **East Texas**

State '85, Greek Advisor at the University of South Florida in Tampa. "Our university has decided that despite our push toward sensitivity, we cannot crush students' freedom of expression.

"The only thing we can be responsible for is attempting to educate our students about sensitivity and the consequences of 'inappropriate' behavior and expressions."

By the year 2008, the largest percentage of college students will no longer be white, middle-class suburbanites. In preparation for this influx of future non-white students, colleges and universities are trying to improve the learning environment. This includes updating codes of student conduct to address harassment and discriminatory acts.

Arizona State University has revised its conduct code to define harassment as actions that "interfere with another's educational opportunities, peaceful enjoyment of residence, physical security or terms or conditions of employment." It also states that the "Harassment is discriminatory if taken with the purpose or effect of differentiating on the basis of another person's race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, handicap or Vietnam-era veteran status."

Again, many university officials and students disregard the PC phenomenon. President of the University of Northern Iowa Constantine 'Deno' Curris, **Kentucky '62**, says that the debate over political correctness is one-third media hype, one-third a political creation and one-third substance.

"It is, for the most part, a non-issue" he said.

When asked what PC is, several students either define it as personal computer or have no opinion at all. "I recently spoke to a freshman class who could not define political correctness," recalled Goodman. "Either we have done a poor job educating, or our students have no interest in the issue."

Whether it is a media invention, a future look at the campus community or just another issue for students to ignore, the components of political correctness, specifically the anti-harassment codes, have collided with First Amendment rights. Its wake has left further uncertainty and controversy, even within Sigma Chi chapters.

During the past two years, Sigs at the University of New Mexico, George

**"Our Fraternity
expects much
more
from its members
than the law
requires."**

Mason University and the University of Alabama were embroiled in incidents some labeled as PC-related. In each case, the chapters received public criticism and university discipline as a result of actions that were viewed as insensitive. These instances, and other PR nightmares some chapters experienced, are further discussed on pages 12-13.

Both the New Mexico and George Mason cases became legal battles. Although the New Mexico chapter settled the issue with the University, federal courts overturned the university sanctions imposed against the George Mason Sigs. The judge ruled that although the incident in question was perceived as racist and insensitive, the students' First Amendment Rights must be upheld.

"Many brothers quickly realized that what was intended as innocent and amusing could be hurtful to other students," said George Mason Chapter Editor Jason Buckel, '94. He said the chapter learned the importance of cultural understanding and is determined to become a leader in educating the campus and community.

"Incidents similar to that at George Mason University illustrate clearly that the ivory tower cannot be impervious to the arms of constitutional law," Remick said. "No matter how noble, how right certain values and standards may be, they cannot be honored by

means that are in conflict with the law of the land."

Grand Consul Joel Cunningham, while supporting the protection of freedom of expression, believes that inappropriate behavior can not be tolerated. "Our Fraternity expects much more from its members than the law requires," he said.

Through these and related incidents, some question what role Greeks will assume as the PC saga continues.

Will Greeks implement an occasional chapter program on diversity, or will they truly work to build a diverse membership?

Will they merely rely on the First Amendment to justify their actions, or will they actively work to educate the campus and community?

"We have spent much time redirecting our fraternity on issues of hazing, alcohol and risk management," Goodman believes. "We must now encourage them to explore the greater issues of society."

"It is imperative that fraternities and sororities stop seeing themselves as a reflection of society's ills, but as part of the situation," he explained. "One philosophy leads to passive acceptance, the other leads to change."

While citizens have the right to freedom of expression, nothing dictates each individual's moral judgements. Fortunately, the founders of Greek-letter organizations advocated virtue in even their earliest documents.

"The rhetoric of Sigma Chi has always conveyed the importance of accepting and bonding with those of 'different talents, temperaments and convictions,'" said Rick Morat, **Central Michigan '86**, student life coordinator at California State University at San Bernardino. "If the current political climate challenges us, Sigma Chi should continue its commitment by instilling the values of tolerance and acceptance toward those who are different. To do otherwise is to leave our members unprepared for personal and professional life."

