The Discriminatory Selection Practices of Colby's Greek Letter Societies

By: Katie Daigle
## COLBY FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

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RUSHING PROCESS

- 1st Information Session
- Open Rush Teas/Smokers
- 2nd Information Session
- Closed Rush
  - Formal, Invite-Only
- Preferential Bidding
- Accepted Bids/Invitations
OPEN RUSH

- Sororities: Open Teas
- Fraternities: Open Smokers
- Open to all “rushees”
- Chance to learn the basic character of each Greek letter society
CLOSED RUSH

- Each fraternity/sorority holds a private, exclusive party
- Invites about 45 “rushees” they would consider for membership.
- Invited “rushees” may bid to that specific fraternity/sorority
PREFERENTIAL BIDDING

Sororities:
- “Rushees” would submit a “bid” to join a specific sorority.
- Accepted bids are passed out the following day.

Fraternities:
- Each fraternity provides a faculty board with 12 invitations.
- Invitations must be accepted/denied within four days.
4 METHODS OF DISCRIMINATION

- Explicit Policies
- Implicit Policies
- Recommendation Systems
- “Mutually Acceptable” Membership Clauses
Language *clearly* outlines membership exclusion

Often designated in the fraternity’s/sorority’s constitution or membership bylaws

Explicit polices are often ordained nationally and followed locally
“As Christian gentlemen, men of honor and high ideals, members are expected to be tolerant of the rights and beliefs of others and never indulge in snobbishness.”

“The active members of a chapter shall be duly enrolled undergraduate male white Gentile students of the institution where the chapter is located.”

Explicitly religiously and racially exclusive
Implicit policies are subtle agreements, often unwritten, but understood by members.

Leaves organization open to racially, religiously, ethnically discriminatory policies as they choose.

Lacks potentially incriminatory evidence.

Several chapters are near Colby: at Bowdoin, Dartmouth, Tufts, Brown, Yale and Williams. Zeta Psi has long had thirty chapters and unwritten law so limits them.

“Facts about Colby’s Fraternities” 1942-1943
RECOMMENDATION

REQUIREMENTS

- Required by way of an alumna or student who knew the “rushee” or the family
- Asked about:
  - Grades
  - Reputation/Character
  - Religious Preference
  - Appearance
Due to recommendation subjectivity, “rushees” could be denied membership on a basis of their race, religion, ethnicity, or economic status.

Subject to individual prejudice within the framework of the national chapter’s prejudice.
Sigma Kappa (S)

Sigma Kappa needs an alumna recommendation before being able to pledge a student. Such a recommendation is never received for a negro girl, and if the Colby Chapter did pledge a negro Miss Reynolds expressed the opinion that the Chapter would be dropped from the National on the basis of weak scholarship or something similar. Indeed, she stated that during the pledging process "students do not think of taking negroes; they go right over their names."

--Letter from Robert Barlow to President Strider

“We even had racism in my day-'19. A girl wasn’t taken into a sorority because her grandfather was colored and I was asked to verify it as I knew the family.”

--Colby and Sigma Kappa Alumnus
MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CLAUSES

- Implies that an inducted member must be considered of a character acceptable to every local within the national chapter.
- Influenced by regional racial, religious, and ethnic prejudices

Chi Omega (S)
ALTERNATIVES TO EXCLUSIVITY/AROUND POLICIES

- Groups founded on a non-discriminatory basis
  - Delta Upsilon (F)
  - Pi Lambda Phi (F)

- Social Membership:
  - A member pays dues, can participate in all fraternity events, yet cannot be officially initiated
  - Lambda Chi Alpha (F)

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Lambda Chi Alpha

In the last issue of the Nuncio, Alpha Rho expressed its opinion that Lambda Chi Alpha is obligated to remove all membership restrictions based on race, religion, or creed. Our alumni have endorsed this view and also suggested that we continue in our efforts to remove these limitations.

The National Fraternity maintains that the 152 chapters which compose Lambda Chi determine their position relative to this matter. At the national convention, held every two years, the question on restriction of entry has been a constant source of controversy. A two-thirds vote of Lambda Chi chapters against limitations to membership is needed. At the last national convention in 1956 the Active chapters continued to vote for membership restrictions. Thus, until the next convention in 1958, we are unable to initiate certain outstanding men.

The brothers of the Alpha Rho chapter of Colby College are proud to be members of Lambda Chi. However, as it was expressed in our last publication, "Each initiate into Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity asserts the motto, Vir Quirque Vir - every man a man. This tenet recognizes and respects human beings as equally endowed with basic rights and freedoms."

We feel that the 152 chapters should follow these ideals and goals.

Alpha Rho will work for a change in the constitution and will abide by whatever laws are adopted at a general assembly. Until that time comes, however, when membership shall be open to "all", we will continue to accept Social privileges, regardless of race or religion. Even though these men have not taken the fraternity ritual and cannot wear a pin, they are known on the Colby College campus as Lambda Chi's.
A PERSON OF CHANGE:
JACKIE NUNEZ

Friends refer to her as a phenomenal person, an incredible scholar, and a privilege to know.

