

Greek societies need to re-evaluate goals

Organizations become status symbol instead of giving help to community

I remember when I was about 10 years old, my then college age aunt took my sister and I to a University of Houston greek show. For those who know nothing about black greeks, this is a program where black greeks or members of the Pan-Hellenic council "step."

"Stepping" could be defined as a stomping of the feet in a catchy rhythm for some greeks, and for others it involves routines done with a cane.

Though the greek shows then were quite different from what they are today, I was enthralled to be there with all the older students, and I was entranced by the greeks performing. All my sister and I could talk about was how much we wanted to be members of the greek society when we got to college. Well, now that I'm in college, I'm not so entranced anymore.

This column is in no way directed toward any particular fraternity or sorority. Its intent is to ask the reader to assess the necessity and purposes of these organizations.

I am quick to point out that there are a number of different kinds of greek societies: service greeks, academic greeks and social greeks.

I am more than happy to applaud the service greeks for all of their hard work done for the community. I also applaud the academic greek societies because those who are members earned the opportunity to take part in the organization's activities.

What bothers me is that greek letters have become symbols of the so-called privileged and respected. I feel our society has placed too much emphasis on a group of letters that seemingly have been placed in a permutation equation to come up with different fraternity and sorority names that are sometimes confusing and difficult to pronounce.

When flipping through the newspaper, has anyone noticed that almost all wedding announcements include the fraternity or sorority the bride and groom were members of?

I do not always know if the greek society listed is a service, academic or social organization, but for most, I noticed they were social groups. I always question the reasoning behind those listings.

Why would anyone want others to know that they were members of a social club in college? Sure, it's great to be social, but of what importance is that to anyone else?

All I can deduct from that situation is that they feel those greek combinations are a status symbol. They let people know that a certain person spent a lot of money to enter a select group or maybe they were a member of one of the best "stepping" greeks in the nation.

That brings me to my next point. Last year, the first time I saw the shirts that say, "rent a friend, join a frat," I thought the shirts and the wearers were being quite unfair. After thinking about the idea the shirt expressed, I found some sense in it.

To be members of social greek societies, many pay outlandish dues and pledge fees just to party on the weekends with members of their organization. If you want to party, there are tons of free ones around the city, and if you want to party with the same people week after week, take your freely earned friends with you.

It's funny that we were taught throughout our grade school days not to exclude anyone just because they were dressed differently or because they didn't look like we did. After all those times we were placed in the corner for excluding little Timmy from the baseball game or preventing little Mary Jane from jumping rope, it's sad that the idea that discrimination is wrong has not sunk into our thick skulls.

The main thing that bothers me about greek societies is that they feel they have the right and the knowledge to decide if someone is "good enough" to be a member of their group.

Though academic fraternities might rightly claim certain requirements, others should not.

We were also taught not to form little cliques and groups but, instead, to be everyone's friend. Though being everyone's friend is not always possible, fraternities and sororities may cause us to separate ourselves more than necessary.

The qualms I have expressed throughout this column thus far have been directed at all greek societies. But now, because it is instinct for me to talk more about what I know, I have a few points to pose to the Pan-Hellenic members of the black greeks.

Going back to the beginning when I mentioned the greek show I attended when I was young, I was completely oblivious to the fact that few, if any, whites attended the program.

After getting older and being informed that there was a separate greek society for black students, I was inspired to find out that their duties were to uplift the black community. (I want to explain that though these societies are not restricted only to black students — the majority of the students involved are black.)

After getting to college and listening to students, I often have heard people ask, "Have these Pan-Hellenic members forgotten what their purpose started out to be?"

After looking through the Student Organizations Guide for 1991-92, I found that all the members of the Pan-Hellenic council on this campus were listed under service organizations. I'm more than thrilled to support them if what they truly do service for the community.

But all do not. My friend pointed out to me just last week on a flyer for one of the greek fraternities the party dates and fun times that were posted. But when it came to the service project, the description said, "To be announced."

