

Perpetua Tenbris on 28th Street:
Patterns of Racist Behavior in Greek-Letter Organizations at the University of Southern
California

By: Giacomo Green

On October 24th, 1988 the *Daily Trojan* reported that on the previous Thursday, several pledges of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity distributed flyers around the University of Southern California advertising a “Slave Auction”. These flyers included a ‘Fiji Man’ logo, a caricature of a slave chained to a spiked collar, the purpose being to advertise a slave-auction themed funding campaign for the fraternity (fig.1).¹ These advertisements sought to “attract ‘lady buyers’ who could ‘own’ a Fiji pledge for 12 hours.”² The ‘Fiji Man’ was depicted as an African American in a way that echoed racist memorabilia produced during the Jim Crow era. This ‘Fiji Man’ was briefly the mascot of the Phi Gamma Delta house at USC and was only removed after direct intercession from the national chapter.³

Incidents like these, while seen today as abhorrent, are not out of place when examining the broader history of racism in Greek life at the University of Southern California. In short, racism in Greek life at USC is not a rare phenomenon – even gentle inspection of the microhistory of 28th street reveals systematic and recurring incidents that substantiate a deep racist presence in USC’s sororities and fraternities. These events have cast almost a “*Perpetua Tenibris*” or “perpetual darkness” over 28th street at the University of Southern California since its inception in 1880.⁴

Understanding the circumstances behind the formation of Greek-letter social organizations in the United States is of critical importance when seeking to establish and understand patterns of racially discriminatory behavior. Sororities and fraternities, as known today, stem from all-male, white, selective literary clubs dating back to the beginning of the 19th

¹ Roger Tefft, “Fijis apologize for racist fliers” *Daily Trojan*, October 24, 1988, 1,8.

² Ibid.

³ Jacob Jenson, “Diverse Insights a must to evaluate racist statements” *Daily Trojan*, March 17, 1989, 17

⁴ Frat Row, or West 28th is the street that has historically housed USC’s Greek-letter organizations

century.⁵ In his monograph, *The Company He Keeps, a History of White College Fraternities* Nicholas Syrette outlines the rationale behind the formation of these organizations: “I have also come to see the fraternity as an artificial means for the creation and maintenance of social divisions based primarily on race and class. . . . Class and race have been, in many respects, the driving force behind the exclusivity of fraternities.”⁶ In this way, Syrette brings to light a key issue, that all Greek-Letter organizations themselves stem from core ideals of racial segregation, class hierarchy, and strict gender conformism. It is these racial archetypes and inherent roots in racist practices that have shaped the modern sorority and fraternity that can be found on almost every college campus across the United States; USC is by no means an exception. Therefore, it is through this lens of historic racial repression that one must analyze the patterns of behavior that took place on West 28th street, Los Angeles.

Researching racism in Greek-letter organizations at specifically the University of Southern California presents its own set of historiographical challenges. There are frustratingly few comprehensive accounts of the racist events that appear to have taken place on 28th street and even fewer are independently verifiable. Moreover, outside of the most flagrant displays of racism, like that of the 1988 “Fiji slave-auction”, many of these did not receive significant local news coverage and likewise were not featured in prominent publications. Additionally, as racist behavior on the part of USC’s fraternities and sororities did not receive significant social stigmatization until the late 20th century, one can postulate that events prior to the 1960’s simply did not receive any coverage at all and are only present in oral accounts. For these reasons, most of the source material in this paper stems from the coverage provided by the local campus news

⁵ Kathleen E Gillon, Cameron C Beatty, and Cristobal Salinas. “Race and Racism in Fraternity and Sorority Life: A Historical Overview.” *New Directions for Student Services* 2019, no. 165 (2019): 9–16.

⁶ Nicholas L Syrett, *The Company He Keeps A History of White College Fraternities*, 2009.

publications, notably *The Daily Trojan*, *SoCal Magazine* and *The Row Run*, all of which provided coverage on the actions of fraternities and sororities. Most of the copies of *The Daily Trojan*, *SoCal Magazine* and other University material referenced can be found in USC's Digital Library, University of Southern California Collection, a digitized archive encompassing publication material from the university dating back to the late 19th century.