Remick believes it is the responsibility of Greek-letter organizations to make higher education a true learning environment concerned not only with the content of the curriculum, but also the character of the community and its constituents.

"Sigma Chis have an opportunity now for moral leadership," he said. "Let's seize it." ■

Chapter Programs Emphasize Diversity

Recent Sigma Chi chapter programming reflects the issues facing society today. Racial sensitivity, multiculturalism and "political correctness" have emerged as buzzwords of the '90s, and several Sig chapters have structured programs and events to give these topics some much-deserved attention.

Over the last two years, the spirit of COLORS (Campus Organized Lectures on Racial Sensitivity) has gained momentum. Sig chapters at George Mason University and the University of Louisville and elsewhere have successfully implemented and benefited from the program.

COLORS, developed by the Sigma Chi chapter and the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity at the University of Pennsylvania, consists of lectures, discussions and skits designed to address race-related issues by prompting interaction between all students.

Since its inception in 1989, the principles behind the program have remained the same. Both groups believed that education is the key in promoting a more harmonious environment.

"Prejudice is often based on incorrect assumptions and stereotypes," they agreed. "We believe that many of these misunderstandings can be remedied if students are given an opportunity to candidly express their own viewpoints. The program aims to expose individuals to different cultures and viewpoints that they may not otherwise experience through direct contact."

Sigs at the University of Cincinnati have scheduled a program similar to COLORS entitled RAPP, or Racial Awareness Pilot Program. According to Chapter Editor Robert Lawley, RAPP will be presented at Zeta Psi during winter quarter to promote racial awareness. The local organization educates groups with literature and different programming ideas.

Several Sig chapters have co-sponsored events with traditionally African-American organizations.

While exchange dinners and group discussions are a few of the most popular activities, Sigs at M.I.T. planned an experience to benefit race relations and the community. Together with Alpha Phi Alpha, Sigs helped clean, paint and renovate a dilapidated house to make a shelter for homeless men. A campus-wide party was held after the project, and all proceeds were donated to the shelter.

"Next year, we'll be out in full force," promised four women of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority after participating in Derby Days at the University of Houston. Although the predominantly African-American sororities were all invited to attend, the AKAs made sure their participation did not go unnoticed. The women placed fourth in the competition and their candidate was selected "Derby Dolly."

Derby Days Chairman Matt Provenzano, '92, said it was difficult to encourage the AKA's participation. "Most organizations invite African-American organizations to participate in events just as a token effort to make themselves look good. But with some straight-forward persistence, we were able to convince the Alpha Kappa Alphas that our intentions were sincere."

"They'll probably win the whole thing next year," said Provenzano, who will serve as the Derby Days chairman again in 1992.

The Sigma Chi chapter at Sam Houston supports diversity both through its membership and chapter programming.

With a culturally diverse membership, the chapter's "most unique case" is Greenwood Horn, who is second in blood line to the chief of the Choctaw tribe, according to Chapter Editor Gregg Lunsford, '92.

"Greenwood is a close pledge brother of mine," said Lunsford. "We spend a lot of time talking about his Native-American heritage."

Greenwood is a descendant of Cornelius McCurtain, chief of the Choctaw during the Trail of Tears in the 1800s. Cornelius' daughter, Kitty, was also prominent in Native-American history. Because of her extensive involvement in education once the Choctaws were in Oklahoma, the University of Oklahoma has named one of its campus buildings after her.

When Sam Houston chapter's Sweetheart served as a chaperone for a group of Japanese exchange students last summer, the chapter invited them to an afternoon of volleyball and fellowship. Both groups discussed their respective universities, but the event allowed the Japanese students to get a first-hand look at higher education in the United States.

Lunsford said the students were quite interested in our Greek system. Since Japanese universities do not have fraternities and sororities, the exchange students enjoyed seeing how American students combine both scholastics and extracurricular/social activities.

