

# PHI MU ALPHA **AMONG MEN** SINFONIA **HARMONY**

## ANNOUNCING THE FRATERNITY'S RESOLUTION CONCERNING OPPOSITION TO HAZING

Delivered as a Report of  
Ryan T. Ripperton, Executive Director,  
to the 2006 National Assembly  
July 23, 2006

Brother Sinfonians:

On the final morning of the 2006 National Convention, I delivered the following speech to the entire attendance of the Convention—delegates and general attendees alike. It is a serious topic, and it demands our urgent and relentless attention. As a result of the action taken at the end of this speech, you will witness—and hopefully be a part of—significant work being done in the coming months and years on the Fraternity's anti-hazing position.

At the end of this document are some open-ended questions to help begin the discussion on the chapter level, both in a chapter meeting and informally between brothers.

If at any time you have any questions or concerns regarding hazing, please do not hesitate to contact your Province Governor or the National Headquarters. May we all join this effort as one!

Sincerely,



Ryan T. Ripperton  
Executive Director

Download the accompanying video, audio and video podcasts,  
and other anti-hazing resources online at:

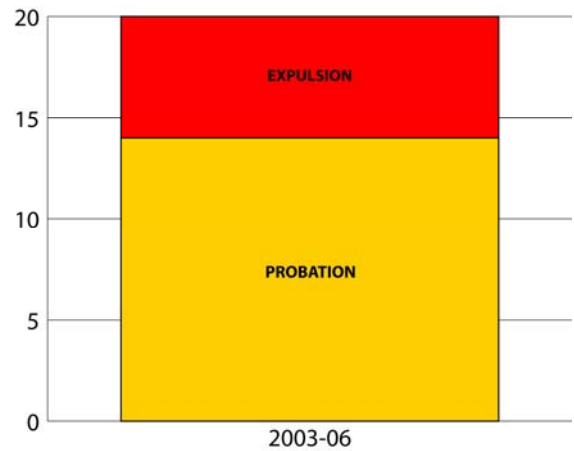
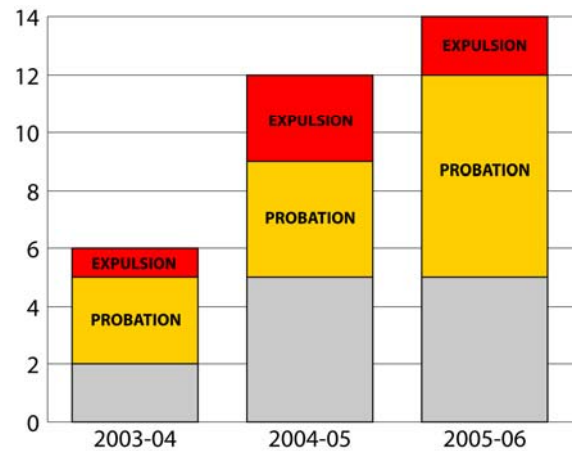
**[www.sinfonia.org/antihazing](http://www.sinfonia.org/antihazing)**

**President Crosby, Members of the National Executive Committee, Province Governors, Collegiate Province Representatives, and all Brother Sinfonians:**

Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia has a disease, and we stand today at a critical point—we must decide whether to let this disease fester, hoping that it’s one of those infections that will “clear itself up,” or to fight it with unparalleled courage for the welfare of the young men joining our ranks and for the very existence of our beloved Order.