The reporting techniques of *The Daily Trojan* are notable as they seem to demonstrate an awareness of the topic sensitivity in response to the actions of Greek-Letter organizations on USC's campus. *The Daily Trojan* often broke the news of the racist acts and took the unusual step of dispatching undercover reporters to fraternity parties in order to unearth information that otherwise would not have been obtained through orthodox methods.⁷ Throughout its history, *The Daily Trojan* has been regarded as an "Anti-Greek" publication, and many members of Greek-letter organizations at USC expressed their indignation by submitting written opinions to be featured in the "Letters to the Editor" section of the publication.⁸ Taken together, these articles and the corresponding opinion letters give insight into both what events transpired and the social conscience on campus regarding Greek life in an era when print media was the principal source of campus news. Ultimately, when reviewing the various forms of media in *The Daily Trojan* in combination with other campus publications, a general narrative begins to emerge.

An early, direct account of informal race segregation can be seen in an article published by *SoCal Magazine* (USC campus publication) written by Patta Steele titled *Everyone was*

⁷ Jonathan Stroud "Fraternities violate Rush Rules" *Daily Trojan*, September 01, 2004, 1

⁸ Sandra Young "Greek System Defended" *Daily Trojan*, November 17, 1972, 4 Multiple sources.

White! This article outlined the discrimination faced by minority students in the Greek-Life social sphere that was 28th street in 1973.⁹ It provided testimony from students actively involved in Greek life, those attempting to join, and those un-interested, detailing their perception and attitudes towards the diversification of the Row. Most striking were a series of quotes in the middle of the article by a member of the Alpha Delta Pi sorority (a USC sorority still on 28th street) who stated: “I’d just as soon let everyone in... [but] people would be dropping out if we took a Black right now.”¹⁰ The article continues with a similar testimony from a member of the Gamma Phi Beta Sorority (also still on 28th street), who disclosed:

Gamma Phi Beta is a very close knit group of girls, she said. They could not agree on whether or not to pledge Blacks during rush last September so they decided that if some girls objected it would be house policy during rush to not pledge any blacks. ‘We can’t risk disunion in our house if some girls are really opposed’ she said.¹¹

Steele then shifts the discussion from the racial discrimination experienced by those attempting to rush sororities to those rushing fraternities. Anonymous testimony from an individual who was formerly in a fraternity but dropped was included, in which he cites the following as his justification: “Fraternities are not for me. They are pretty racist towards minorities. They’re just a bunch of rich kids who are afraid of Blacks. I got a lot of negative vibes when I was in that fraternity.”¹² The article goes on to describe the experience of Jewish students rushing Alpha Epsilon Phi, a predominantly Jewish house. It reads:

Some Sororities have certain rules that do not allow them to pledge Jewish Students, most Jewish women join the predominantly Jewish house AEP rather than go for another

⁹ Patta Steele, “Everyone was white!” SoCal, March 12, 1973, 8

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

house and be dropped the last night because of the house's policies about pledging Jews... 'we just can't seem to get rid of the Jewish stereotype' said [Patti] Judson 'We don't have horns or long tails you know.'¹³

These first-person perspectives attest clearly to some of the attitudes within USC's fraternities and sororities against diversification. For the majority of the 20th century, there was simply no place in USC's Greek-life sphere for minority inclusion, with momentous social stigmatization towards the inclusion of non-white students. This often manifested into specific rules enforcing racial homogeneity – the presence of which was expanded upon in an article for *The Daily Beast* on racist traditions specifically within USC's fraternities and sororities titled: *Stepford Sororities*. Author Maya Richard writes:

People often forget that the National Panhellenic council used to enforce racial segregation by means of strict codes and laws. Legal clauses that excluded both "Negroes and Orientals" from West Coast chapters of USC's beloved Sigma Nu fraternity existed through the late 1950s. At the time, sisters were highly encouraged to follow "unwritten" rules to "routinely deny membership to Asian Americans, along with African Americans, Jews, and the working class".¹⁴

Such racist sentiments and rules, while clearly problematic, should not be surprising when looking at the greater history of Greek-letter social organizations - as groups created with the principal purpose of preserving social hierarchy, any call for diversification would likely be met with a strong reactionary backlash on the part of existing members. As one would expect, a conflict emerges: as colleges and universities become more racially diverse and inclusive places, the very nature of Greek life is threatened. This conflict would be frequently brought to light

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Maya Richard Craven. "Stepford Sororities" *The Daily Beast*. November 17, 2014. Cited Torbenson, C., & Parks, G. "Brothers and sisters: diversity in college fraternities and sororities" 2009 [See Note in Bibliography]

throughout the 20th century and still remains – while campus has recently become more diverse, the *Perpetua Tenibris* remains over 28th street.

