The Non-Recognition of Jewish Fraternities: The Cases of Columbia and Brown Universities

Marianne Sanua

While a great deal of excellent and illuminating research over the past fifteen years has examined the barriers Jews faced in their encounter with American institutions of higher education, much of it has necessarily focused on the most basic area of the admissions process. Such themes as the widespread establishment of anti-Jewish quotas, the various elaborate techniques developed after World War I to otherwise limit the number of Jewish students, and the difficulties encountered by Jewish academics seeking faculty positions have all been extensively explored.[1]

Somewhat less emphasis, however, has been placed on examining the question of what happened to Jewish students after they passed the barriers and were finally admitted to the university. Discovering that the challenges were far from over, those American Jewish students who successfully matriculated developed a number of institutions which helped them to deal with the prejudice and isolation they inevitably encountered, and which enabled them to partake of some of the joys which the college experience was supposed to offer. It is within this realm that the Jewish Greek-letter fraternity and sorority system played its most important role.

The Fraternity System

The history of American college Greek-letter secret societies stretches back to the birth of the Republic, the first being Phi Beta Kappa, which was established at the College of William and Mary

Louis Marshall
(1856–1929)

in 1776 and was originally meant to be a literary and social society.[2] Next came Kappa Alpha, Sigma Phi, and Delta Phi at Union College in the 1820s. All of these groups chose Greek letters and mottoes as a way of identifying with the classical civilizations. They were all distinguished by passwords, secret handshakes, and often-elaborate rituals with details and symbols borrowed from the humanistic, Masonic, and Christian traditions.[3]

Greek-letter societies especially proliferated on the American campus after the Civil War. It was then that the practice of building a "chapter house" with dining facilities for each fraternity began. College officials, who had originally opposed the fraternities for their secrecy and rebelliousness, were glad to be relieved of the responsibility of housing, feeding, and regulating student behavior, and often cooperated with the fraternities by supplying them with land and guaranteeing their mortgages. By the turn of the century the so-called "Greek system" was an integral part of American higher education, with fraternities and sororities, by now having developed the character of exclusive social clubs, often completely dominating student life and activities. The system reached its zenith in the 1920s when, among other factors, fraternity and sorority membership served as an indicator of social class and a method of "filtering" increasingly large and heterogeneous campus populations.[4]

For a Jewish student arriving on an American campus after the 1890s, however, the system was closed (as it was, also, to black and Asian students, with severe restrictions facing Roman Catholics as well). Before then and even sometimes after, an American-born Jew of great wealth, talent, and social prominence, such as Herbert Lehman, who graduated from Williams College in 1899 and later went on to serve five consecutive terms as governor of the State of New York, might occasionally be accepted into a traditionally gentile fraternity. However, the turn of the century and the attempts of Jewish immigrants and their children to enter American institutions brought a corresponding rise in open educational and social anti-Semitism. Many college fraternities added restrictive clauses to their constitutions, such as specifications that prospective members had to be "white Christians," descended from two Christian

parents, or "of full Aryan blood." Women's groups, which at first preferred to be called "women's fraternities" rather than "sororities" (the term "fraternity" technically encompassing both genders) were known to be even more restrictive than the men's. In cases where there was no specific restrictive clause, Jews were kept out by unwritten agreement.[5] In any event the gentile fraternities, many of which had crosses on their insignia, professions of faith in Jesus Christ as part of their rituals, and encouraged regular prayer and church attendance, were hardly places where a Jewish student could feel welcome.[6]

The Rise of Jewish Fraternities

Needing to respond to this exclusion, and wanting to enjoy the pleasures of fellowship and full participation in campus life, Jewish students organized their own parallel fraternity and sorority system which functioned in virtual isolation from the gentile fraternities well into the 1950s and even, in some cases, the early 1960s. At the same time, especially at all-black institutions of higher education, an entire alternative African-American fraternity system developed as well—itself an important topic for historical investigation.

Segregation of these non-mainstream fraternities was a fact of life, often built into the university's organizational structure. On some campuses, for example, such as the University of Pennsylvania, there were two interfraternity governing councils, A and B, A being for the gentile groups and B for the Jewish ones. It was also widely customary for Jewish "rush"—the period and process whereby fraternities recruit and select their members—to be held separately from "regular" rush, and at a different time of the year.[7] Alumni who participated in the separate rush later remarked that, at the time, it never occurred to them to consider the process discriminatory. While at times the separation was cause for bitterness, it was usually so taken for granted that no one questioned it. Furthermore, Jewish fraternities were grateful when the gentile fraternities did not attempt to recruit the most desirable Jewish men and women.[8]

Before the early 1950s, when national pressures and the new val-

ues of the postwar civil rights era forced virtually all college fraternities to remove, at least in writing, their sectarian clauses, Jewish fraternities fell into two categories: those which specifically avowed a Jewish purpose in their constitutions and rituals, and those that claimed to be humanist and nonsectarian. (The paradox of a fraternity claiming to be nonsectarian when 99 percent or more of its members remained Jewish, caused these groups no end of troubled discussion and collective soul-searching.)