The disease of which I speak is HAZING. It is a scourge in the Fraternity today. We do what we can to prevent it, to discipline those who commit these abuses, and to prevent offenders from having the opportunity to commit their crimes again. Our efforts, however, have been met by some surprising and extremely concerning trends:

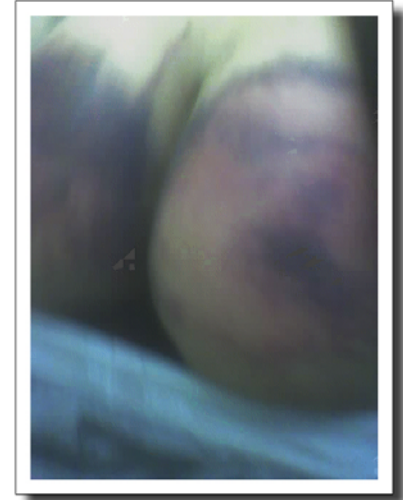
- In the past 3 years, we have seen our rate of hazing-related risk management investigations rise significantly: from 6 in the first year of the triennium, to 12 the next, to 14 this past year.
- Among those cases, we have experienced a disturbing rate of those requiring extensive disciplinary action:
  - Of the six investigations in the first year of the triennium, three chapters were placed on probation and one chapter was expelled.
  - Of the twelve investigations the next year, four chapters were placed on probation and three were expelled.
  - Of the fourteen investigations this past year, seven chapters were placed on probation and two were expelled.
  - This means, within this triennium, almost 15% of our chapters were investigated for hazing activities, and in those cases where credible evidence was found, fourteen chapters were placed on probation and six chapters were expelled outright.



When addressing hazing in Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, some may believe that we’re only talking about silly pranks and “boys will be boys” buffoonery. We most assuredly are not. Having to drink massive amounts of alcohol on the night of initiation; drinking a disgusting concoction of mayonnaise, ranch dressing and hot sauce; being kept up until 3 and 4 in the morning five nights a week to memorize pages and pages of useless information; being fooled into believing that you’re being pushed off a bridge; being beaten repeatedly with a paddle as hard as it can be swung; having to watch someone else be beaten with a paddle because you got the answer to a question wrong; being kidnapped from one’s dorm room in the middle of the night only to spend hours standing blindfolded on a deserted highway being tackled, punched, kicked in the stomach—these are not story lines taken from a recent episode of

“Dateline.” These are *real* findings of our investigations of *our own chapters*—chapters professing to love the same organization as all of us in this room.

Within the past triennium, I received this extremely graphic photograph taken by a young man to document his allegation of the abuses he was suffering at the hands of one of our chapters. The bruising that you see on this young man’s buttocks was inflicted by men claiming that suffering this kind of abuse is *essential* to becoming a true Sinfonian. Worse yet, this is not an isolated incident—many young men have told me they’ve sustained this same type of injury. The injuries you see have been inflicted time and time again in the name of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. What do you suppose Father Mills would think about *that*?



This issue is neither complex nor debatable. Some would argue that there is this ambiguous “gray area” of hazing that is somehow tolerable and should be accepted. This mindset is a significant part of the problem. There is no hazing that is “minor.” Minor acts of demeaning behavior are nothing but a gateway to more severe hazing. For once a man is willing to abuse another person in any way—mentally or physically—serious injury or even death from hazing is only one bad decision away.

To shame others, to abuse them, to beat them is utterly opposed to the fundamental virtue of *fraternity*. In fact, in Sinfonia we often speak in terms like fraternity, sincerity, idealism—so let’s try some others on for size. How about *maturity, respect, honor, dignity, compassion, responsibility*? These words are beacons that will light our path toward the eradication of hazing from our organization.

**... maturity, respect,  
honor, dignity,  
compassion,  
responsibility...**

The only way to defeat this disease is to attack it. We cannot be content to discipline hazers *after* they commit their abuses. At that point, we’ve already missed our opportunity. Our only opportunity to stop hazing is to prevent it. Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia is already an organization whose virtues are morally opposed to hazing, so it’s time that we recast this fact into an organizational culture that is not just intolerant of hazing but which acts specifically in defiance of and opposition to it—*anti-hazing*, if you will. This disease will continue to infect us until we are the type of organization which discusses our opposition to hazing with potential members and *turns them away* if they don’t *whole-heartedly* agree. If a man thinks the way to build a better man is to first tear him down, we don’t want him. Hazing will continue until we as a Fraternity commit ourselves *above all else* to prevent it by blanketing the country with knowledge and information, prevention programs and communications that will leave no brother in the dark. As an organization deeply committed to the welfare of our fellow man, our chapters should be sponsoring anti-hazing programs on campuses and confronting those in *any* organization who would risk the mental or physical wellbeing of others.