I. Cases, 1960-2000

While most events involving racism in Greek life at USC did not receive national news coverage, one event known colloquially as ‘The Jew Week Fiasco’ (March 1986) stands out. This incident did gain the attention of national news media publications such as the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.¹⁵ To provide context, there was a tradition for USC sororities and fraternities to participate in what was known as ‘Greek Week’, an event consisting of multiple athletic tournaments, parties and other competitions, where successful entrants would be crowned as the winners of ‘Greek Week’.¹⁶ Also pertinent is the presence of ‘Jewish Houses’, or fraternity and sorority houses that had a significant Jewish membership. Predominately Jewish houses were a direct consequence of anti-Semitic discrimination in other houses that effectively forced Jewish students to create their own organizations.

Unfortunately, the specific events of the ‘Jew Week Fiasco’ remain weakly documented as sources differ as to what exactly happened - what was well substantiated were the anti-Semitic actions of a few members of Kappa Sigma fraternity and Pi Beta Phi sorority.¹⁷ Following the victory of Sigma Alpha Mu (a predominantly Jewish house) at the end of Greek Week, members of Kappa Sigma and Pi Beta Phi (and possibly other Greek-letter organizations) took to 28th street and chanted anti-Semitic slogans, destroyed Alpha Mu’s garden, burned an effigy of a “Sammy”¹⁸ member and painted the words “Jew Week” in front of Alpha Mu and on a nearby

¹⁵ Katherine Dyar, “Sorority, fraternity dace hearing today for anti-Semitic incidents” *Daily Trojan*, April 2, 1986

¹⁶ Marci Kenon, “Greeks Sponsor Fund Week” *Daily Trojan*, March 11, 1986.

¹⁷ Sources differ on the exact events, however all sources referenced mention the burning of an effigy, the painting of the words “Jew Week”, the chanting of anti-Semitic slogans and the destruction of Alpha Mu’s garden.

¹⁸ “Sammy” was a byname for the Sigma Alpha Mu Fraternity, the target of the demonstration.

sign¹⁹. Gordon Gary, a writer for the *Daily Trojan* provided a scathing description of the the event in his opinion piece titled: *Anti-Semitic Row activity makes you wonder*. He writes:

At first thought, you are inclined to be shocked by such behavior. To think that racist extremism and narrowminded reactionism to this extent would happen in so integral a part of the university as its Greek system is beyond comprehension. Some of the images you get from this little demonstration are quite similar to racist intolerance in Iran in the late '70s, or perhaps a Ku Klux Klan rally in the Deep South. . . I found the Row to be a bastion of intolerance, bigotry and irresponsibility.²⁰

Gary's analysis was published in conjunction with a political cartoon (fig.2) depicting Adolf Hitler watching fraternity brothers in front of Kappa Sigma as they march in formation down 28th street, with the caption "Ach! True Brotherhood at Lazt [*sic.*]!"²¹

The "Jew Week Fiasco" stands out for two reasons. Firstly, it reflects a *collective* bigoted action rather than the racist act of a single individual. This distinction is critical as it outlines the racist tendencies inherently present in the environments created by Greek-Letter organizations, rather than in the individuals themselves. Secondly, the student body response to the incident, when taken in context to other similar incidents, demonstrates a social awareness of the racism present within Greek life at USC. Such social consciousness is made evident in not only Gary's opinion piece but also in other printed media. Following the 'Jew Week' incident, *The Daily Trojan* published another opinion segment *We need to condemn acts of racism; we're the losers* in which the author ends the article with a particularly ominous statement: "The last thing this campus needs is to raise the ugly spectre of racism and bigotry beyond its already unbelievable

