



Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
3951 Snapfinger Parkway Decatur, GA 30035
Telephone: (404) 284-5533 Fax: (404) 284-0333
www.oppf.org

FROM THE DESK OF THE GRAND BASILEUS



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Recently, I learned of a most disturbing conglomerate of egregious and downright alarming accusations from women regarding the behavior of men purporting to be members of our fraternity. While I have discovered that several of the alleged incidents go back twenty-eight years, each and every one of them, whether an Omega man was involved or not, struck a chord of utter disappointment in my heart. Some reading this might expect that I would minimize the accounts of these women - I do not. Others reading this might expect me to defend the men reportedly involved in these instances - I will not. And there are those who might expect me to deflect the responsibility to solely law enforcement or another entity in these matters - I cannot. The protection of womanhood, as a principle, is something that all Omega Men learned from the earliest days of our Omega training, and is a principle that shapes our philosophy today. It is the ideal that has transcended nearly 108 years of Omega history.

To anyone who has experienced behavior less than becoming of any man, you should be taken seriously. While I am humbled to serve as Grand Basileus of the Fraternity that I love, I am first a husband and a father of all girls. I am also a mental health professional who has provided mental health counseling to individuals and families for twenty-seven years. In my experience, it is helpful to reach out to not only law enforcement (who should be reached primarily) but also to 1-800-656-HOPE, a toll-free and confidential national sexual assault hotline. In addition to fielding allegations of sexual assault, they connect you with local resources to get confidential support services, they raise the visibility of sexual violence and advance the public's understanding of the crime, and they help create and advocate for laws and regulations that make communities safer and support survivors. The National Sexual Assault Hotline has been listed as a resource for the last four years on our website (www.oppf.org).

We do not condone assault or find justification for behavior that can be described as lewd and lascivious. To each and every member of this Fraternity - I will continue to use the full power of our constitution, bylaws, and this office to assure that our membership follows the cardinal principles that were sworn to Omega. You will have your right to a defense, as you do in the law, but you will not be entitled to any pass from this office if your behavior involves subjugating women to demeaning and deliberately disrespectful behavior.

Finally, we do not pretend to have all of the solutions. We are an organization of men who are striving to be better men and better contributors to our communities. As such, we have reached out to other international presidents of the Divine Nine to assist us in further developing programs and mandates designed to provide early recognition of inappropriate behavior and speech that, if left unchecked, can lead to additional horror stories that no one should have to endure. I will make it my mission to place it as an agenda item during our next series of joint meetings to not only come up with ideas but solutions that we can all buy into for true improvement. I thank each of those wonderful organizations and their leadership in assisting us in shaping the reputation of our fraternity from reactive to proactive in matters such as sexual assault. I implore all male organizations to join us in fighting sexual violence and in protecting and respecting our women. We are committed to internal changes to produce external results. This is not who we are. We are men of Omega.

David E. Marion, Ph.D.
Grand Basileus