"It was truly a mutual learning experience," said Lunsford. "We look forward to the group returning again next summer."

Multicultural programming does not need to be complex to be effective. Friendships can evolve from activities similar to those mentioned above. A simple gesture and the rapport established can naturally lead to a more heightened awareness and understanding of many different cultures.

Other programming ideas are highlighted in the On Campus section on pages 37-61. ■

**"Prejudice
is often based
on incorrect
assumptions
and
stereotypes."**

~The Founders of COLORS

The National Interfraternity Conference, with support from the National Pan-Hellenic Council, Inc. and the National Panhellenic Conference has developed a programming manual titled Diversity Week: Creating Unity In The Community. It contains a number of ready-made multicultural programming ideas and instructions on how to successfully implement them on your campus. Please contact your IFC representative, or the National Interfraternity Conference at (317) 872-1112 for more information.

For more information on COLORS, please contact Saad A. Khairi, COLORS Chairman, at the Phi Phi chapter-University of Pennsylvania.

For more information on the Racial Awareness Pilot Program, contact the Zeta Psi chapter at the University of Cincinnati.

Chapter Eternal

- OHIO STATE**
'52 William J. Webb of Worthington, Ohio, on Sept. 23.
- OHIO WESLEYAN**
'24 Eugene K. Taggart of Delaware, Ohio, on Aug. 20.
'25 J. Paul Mossman of Gallipolis, Ohio, on June 4.
'27 Harold W. Blose of Ridgway, Penn., on Sept. 10.
- OKLAHOMA**
'26 Lloyd B. Fleming of Tulsa, Okla., on Nov. 21, 1990.
- OKLAHOMA STATE**
'29 George C. Edgerton of Bartlesville, Okla., in March.
- OREGON STATE**
'30 Bob Hancock of Naples, Fla., on July 31.
- OREGON STATE**
'23 Philip B. Gilbert of Tualatin, Ore., on Aug. 10.
- PENNSYLVANIA**
'31 William J. Colbert of Shreveport, La., Nov. 1990.
- PURDUE**
'35 John P. Garrett of Englewood, Ohio, in June.
'51 Robert C. Nordli of North Barrington, Ill., on May 3.
'61 William L. Survant of Northridge, Cal., on July 9.
- SAN DIEGO STATE**
'49 Manuel Doria of San Diego, Cal., on Oct. 15.
'50 Richmond M. Guasti on July 29.
'50 Jon Kowal of San Diego, Cal., on Oct. 15.
'53 John Cady of Spring Valley, Cal., on Oct. 15.
'66 Robert A. Sitcoscy, on July 29.
'69 George C. Tomlinson, in April.
'71 Steve P. Jordan of San Diego, Cal., on Aug. 2.
- SOUTH CAROLINA**
'44 Joseph E. Shaw of Greenville, S.C., on Aug. 29.
'62 Edmund C. Owen of Anderson, S.C., on Dec. 22, 1990.
- SOUTHERN METHODIST**
'53 Steven G. Condsos of Dallas, Texas, on April 24.
- ST. LAWRENCE**
'70 Ronald Laboda of Garden City, N.J., in March.
- STANFORD**
'31 Felix Joujon-Roche of Palos Verdes, Cal., on Jan. 15.
- TENNESSEE-KNOXVILLE**
'36 Charles W. Black of Knoxville, Tenn., on Feb. 9.
- TEXAS A & I**
'66 David E. Wilds of Corpus Christi, Texas, on July 1.
- TEXAS-AUSTIN**
'41 Hugh Burns of Dilley, Texas.
'49 Robert J. Paxton of Midland, Texas, on Aug. 18.
- TULANE**
'44 Malcolm R. Stouse Covington, La., on March 13.
- UTAH**
'55 Byron B. Paulsen of Salt Lake City, Utah, on Feb. 3.
- UTAH STATE**
'30 Moses H. Thatcher of Salt Lake City, Utah, on Sept. 6.
- VANDERBILT**
'44 William T. Hutchinson, III of Nashville, Tenn., on July 24.
- VIRGINIA**
'32 Paul Whitehead of Lynchburg, Va., on March 19.
'52 Henry C. Schulz of North Hollywood, Cal., on Aug. 1, 1990.
- WAKE FOREST**
'52 Daniel W. Fagg Jr. of Batesville, Ark., on Feb. 19.
- WASHINGTON STATE**
'41 Donald L. Knapp of Docton, Wash., on June 6, 1990.
- WASHINGTON (ST. LOUIS)**
'25 Sidney A. Weber of St. Louis, Mo., on Sept. 19.
'40 Thomas M. Hawken Jr. of St. Louis, Mo.
- WISCONSIN**
'25 Raymond J. Stipek of Los Angeles, Cal., on Sept. 24.
'44 Leroy H. Jerstad Jr. of Racine, Wisc., on Aug. 31.
'46 Willard J. Peterson of Elkhorn, Wisc., on July 30, 1990.
'47 William G. Lathrop Jr. of Madison, Wisc., on June 23. ■