¹⁹ Aaron Van Curen "Kappa Sigma, Pi Beta Phi Placed on Interim Suspension by Zumbrige" *Daily Trojan*, March 20, 1986, 1

²⁰ Gordon Gary "Anti-Semitic Row activity makes you wonder" *Daily Trojan*, April 02, 1986, 4

²¹ *Ibid.*

levels.”²² This, in conjunction with other articles run on “Jew Week’ that included statements from the student body denouncing Greek-life anti-Semitic behavior, paints the picture of an outspoken, racially-sensitive and socially-conscious section of the student population in conflict with Greek-letter organizations at USC.²³

Collective acts of racism and bigotry pepper the history of 28th street and often received little or no reprimands from USC’s administration. Consider an event that took place in the Spring of 1989, (the semester following the ‘Fiji Man’ incident) in which members of the Kappa Alpha fraternity painted a confederate flag on the side of their house as part of an annual “Old South Week” event. (fig.3) In an article published by *The Daily Trojan* titled *Blacks Assail Fraternity*, the president of Kappa Alpha is quoted providing justification: “[The Flag] celebrates and represents ‘a tribute to Robert E. Lee and the chivalry and respect toward woman and God he exhibited.”²⁴ Following an outcry from the Black Student Assembly, the president of Kappa Alpha issued a statement that “[Kappa Alpha] will not apologize for our fraternities’ traditions”²⁵ Notable criticism comes in a quote issued in the same article by Jason Harvey, a member of the Black Student Union who said, “The flag stands for one thing and one thing only: racism”.²⁶ *The Daily Trojan* ran an opinion piece shortly after significant public concern was voiced: *Diverse insights a must to evaluate racist statements*, which criticized the Black Student Union’s response: “How ironic is it that [The Black Student Union] who stand[s] for tolerance from others give[s] so little in return. The problem of interpretation is not limited to Jews or blacks

²² “We need to condemn acts of racism; we’re the losers” *Daily Trojan*, April 03, 1986

²³ See note 14, 17, 18, 20

²⁴ Jeordan Legon, “Blacks Assail Fraternity” *Daily Trojan*, March 09, 1989 1, 17

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

and has been used by religions and other special interest groups to legitimize their own existence and activity.”²⁷ Despite these open statements of callous racism directed towards the Black community, no official condemnation was issued by the USC administration.

Similarly, in September of 1984, members of the Greek-Letter organizations attended a campus speech given by democratic nominee Walter Mondale, a candidate who advocated and campaigned for the equal rights amendment and the Fair Housing Act, that aimed to establish legislation that prohibited housing discrimination based on race.²⁸ At the speech, the members of the various Greek-Letter organizations continuously shouted and heckled Mondale as he spoke.²⁹ A reference to this event is given in Gordon Gary’s *Anti-Semitic Row activity makes you wonder*:

The Mondale heckling incident during the 1984 presidential campaign. Not wanting to hear that which runs contrary to their own beliefs, a large contingent of “Row People” saw fit to chant anti-Mondale slogans so loudly that nobody could hear what a candidate for the presidency had to say. Obviously, those students are going through life with blinders on, but when they choose to take away the right of others to hear a different point of view, they are narrow minded.³⁰

While the student body senate passed an immediate order to reprimand those involved in the heckling, the USC administration intervened, and ultimately no punishment was issued; the university administration argued that it was protecting free speech.³¹

In the history of Greek-Letter Organizations at USC, the *Row Run* is worthy of focus as a publication that covered events pertinent to Greek Life and 28th street. This magazine,

²⁷ Jason Jacobson “Diverse insights a must to evaluate racist statements” Daily Trojan, March 17, 1989, 5

²⁸ Charles McC. Mathias, and Marion Morris. “Fair Housing Legislation: Not an Easy Row To Hoe.” January 1, 1999 21–33.

