

30 Theses Against Greek Life

Greek Life perpetuates sexual violence. This is an undeniable fact. Ask any of the hundreds of women currently on campus who have been sexually assaulted or harassed by a member of Greek Life through the system of Greek Life. They have been speaking but you have not been listening.

You cannot say Greek Life is not racist. Those who experience racism are telling you it *is* racist. What better “proof” is there? If you must ask for “proof,” you have a fundamental misunderstanding of racism and what it means to be a human being.

Rushing. Women are objectified. Not just by appearance but by economic status, background, sexual preferences/activity, religious beliefs, and world view. Rushing homogenizes and coldly collates the women of our Student Body. Participation in these rituals must involve excluding other women and non-binary folk through subtle, sometimes entirely unarticulated criteria. If this were not the case, quite obviously, IFC Sororities would be more diverse. “Sisterhood” does not come from selection, it comes from respect. “Brotherhood” requires more than parties, pong, and posturing.

Greek Life body shames. Both sororities and fraternities hold their members to unhealthy, dysfunctional standards with regards to their appearance. By placing immense value on the “thin ideal” and white standards of beauty, Greek Life perpetuates dangerous habits. Greek Life pushes individuals to extreme measures, which sometimes result in disordered eating/eating disorders, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, and a reliance on external validation—all of which limits one’s autonomy, health, and ability to self-realize. While this applies differently to different people, it harms all members of Greek Life.

Hazing. People have died. They have been humiliated. They have been made inhuman. The fact that this has not stopped shows that Greek Life at its root is unable to change. While some compassionate alternatives do exist, even they require a blind devotion to a sexist, classist, racist way of life. If you can be urinated on, you can be critiqued.

The elitism performed by all members of Greek Life damages the entire student population. Devotion to such a corrupt system shows a lack of critical engagement with one’s community and an inability to critically self-reflect. Such attitudes make these individuals **unfit to serve in leadership roles** on campus.

The space that Greek Life takes up on campus is inequitable, discriminatory, and shockingly illogical. Other organizations that advance the student body (and are not sexist, racist, classist, &c.) could use the space Greek Life so greedily occupies. Giving other orgs more space will better represent our Student Body; giving it to Greek Life harms the Student Body, by overemphasizing one archetype of the student body. Put simply: Greek Life has colonized and quartered our campus. This is unacceptable.

The GME (Greek Member Experience) system tokenizes and devalues our community. Forcing Greek members to go to “diverse” events demonstrates that these organizations alone are not capable of evolution through their own thought-provoking and critically engaging experiences, instead they rely on others to teach them. The Student Body refuses to shoulder the burden of educating members of Greek Life. “Diversity and Inclusion” should be found through voluntarily engaging with diverse communities.

The scholarships that exist to promote “economic inclusivity” within Greek Life show that these organizations are built on class status. While students of lower economic status may participate in Greek Life, a certain amount of money is nonetheless required to be accepted into the fold. True community requires nothing from its members other than respect for one another. Greek Life only respects you if you can pay for it through money, dignity, and sacrificing autonomy.

The donations made by Greek Life alumni are blood money. Given by those who perpetuated or were complicit in sexual violence, racism, and classism while on campus—these gifts work to glorify this corruption. The university we want to create and be students of cannot be funded with such deadly stipulations. Why does an organization riddled with accusations of harm generate so much money?

Members of Greek Life are prone to alcoholism and drug abuse. We could not possibly condemn all alcohol and drug use, such activities are pervasive across many institutions, but it is clear that Greek Life glorifies them in a harmful way. Getting “blacked” is treated as a mark of a good time and doing so frequently is encouraged. In reality, such habits leave students stranded with psychological issues and puts them in unnecessary danger. There is a way to gather, celebrate, and socialize without this mindset.

As an intrinsically exclusionary organism, Greek Life creates, perpetuates, and politicizes division within the Student Body. Greek Life exists for the sole and primary reason of creating a hierarchy of social power wherein some students have access to certain resources and experiences and everyone else does not. No Student Body can exist as a whole, equal community with Greek Life.

Greek Life is not “cool.” It is in fact the exact opposite of “cool.” It is ignorant, harmful, unkind, and ugly. Any person who joins Greek Life *ipso facto* accepts its evils, and thus perpetuates it.

The gendered formation of Greek Life is backwards-thinking and harmful to student’s autonomy and agency. By forcing students into ideologies and roles based on their gender, the Greek Life system maintains a sexist norm in which students are forced to act a certain way and believe certain things *solely based on their gender*. Participation in Greek Life does not encourage or even allow critical thinking about these gender norms. To be “Greek” is to be gendered.