Though I am not aware of what the final service project was, that flyer presented the feeling that they were more concerned about partying than about the community.

Though I am sure, or rather I hope, the fraternities and sororities conduct service projects that are not of public knowledge, I question whether their purpose still is service oriented. I wonder sometimes if instead their purpose has become social and self-serving, almost completely forgetting the promises made to the community.

I also wonder if greeks have taken "the Godfather or Godmother" role on college campuses. In talking to people about this column, one of the questions I always was asked was, "Do you want to go greek?" It was if I would be placed under the wrath of greek society and be prevented from pledging because I wrote this column. If this is the case, again, take a look at your purposes and re-assess your power.

I feel that in some cases, the power given to greeks has gotten out of hand. We hear of numerous stories of hazing on every coast.

After talking to a greek fraternity member and looking over descriptions of greek purposes and goals, I never once found the goal of beating someone up listed.

But I did encounter the goals of becoming more responsible, having more latitude in the community, using leadership skills in positive manners and developing positive sisterhood and brotherhood. Think about it.

As long as something is useful or is making positive steps, I support it all the way. But if it sits stagnant and, as a result, causes negative change, I find no use for it.

I ask the greek societies to look back at your original goals and purposes. Are your working toward those goals with the best of your abilities, or are you using the society-induced power of greeks toward useless acts?



Tanya Williams

Williams is a sophomore journalism major.

Live in harmony with each other

Accept people as different

America by now is done healing from the wounds aggravated by the Thomas hearings. The national fiasco was fervently discussed among Americans as a serious incident and was poignantly commented upon by Europeans as an indication of the pseudo-puritanism of American society.

After a fortnight of domination over the national news, it has surrendered its throne to other events like the California fires, the Texas mass murder and President Bush's attack on Congress.

But the fact remains that it opened up windows into the American psyche we do not really want to open because they bring to the foreground a perplexing reality we try to submerge under beautiful, grandiose facades.

Issues like race, gender, sex, religion, etc. are among the facets of our character we have handcuffed and pushed into the cell of our subconscious called "resolved."

We have done this by creating laws, by making proclamations, by writing constitutions, by voting on amendments.

We attempt to regulate these issues by our actions which, even though noble in cause and spirit, are not enough because the ultimate resolve of these issues has to come from within our heart.

There has to be a change in our mind set, in our thoughts and beliefs, if we ever really are to resolve these issues. By hiding them under laws and presenting the image that we have them under control, we are fooling ourselves.

Once in a while, they find the opportunity to rush to the surface and laugh in our face, mocking our hypocrisy and our awkward response in dealing with them. Why don't we stare these issues in the face, accept them and, realizing they are all complexes, reject them as invalid?

Why don't we accept that white is a different color than black, male is a different gender than female, Muslim is different than Christianity, that sex is not for the sole purpose of having children? But so what?

So what if there are differences? So what if black and white are not the same color? We are all human. The fact that we have different

colors and shapes is a result of our process of adaptation to our habitat.

So what if we are male or female? We are all humans. Instead of fighting each other, we should realize there would be a much higher potential in the world if we accept each other as equal and respect each other.

So what if we are straight or homosexual? Sexual orientation does not make us a good or bad person, it does not give us the right to discriminate and harass.

So what if we are Christian or Muslim, Hindu or atheist? If we have one, several, or no Gods, that is a personal decision which does not make us better than others.

Ultimately, it all boils down to a few basics that, if we all understand, accept and adapt to, we might finally be able to live in harmony with each other.

So what's the deal with sex? Why do we make such a big deal out of it? Why do we try to present it as bad, evil, obscene? Why do we build so many complex issues around it with our nudity and our obscenity laws so it subconsciously becomes associated with guilt? If it's between two mature, consenting people, why do we bother?

Why do we shy away from the human body? Isn't it natural, and aren't clothes unnatural? Who is the Supreme Court to decide what is obscene in a painting or a photograph? These are matters that each individual should resolve for themselves, and it is about time that society relaxes its grip on dictating what is right or wrong.