Chapters endure PR NIGHTMARES

(continued from pg. 13)

Kenneth Bumgarner prohibited the chapter from participating in most activities on or off campus for two years.

A report filed by university administrators said that "Insensitive and offensive acts created or perpetrated by groups or individuals in the name of fun or humor are often the cause of strife, anguish, frustration, and extreme personal pain." The report called for a "positive, well-informed response and plan of action by Sigma Chi Fraternity, addressing the concerns of the offended." Such a response, according to the report, should consist of acknowledging responsibility for the action, a desire to participate in multicultural and gender issues programming, and a planned series of responses to offended groups.

John Singsank, Consul at the time of the event, publicly apologized for the event. He noted its perceived insensitivity, however unintentional, and said the chapter would initiate race relations programs within the Greek system.

"From the bad we must search for the good," he said, "and we feel this is a chance to improve the future relations of all the parties involved."

Besides groups lobbying for suspension of the chapter's activities, Consul John Howlin said students called chapter members derogatory names, and friends acted cold toward members. Other students made innuendos and other subtle remarks to chapter members, he said, and an underground campus newsletter labelled the chapter as racist.

"We felt judged just by wearing our letters," he said.

"We handled the abuse because we felt we deserved it," Howlin explained, "but at times we felt cut off—people wanted to hold this incident over our heads despite any progress we had made."

Besides people refusing to listen, Howlin said on several occasions campus groups have held forums to talk about the incident without inviting the chapter. Once, after he received word of a forum about to occur, he asked to attend. When he went to the forum, he found it had been cancelled, he said. On further investigation, an organizer of the event told him it had been cancelled because it had become too big, too many people had been invited.

"I was told that it had become too big, but I was the only addition to the guest list," he said.

According to Howlin, hoopla about the incident has subsided considerably since April, and groups are now more willing to listen.

Currently, the chapter is organizing a COLORS program similar to the one Phi Phi Chapter at the University of Pennsylvania sponsors. Howlin said the chapter's program will consist of bringing together all campus groups for racial awareness programming. The program will consist of speakers, discussions and skits. "It will make all groups aware that racism can happen anywhere, to most anyone," he said.

Besides bringing in speakers and watching skits, Howlin said the chapter will sponsor a community service project involving all the groups participating in the COLORS program.

He advised other chapters to seek input if an event they want to hold seems questionable.

"If an event is questionable, ask someone for input," he advised. "Go outside the Greek system for advice."

This article is not intended to embarrass the chapters mentioned; rather, it is intended as an educational tool to help others. The chapters mentioned went through PR nightmares without anticipating them. In contemporary campus climates, offensive behavior can instantly ignite fiery reprisals. To avoid PR nightmares, chapters are encouraged to carefully review programming ideas and to seek guidance from the General Fraternity Headquarters, the Grand Praetor and Chapter Advisor or other concerned individuals. Other articles in this issue may also be helpful. ■