²⁹ Karen Castro “Mondale rally aftermath: Investigation Ordered on Students’ Heckling” Daily Trojan, September

³⁰ Gordon Gary “Anti-Semitic Row activity makes you wonder”, 8

³¹ Robbie Asghar “No punishment for hecklers” Daily Trojan, October 02, 1984 1, 6

presumably run by members of Greek organizations, received significant backlash in 1987 when the April 6th edition included a satirical USC entrance application.³² (fig. 4) A *Daily Trojan* article issued three days later outlined some of the questions:

The mock application printed on page 28 of [The Row Run's] Monday issue asks for personal information such as the "number of hired servants in your household" and the "number of slaves" the applicant owns. . . two of the essay questions were "Have you ever spoken with a black person? Describe the experience." And, "You are going to be stranded at a desert resort hotel for three weeks. You will be allowed to bring along only five (5) of your family's servants, Which servants will you bring? Why?"³³

These questions shed light on some of the more overt racism on 28th street. An opinion piece published in the *Daily Trojan* nine days after the *Row Run* article cited one student's experiences with racism at USC and reaction to the mock application: "These racial jokes and all-white good 'ol boy networks start young but make it up the ranks from farm league kidstuff to national politics... they maintain white supremacy in the big leagues...the Row Run's inane actions allowed everyone to see the undercurrent to which I've always been witness."³⁴ This article speaks both to the dramatic student backlash concerning the *Row Run*'s publication and gives insight into some of the attitudes towards minorities present in Greek life at USC. As the *Row Run* was not officially associated with the university, no formal action was taken.

Articles such as those published in the *Row Run* created and upheld an environment on campus and 28th street that was hostile to minority students – reflected in the ongoing low participation of minority students in Greek-Letter organizations to the present day. In 1990, three years after the *Row Run* satirical application, an article published by *The Daily Trojan* cited that

³² Byron Okada "Mock Application Deemed 'offensive'" *Daily Trojan*, April 09, 1987 1, 9

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Frank J. Buckley "The invisible minority" *Daily Trojan*, April 15, 1987, 4

there were only 25 Black students in Greek Life, outweighed heavily by the over 3,500 Caucasian majority.³⁵

II. Cases, 2000-Present

Overtly racist and bigoted actions on the part of Greek-letter organizations at USC are not simply a product of the past. While public perception of race has changed significantly since the 1960's, Greek-Letter organizations at USC continue to perpetuate collective, behavioral racism with disturbing frequency. In the Spring of 2004, the Delta Tau Delta fraternity hosted a "Mekong Delta" party, themed after the Vietnam war. This war resulted in the death of over 600,000 Vietnamese citizens, the lasting effects of which can still be seen in Vietnamese society today.³⁶ According to a *Daily Trojan* article, the party "sparked outrage from many Asian-American students across campus, including a complaint from the Asian Pacific American Student Services."³⁷ Following this and another incident, the IFC (Intra-Fraternity Council, governing body of Greek-Letter organizations at USC) took the somewhat perplexing action of withdrawing from the diversity engagement council, citing 'poor management'.³⁸ The IFC subsequently created its own independent diversity council the following year, following public outcry in relation to another incident of racial insensitivity.³⁹

In January of 2005, less than a year after the 'Mekong Delta' party, the Alpha Epsilon Phi fraternity hosted a "Once upon a time in Mexico" social event which, similar to the prior year, sparked outrage with the student body.⁴⁰ One particular student, Jesus Cuellar, filed an official

³⁵ Glen Justice "Black group focuses on diversity" *Daily Trojan*, October 10, 1990, 1, 17

³⁶ J. S Olson & M. Gumpert, "Vietnam War, Casualties Of", 2018 *The 1960s: Key Themes and Documents*

³⁷ Aaron Burgin, Rebekah Sanders "Greeks at odds over Comments" *Daily Trojan*, October 21, 2004 1, 13

³⁸ Rebekah Sanders, "Apology After Frat Party" *Daily Trojan*, February 07, 2005 1, 3

³⁹ *Ibid.* 3

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 1

complaint with the office of Student Judicial Affairs, and provided his justification to *The Daily Trojan*:

[Jesus] went to the Row the night of AEPi's "Once upon a time in Mexico" party and saw a chain-link fence, barbed wire, a "Danger Keep Out" sign, flashing red lights and a cardboard poster reading 'Welcome to Mexico' outside the fraternity house. . . The display was saying that Mexicans were dangerous and should be kept behind barbed wire.⁴¹

Following the resulting outcry, the AEPi fraternity issued an apology in conjunction with a promise by the Intra-Fraternity Council to "encourage diversity".⁴² There is no record of formal reprimand on the part of the university administration towards AEPi.