She was one of the most brilliant students I've had at Colby.

ADMITT OFFICE OF COLBY COLLEGE
College Biographical Information

Class 1961

Fraternity or Sorority Chi Omega
Nickname Jackie

Full Name Jacqueline Ruth Nunez
Home Address 6 W. Barbara Dr., Freehold, N. J.
Street
City
State

Major Subject English Literature

What are your plans after graduation? PLEASE BE SPECIFIC.

Graduate School? Yes Name of school Hamilton What field? A.M.T.

Please list all your activities and interests while at Colby (prizes, honors, awards, athletics, societies and organizations of which you have been a member, offices held, etc.)


Mailing address after June 6. 6 W. Barbara Dr., Freehold, N. J.
“Within two years, before June 1963, each group on campus must present a letter from their national organization to the effect that the local group has complete freedom of selection in regard to membership...the evidence should be in writing so that so-called “mutually acceptable” clauses and “gentleman’s agreements” will not provide an opportunity for groups to continue to discriminate.”
(1) No fraternity or sorority shall maintain a connection with a national organization that requires the local chapter to select its members with regard to race, religion or national origin.

(2) Although it is entirely appropriate for a fraternity or sorority to include religious rites in its ceremonies, these ceremonies must be so arranged that no person is required to participate in any religious rite as a condition of admission or continued membership.

(3) The right and opportunity to select and initiate members regardless of race, religion or national origin shall not be restricted or modified in any way by the local fraternity or sorority, its national officers, alumni, advisers, or others from off campus through exclusive privileges of recommendation, approval privileges, veto power, or "mutually acceptable" agreements.
1964 Convention Notes

- Beta chapter attempted to remove the “mutually acceptable” clause and recommendation requirements.
- Tensions over race and changing membership qualifications arose between Beta and other local chapters, as well as the national chapter.
- Beta was accused of being too “liberal,” as nearly Communist.
- Southern chapters believed southern African Americans to be inferior, and unworthy of sorority membership.
- Other southern chapters believed that to induct an African American sister was equal to, and would increase, interracial marriage.

Collins. When it came right down to it, the fact remained that negroes at the first two schools mentioned are of a different caliber than those at Colby, and both girls refused to envision them ever as one of their sisters in Chi Omega.

It was during this discussion that I first realized that many Chi Omegas consider taking a Negro girl into their sisterhood to be the equivalent of marrying a Negro. This is because of the filial bonds and affection between sister and sister, or husband and wife in the same family. Southern Chi Omegas feel, in particular, that accepting a Negro into our sisterhood would lead directly to intermarriage between races, eventually.
“I try to think sensibly about the whole situation and I wonder sometimes if I’m being too irrational to promote our going local. I know it’s what we should do on the basis of principle, but we’ve got a lot of work to do in order that we convince each member she is willing to sacrifice the prestige and other surface benefits for her ideals.”

“Also mention that we feel even if we did not drop now, if we ever did take [an African American], I think we would be forced to do so and also the administration will eventually force us to do so – we will gain nothing by remaining a part of XΩ and only lose $55 for each girl.”

—Letter from Marty to Margie

—Letter from Beth to Maggie
From “Tau Delta Phi/Tau Alpha” (1955):

As most of Colby’s fraternities were religiously Christian, a small group of Jewish students petitioned the faculty for recognition as a fraternal society. While the faculty allowed it, in order for official Colby recognition, they would have to receive 3/4th votes by a Student Council comprised of eight students representing each of Colby's fraternities.

Several attempts were made in 1928, but the petition was continually turned down. To be without official recognition excluded the students from “membership on the various honorary societies, competition for the scholarship and athletic cups and official membership on the Student Council.”

The petition officially passed in 1932, granting Tau Delta Phi official recognition.
TAU DELTA PHI, AND OTHER SECTARIAN FRATERNITIES: GREY AREA

- As a sectarian society, was it unity through identity or the same discriminatory policies practiced by religious-based groups?

- May have isolated other Jewish students that did not want to join the fraternity.

Letter from Gerald Frank ('50) to Dean Earl Smith

I am Jewish, and was "rushed" by the Tau Delts. I thought long and hard about it and decided not to join the fraternity. I liked some of the older guys, but knew they would be graduating soon. And, I will admit, I was confused.

My refusal to take their pin when they broke in to my room in the early morning hours brought about several things.

First and foremost, an estrangement with the Jewish men on campus. It certainly added to an uncertainty that I felt about myself -- who I was and what I was doing and why. But the fact is that I was forced to reject them -- and they, therefore and naturally, rejected me.
“Colby College is committed to the idea that residential life should support and enhance the academic, intellectual, and social growth of its students... residential life should be administered so as to assure the individuals rights, well-being and dignity of others, promote understanding and respect among all people, and foster the opportunity to make lasting friendships.”

--“A New Beginning,” Trustees Committee Report Draft (1983)