Let's get out of our fake world and face reality. Let's start measuring our worth as humans on the basis of what we do to help our fellow humans who are in need. Let's try to learn to treat each other with respect, like we would want others to treat us.

Let's accept our differences but stress and build on our similarities.

If we learn to respect each other, there will be no more harassment or mistreatment. If we all learn respect, there will no more be a need for locking up windows to our psyche, because we will resolve all issues that could be locked out of view.

It should be possible, should it not?



Christina Maimarides

Maimarides is a graduate student in business administration.

Mail Call

Yell leaders disappoint fan

❖ I am one of the many people in this University who feel a great sense of school spirit. I love all of our traditions and try to support each and every one of them.

I also enjoy sports and attend most of our games with the ever-living spirit of the 12th man.

Thus, I feel the obligation to write about our Aggie Volleyball game that took place Oct. 16 against Baylor.

The Lady Aggies played an outstanding game, and, even if only a few people showed up to support the team, we made enough noise to be heard in the G. Rollie White Coliseum and its surroundings.

The yell leaders did a good job of keeping up our school spirit by doing all kinds of yells, especially Ron's "1-2-3-boom."

After the game was over and the Lady Aggies had beat the hell outta Baylor, our men's volleyball team was going to play.

This team is relatively recent, and its players need as much support as any other team does.

Therefore, I stayed to watch the game, not only because the players are outstandingly talented but also because they need us to cheer for them. However, as soon as the Lady Aggies left the court, I was surprised to see that most of the crowd left too.

I then thought "Well, we'll just have to shout louder during the yells to encourage the players and show them that we do care about them and our University."

At that moment, I saw the yell

leaders leaving too.

Hey Ags, that's bad bull. I felt as if part of A&M was leaving us on our own.

Consequently, we had to start our own yells, while the Baylor fans looked at us and laughed.

I have to thank the men on our volleyball team for permitting us to see such a great game. They beat the hell outta Baylor and showed us that they are good.

So for the next game, I'd like to encourage more people to come see them play, and, please, yell leaders, come join us too because the players need you and so do we.

Rosa Llivina '94

Radical activist misses mark

❖ Apparently the "Chicken Avenger" who struck the A&M campus on Tuesday, October 22 have not figured out that such zany antics only demonstrate to the vast majority of the rational public just how off-base a radical and over-zealous animal activist can be.

These collegiate animal activists appear to be taking their lessons from such skilled animal activists as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals members who shoved a pie in the face of a 19-year-old Iowa pork queen at this fall's World Pork Expo.

Perhaps they have taken more lessons from PETA's full page ad in the Des Moines Register comparing the mass murders in Milwaukee with animal agriculture.

Wake up, chicken terrorists. This kind of action only further polarizes this issue and crowds those on each side of this issue into

camps further apart.

Are you interested in making progress or just making waves?

Jeff Goodwin
doctoral student

Campus grass looks better

❖ I would like to take a moment to thank the grounds keepers and University staff responsible for the improvements being made to the grounds on campus.

For some time now I have seen the gradual replacement of the "vines" (for lack of a better description; you'll have to call in a botanist for a more technical name) and other weed-like vegetation around the base of trees to green grass.

This improvement can be seen around the trees between the old engineering building, agriculture building and between Cushing Library and the Academic Building.

This is an improvement which enhances the beauty of our campus. I realize the cost of maintaining grass must be much higher than that of vines.

I hope the trend of replacing vines with grass is able to continue all over campus.

I just wanted to thank those responsible for the change, and let them and those doing the work know their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

If you haven't noticed the difference, take a look around.

I think you'll find the grass an improvement.

Kenneth P. Lawson '92

Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers.

All letters to the editor are welcome.

Written letter must be no longer than 200 words. Letters must be signed and include classification, address and daytime phone number for verification purposes. Anonymous letters will not be published.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length, style and accuracy. There is no guarantee letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-5408.