Less than a week later, the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity hosted an "L.A. Riot" themed party. This drew comparable criticism that again challenged the fraternity with the reality that it was being racially insensitive.⁴³ Such a trend of insensitivity and blatant bigotry continued as exhibited by another incident in 2013, in which the Pi Kappa Phi fraternity planned to host a 'phi-esta'. In promoting the event, the fraternity issued a statement telling partygoers to don "sombros and accentos [*sic.*] to a night of classy fun"⁴⁴ *The Daily Trojan* published a Letter to the Editor by Melissa Morales concerning the details of the event: "few hours after the event was posted, the description was edited to include "what not to expect": "border patrol, pickpockets, those kids selling you chicle gum, [and] Montezuma's Revenge. . . It is offensive that race is so easily used as a party theme."⁴⁵ Repeated behaviors by those leading houses on 28th street where

⁴¹ Ibid. 1

⁴² Ibid. 3

⁴³ Ibid. 1

⁴⁴ Melissa Morales, "Letter to the Editor – In Regard to Pi Kappa Phi's 'Phi-esta'" *Daily Trojan*, February 19, 2013

⁴⁵ Ibid.

derogatory or marginalizing language is used to celebrate a social gathering demonstrates, at best, a lack of understanding of race and historic discrimination and, at worse, the presence of institutionalized racism.

Social attitudes have the potential to create situations that are physically dangerous for minority students – acts of racial violence and aggression, while less frequent than collective bigotry, do occur. In September of 2015, as student body president Rini Sampath was walking down 28th street at night, a member of a fraternity shouted, “You Indian piece of shi—” and threw his drink at her from the window of his fraternity. Following the event, Sampath took to Facebook to share her story, writing: “I couldn’t quite figure out why their after-the fact apologies deepened the wound. But one of my friends explained it to me best this morning: ‘Because now you know the first thing, they see you as is subhuman.’”⁴⁶ Sampath’s words resonated with many students at USC, the resulting groundswell of concern in the broader student population led to a joint statement from the university administration and Sampath that condemned the abuse. The incident also received attention from large national news such as the *Los Angeles Times*. For a brief moment in 2015 the *Perpetua Tenibris* was in the limelight, illuminating the racist and bigoted underbelly of Greek-Letter organizations at USC.

III. Appeals for Abolition

Calls for reform and abolition of Greek-letter organizations at USC are not new. An early article seeking their abolition was published in *The Daily Trojan* (then known as *The Southern California Trojan*) on May 27th, 1919. President Wilbur of Stanford is quoted: “Unfortunately one or two eggs will spoil an omelet, and a successful fraternity must be more or less an omelet.”

⁴⁶ Larry Gordon, “USC Student president says frat member shouted racial epithet, threw drink at her.” *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 2015

The article goes on: “Every fraternity that ‘rushes’ men the opening week of school gambles with its chances of getting the right men. . .it is a constant brooder of hatred and disappointment.”⁴⁷ Such language succinctly captures a negative sentiment towards Greek-letter organizations, pointing out the existence of dangerous, exclusive environments that ultimately negatively affect campus as a whole. In 1967 *The Daily Trojan* published a series of articles calling for abolition of fraternities, complete with an endorsement from the editor-in-chief Hal Lancaster: “The official editorial stand of the Daily Trojan on Fraternities is simple: abolition. At least, that is its stand as long as I am editor”.⁴⁸

Following the mass protests sparked by the death of George Floyd, calls to re-examine racism in contemporary society have been met with fervent support, especially on the part of young, college students.⁴⁹ A nation-wide campaign to abolish Greek Life has resurfaced, which has gained traction on social media sites, most notably Instagram. The accounts @black_at_usc and @abolishgreeklifeusc have made use of anonymous reporting to showcase a darker, more personal side of the *Perpetua Tenibris* that conventional reporting could not.⁵⁰ For the first time, smaller racial injustices that otherwise may never have been disclosed can be used to demonstrate a pattern of discriminatory behavior in Greek-letter organizations at USC. Much like the ‘letters to the editor’ submitted to the Daily Trojan lambasting its negative reporting of Greek life in the 20th century, these Instagram accounts have been met with their own share of criticism.