Hazing is a strong force in our society and in human nature. *But we are stronger.* For proof, one must look no further than our past division as an organization, compared to the unity we find today. If this doesn’t prove our strength and ability to overcome a seemingly insurmountable obstacle, nothing else could. Our beloved Sinfonia and our fellow man deserve our absolute, unconditional, unanimous dedication to defeat hazing completely and to prevent it from ever returning to the landscape of our Fraternity. We have the strength and courage to meet this challenge. It is time for us to fulfill the moral imperative to fight this disease to its death.

This effort must begin here, today. In this room are gathered the leaders of every province and virtually every chapter in the nation. Each of you has seen and heard today of the severity of the disease that we must fight, and you have the power to stamp it out in your area. From this room can launch one of the most powerful movements, one of the most positive movements, in our Fraternity's history.

Therefore, the 2003-2006 National Executive Committee joins me in recommending that the 2006 National Assembly adopt the following resolution:

**PHI MU ALPHA SINFONIA FRATERNITY'S  
RESOLUTION CONCERNING OPPOSITION TO HAZING**

**Unanimously adopted July 23, 2006, by the 2006 National Assembly**

*Whereas*, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia was founded for the development of fraternal spirit and mutual welfare, and it achieves that mission by developing manly musicians and musicianly men of moral character and social responsibility; and

*Whereas*, Hazing constitutes intentional acts which demean and abuse an individual physically, mentally, morally and spiritually, and which endanger the victim's psychological wellbeing and physical health to the point of injury or even death; and

*Whereas*, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia recognizes that hazing is contrary to the noble ideals and philosophy of our brotherhood and violates the human rights of victims, the Golden Rule and criminal statutes in almost every state; and

*Whereas*, Hazing drains the financial and labor resources of the Fraternity, its staff and its volunteer officers, negatively affecting the Fraternity's ability to provide valuable programs and services to its members; and

*Whereas*, Incidents of hazing defile the public image of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia and all fraternal organizations; therefore,

*Be it resolved by the National Assembly of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity of America:*

That the Fraternity commits itself to the total eradication of hazing within its chapters and enacts a strict policy of opposition, and in doing so, the Fraternity commits to act in opposition to those who would perpetuate, enable or tolerate hazing within its ranks;

That the Fraternity commits to foster personal responsibility and overcome this scourge by producing educational programs and communications that will shed Light upon the unenlightened [*as amended*];

That the Fraternity vows to strictly discipline brothers engaging in hazing activities through enforcement of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia's risk management policies; and

That Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia commits to join in the efforts of other organizations to eliminate the abhorrent practice of hazing in its many forms.

## CHAPTER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What did you find surprising or challenging in the speech/video?
- 2) Why is hazing an important issue in our Fraternity? In society?
- 3) Does our chapter ever discuss hazing?
- 4) When was the last time we critically reviewed our probationary membership program?
- 5) Is our entire probationary membership program documented in writing? (It should be.)  
If not, how can we work together to address this shortfall?
- 6) How can our chapter support this movement?
- 7) How can we involve other chapters in our province in this effort?
- 8) What role can we play on our campus to eradicate hazing even outside Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia (other Greek groups, band/chorus, athletics, etc.)?
- 9) What is the role of the individual Sinfonian in the anti-hazing movement?
- 10) How do we communicate these ideas to our alumni?
- 11) What questions do we have? What resources would be helpful for the Fraternity to provide us in the movement to eradicate hazing?  
(Make a list and submit them to [STOPHAZING@sinfonia.org](mailto:STOPHAZING@sinfonia.org))