The brother/sisterhood created in Greek Life is a blind form of self-identification. The ties you create with your brothers/sisters may be nourishing, real, and nuanced, but they are contingent upon requirements of a certain status (racial, gender-conforming, economic, &c.) and are thus harmfully dogmatic. The bond you have to your **racist** sister or **sexual-predator** brother is not real and in fact hurts you. Real friendship forces each party to grow; Greek Life wants everyone to stay the same.

Greek Life thrives on a lack of an alternative way to socialize and party. There are plenty of other ways to gather outside of Greek Life, but the culture Greek Life creates makes it seem that there are none. This creates an environment where Greek Life members refuse to/are not allowed to socialize with others. Not only is this problematic, it is also childish. While we hope to create an environment where everyone can socialize freely, the pairing of other organizations with Greek Life to host events lends power to its erroneous mindset and must cease immediately.

Greek organizations' move off-campus shows their inability to face valid criticism and be able to change. A change in location does not mean a change in levels of harm. Women are still being assaulted, racist actions and beliefs are still being validated, and an exclusionary, elite identification is still damaging our ability to form community. It is not just Greek Life's presence on campus that is harmful, it is its very existence.

Greek Life is a parasite. Greek Life is the old, uninformed, draconian way of organizing a once homogeneous Student Body. Now that the Student Body is far more diverse, in every aspect of the term, Greek Life represents a failed way to socialize students—one made by racist, sexist, imperialist children. We have grown, so too must our ways of living and learning with one another.

There is no valid, logical, or empathic reason to follow the traditions of Greek Life; tradition is simply peer pressure from dead people. In this case, the dead were racist, sexist, and ignorant—why listen to them?

Why? Ask yourself, truly, *why* this institution exists. Can a productive Student Body exist with organizations, such as Greek Life, organizing primarily white students into *inherited* college identities? Can these same people organize themselves along other lines? If you believe a campus requires this form of division, we encourage you to critically reflect upon your own life and privilege. Perhaps the reason you are in Greek Life is because you are unable to do just that.

Greek Life is being attacked for a reason. The inevitable rush to defend or reform Greek Life cannot reconcile the exclusive core traits that continue to keep it alive in ways that leave little room for non-white, non-straight, and non-binary folks. Any rigorous analysis and critique of Greek Life done by Greek members will reveal these corruptions and necessitate the construction by *all members of the Student Body* of a radical new way to socialize and organize. We do not yet know what this future may look like, but if we build it together, we can create a just, equal, and compassionate alternative.

Greek Life is not the sole source of the problem but it is the place where many of the symptoms happen. Students have agency in how they socialize and construct community. So long as Greek Life exists, we cannot take the necessary steps towards a true realization of this, or the next, Student Body's potential. Some of us are too fixated on the past. Our education and community is in our own hands—Greek Life works to degrade that autonomy.

The unwillingness of those in charge of Greek Life to use the ideals of restorative justice to repair the damage they've done on campus shows the hegemonic, corrupting power and influence they have. The Greek Life system is unfit for the type of just, equal, and compassionate community any healthy, critical Student Body should strive for.

The unwillingness of the University to root out Greek Life shows the apathy they have towards the lives of their students. Shame on you Vanderbilt. These are the theses of our discontent; we will not rest until they are addressed.

Just because you have dropped your Greek Life org does not mean you are exempt from critique. You must still radically reevaluate your life and identity. What is it that separates you from students that *never* participated in Greek life? You cannot deny the extent of your privilege.

The recent VSG election controversy was a consequence of the Greek Life system. The Student Body refuses to be governed by or with Greek Life. Any attempt by Greek Life to control this community will be met with rigorous critique and active protest. While we are dedicated to constructive engagement, the fact of the matter is the Student Body has been hurt by Greek Life and will respond with due passion and diligence.

The Abolish Greek Life movement has done valuable work in documenting and platforming the testimonies of students who have been harmed by Greek Life. Thus far, however, AGL has failed its mission. In the coming months, once the Student Body fully recovers from the pandemic, we must all help AGL fulfill its promise to rid our campus of Greek Life through consistent critique, protest, and radical change in campus culture.

Every person who has participated in Greek Life (of which some of the authors of this list have) and those currently participating in Greek Life must confront and understand the meaning of the wounds they have inflicted. We must change the culture surrounding Greek Life to one of both condemnation and desire to grow. We do not promote violence—we simply believe that every person can and must do better.

If VSG, the MLC, VPAC, and other student organizations on campus are truly committed to ending the oppression caused by Greek Life, they should publicly condemn it and work towards creating a better community. This list of theses should be emblazoned on the doors of every Greek house. Everyone should know what this system truly is.

From here on out, there will be protests at every Greek event held by Vanderbilt students. We will not rest until the cancer of Greek Life is completely gone from this community. You cannot hide from these truths. They will rot you from the inside.

-The Vanderbilt Student Body