⁴⁷ “Editorial Submission” *The Southern California Trojan*, May 27, 1919, 2

⁴⁸ Hal Lancaster, “Editorial Dialogue on the fraternal system” *Daily Trojan*, October 13, 1967, 3

⁴⁹ Randall Kennedy, *The George Floyd Moment: Promise and Peril*. Washington: Newstex, 2020. ProQuest. Web. 12 Sep. 2020.

⁵⁰ Shaylee Navarro “A digital movement: Creating a safe space for Black Trojans seeking institutional change” *Daily Trojan*, July 6, 2020

Social media posts that echo calls for abolition, are naturally at odds with the agendas of USC's Greek-letter organizations. In the wake of mass social protest and support for movements like Black Lives Matter, the fraternities and sororities have offered promises to reform.⁵¹ Despite expressing words of contrition, when looking back over the past hundred years, little has changed that is a direct consequence of proactive anti-racist actions by USC's fraternities and sororities. Instead, a predominant pattern of behavior emerges: transgression on the part of a Greek-organization, public outcry, promises of reform and then little to no capitulation on the part of the Greek-letter organizations involved in the original incident. This reactionary behavior is not surprising, Greek life was created with the principal purpose of preserving social hierarchy – any call for reform is antithetical to its very existence. Furthermore, as organizations with a constantly shifting membership, with most members graduating after four years, accountability for change is nearly impossible, and the system is virtually incapable of learning.

As USC becomes more progressive, regressive Greek-letter organizations will find it harder to maintain the social capital which underpins their existence. To examine the racist history of Greek life at USC is to come to terms with a record of systematic and repeated incidents that reveal a deep, institutionalized racist presence on campus. The reforms necessary to make these organizations socially acceptable are likely so antithetical to their current value systems that the outcome would be unrecognizable and unpalatable to its membership. This is likely to play out in one of two ways: either Greek life becomes socially ostracized to the point where it dies out, or direct third-party intervention occurs in order to facilitate comprehensive change. Either way, the *Perpetua Tenibris* will be lifted.

⁵¹ Sahiba Gill, "Letter to the Editor: why Greek life should be abolished" Daily Trojan, June 9, 2020

Fig. 1 "Fiji Slave Auction"

DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO OWN A FIJI PLEDGE

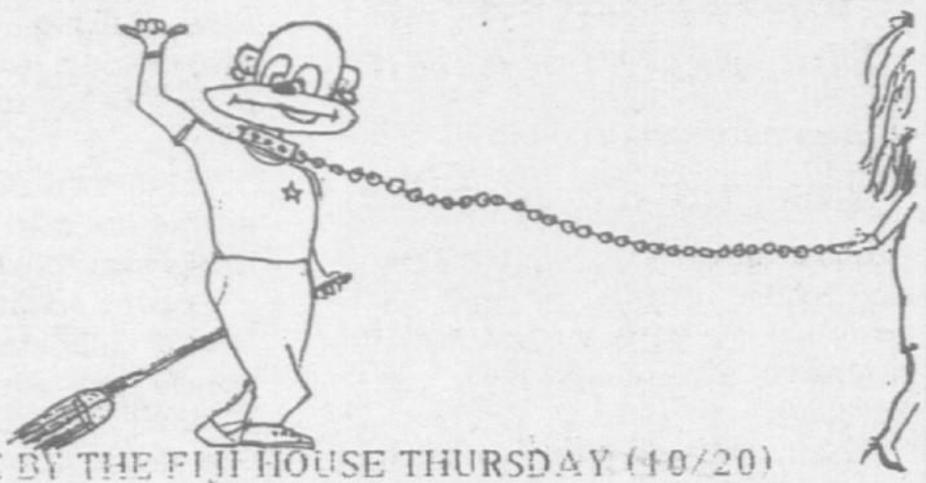


the office!

FIJI SLAVE AUCTION

YES! FOR 12 HOURS YOU TOO CAN OWN YOUR OWN FIJI PLEDGE

CLEARANCE SALE ! ALL PLEDGES MUST GO
LADY BUYERS ONLY PLEASE



COME BY THE FIJI HOUSE THURSDAY (10/20)
FOR BURGERS N BEER AND CHECK OUT THE MERCHANDISE
AUCTION BEGINS AT 7:00 *

Fig. 2 "Jew Week" Political Cartoon



Fig. 3 Kappa Alpha 'Old South Week' Confederate Flag



REBECCA MIGALA / DAILY TROJAN

A Confederate flag, spray-painted beside the Kappa Alpha Order house this week to help in the festivities of the fraternity's "Old South Week," has caused a stir among black students.

Fig. 4 Row Run Mock USC Application



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION

NAME _____
 LAST FIRST MIDDLE SUFFIX _____
 HOME ADDRESS _____
 PALM SPRINGS ADDRESS _____

HEIGHT _____ WEIGHT _____ MUST (if applicable) _____
 HAIR COLOR (natural) _____
 WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BODY TYPES IS NEAREST TO YOURS (circle one)
ectomorph mesomorph endomorph
 (Please ask your doctor if you don't know what these words mean.)
 PERSONAL BANK INTEREST (U.S. and foreign) ACCRUED THIS PAST FISCAL YEAR:
 \$ _____

ARE YOU A FOOTBALL PLAYER? _____ IF "YES," PLEASE SKIP TO THE LAST LINE OF THIS APPLICATION.
 NUMBER OF HIRED SERVANTS IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD: _____
 NUMBER OF SLAVES: _____
 BOAT TYPE: YEAR _____ MODEL _____ ACCESSORIES _____
 LIST ALL OF YOUR PERSONAL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS: _____

ESTIMATE YOUR PARENTS' YEARLY INCOME (round off to the closest \$50,000; use exponents if necessary and if you know what they are): _____
 HAVE YOU READ A BOOK THIS YEAR? _____ IF "YES," WHY? _____
 HAVE YOU EVER HELD A JOB THAT YOUR PARENTS DIDN'T GET YOU? _____ IF "YES," WHY? _____
 NAME FIVE OF THE UNITED STATES (for instance: California, New York, Illinois, Texas, Florida): _____
 WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PRIME TIME SIT-COM? _____
 WHICH GOSSIP MAGAZINES DO YOU READ REGULARLY? _____

ESSAY QUESTIONS

(Answer only 4 [one] essay question; please do not exceed the space provided.)

- 1) HAVE YOU EVER SPOKEN WITH A BLACK PERSON? DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCE.
- 2) YOU ARE GOING TO BE STRANDED AT A DESERT RESORT HOTEL FOR THREE WEEKS. YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO BRING ALONG ONE (1) OF YOUR FAMILY'S SERVANTS. WHICH SERVANTS WILL YOU BRING? WHY?
- 3) YOU ARE TRAPPED IN THE BEVERLY HILLS 1. MADONN FOR ONE (1) HOUR WITH ONE (1) TEN THOUSAND (10,000) DOLLARS TO SPEND. WHAT WILL YOU BUY? WHY?

***** THE FEE FOR PROCESSING THIS APPLICATION IS NEGOTIABLE *****

IF YOU CAN, PLEASE SEND ALONG A HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT (your grades) AND ALSO THE ENCLOSED TENNIS PEG RECOMMENDATION. 8 X 10 GLOSSY PORTRAITS OF YOURSELF MAY BE SUBSTITUTED IN LIEU OF (instead of) AN OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT (your grades).

I SWEAR THAT THE INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THIS APPLICATION IS REASONABLY ACCURATE.

SIGNATURE (that's a messy version of your printed name) _____
 APPROPRIATE DATE _____

The Row Run's version of a university application.

Bibliography

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Note: The quote referenced from *Stepford Sororities* includes the sub-quotation:

"unwritten" rules to "routinely deny membership to Asian Americans, along with African Americans, Jews, and the working class."

This is credited to Edith Wen-Chu Chen in "*Brothers and sisters: diversity in college fraternities and sororities*" Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009.