The first nonsectarian fraternity, which soon developed an overwhelmingly Jewish membership, was Pi Lambda Phi, founded at Yale in 1895 by three Jewish students, one of whom, Henry Mark Fisher, was eventually ordained a rabbi at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. So eager were the officials of Pi Lambda Phi to stress their nonsectarianism that by the 1910s they had developed the mythology, passed on and believed by generations of students, that only one of the fraternity's founders had been a Jew, the other two being, respectively, a Catholic and a Protestant. Nevertheless, Pi Lambda Phi before World War II never had more than a handful of non-Jewish members, and was generally classified by others as a Jewish fraternity.[9]

The first fraternity specifically restricting membership to Jewish men was the ZBT Society, founded at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1898 under the guidance of Dr. Richard J. H. Gottheil, who at the time was president of the Federation of American Zionists as well as an eminent professor of Semitics at Columbia University. The group's name comprised the initials of its motto, *Zion Bemishpat Tipadeh* ("Zion shall be redeemed with judgment," Isaiah 1:27). ZBT began exclusively as a Zionist social and discussion group made up of students studying at several institutions of higher education in the New York City area, including such later illustrious figures as Mordecai Kaplan and A. A. Brill. The call of the more accepted and conventional Greek-letter system, however, was powerful, despite Judaism's historically uneasy relationship with Hellenism. By 1906 ZBT, although still restricted to Jewish membership and espousing the goal of the advancement of Judaism, had evolved into a group having all the characteristics of a college social fraternity, with separate chapters at each school.

The British Government having issued on November 2nd through the Right Honourable Arthur A Balfour a statement showing its especial interest in the future of the Jewish people, the Convention of the Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity, a society made up of Jewish College and University men, takes this opportunity of expressing its extreme gratification at this action and its sense of obligation to the British Government for so signal a mark of recognition and good will. It begs his Excellency, Sir Cecil Spring Rice to transmit this resolution to the proper authorities in Great Britain.

Draft of a telegram sent by Zeta Beta Tau fraternity expressing its gratitude for the Balfour Declaration which recognized the need for a Jewish homeland.

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a daymessage. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT   GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

RECEIVED AT 2780 BROADWAY, NEAR 107TH STREET, NEW YORK

B16NYK13

WASHINGTON DC 740PM DEC 31/17

PROFESSOR RICHARD GOTTBEIL
        SUPREME NASI ZETA BETTA TAU FRAT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY NY

I WILL HAVE THE GREATEST   PLEASURE IN TRANSMITTING YOUR MESSAGE

TO MR BALFOUR

        CECIL SPRINGRICE

            1110PM

Telegram to Professor Richard Gottheil assuring him that the ZBT message will be relayed to Arthur Balfour

That same year it adopted officially, after some years of informal use, the Greek letters Zeta Beta Tau.[10]

Other Jewish or nonsectarian Jewish fraternities for men which followed, mostly founded at City College, New York University, or Columbia, were Phi Epsilon Pi, Sigma Alpha Mu (whose members were known universally as "Sammies"), and Alpha Epsilon Pi. Jewish college women, although at first much fewer in number, organized their own national fraternal groups: Iota Alpha Pi, founded at the predecessor to Hunter College in 1904 by the younger sister of a ZBT member; Alpha Epsilon Phi, founded at Barnard in 1909; Phi Sigma Sigma, founded in 1913, also at Hunter College; and Sigma Delta Tau and Delta Phi Epsilon, both founded in 1917, at Cornell and New York University.

The Post–World War I Era

Jewish fraternities and sororities proliferated and spread with great rapidity, especially in the years before World War I, along with the rising tide of Americans of all faiths and backgrounds seeking higher education. Between 1895 and 1920 it is estimated that at least twenty national Jewish fraternities—that is, groups with chapters at many different colleges—and at least five Jewish sororities were founded, with many more Jewish Greek-letter groups existing solely on the local level.[11] These groups reached the height of their power and influence in the Roaring Twenties, as all fraternities did, when the glamour of being a fraternity man or a sorority girl was considered an indispensable part of the true collegiate experience.[12]

A 1927 survey published by the *American Jewish Yearbook* found that nearly 25,000 students belonged to chapters of Jewish fraternities and sororities, comprising 80 percent of the membership of all Jewish student organizations combined.[13] By World War II Jewish men's fraternity membership, including alumni, had reached over 48,000 in 265 chapters out of a total membership of 850,000; the Jewish sororities had grown to over 90 chapters and more than 12,000 members.[14]

Ironically but not surprisingly, the myriad of Jewish fraternities and sororities mirrored, for the most part, the social mores of their

age, with standards of selectivity and exclusiveness in the more prestigious groups approaching, and sometimes even surpassing, those of their commonly anti-Semitic gentile counterparts. New Jewish fraternities and sororities were routinely founded in response to exclusion from those that already existed, with a majority of Jewish students left out entirely in the cold.

For tens of thousands of Jewish young people fortunate enough to be granted membership, however, the fraternities and sororities provided a haven on hostile university campuses, as well as an important means of acceptance and acculturation into upper- and upper-middle-class American norms. Being a member of a Jewish fraternity meant that one had a place in the general university system for such activities as homecoming, prom, student elections, intramural athletics, and so on; it meant having a place to eat and sleep as an alternative to boarding houses in town, in the days before university dormitories were the norm. It meant having a pleasant and well-organized social life, usually with other Jews, with numerous interfraternity and intersorority relationships leading to marriage. After graduation, continued membership offered important business and social contacts.

Most of all, for the Jewish college student, membership in a fraternity meant having a feeling of self-respect. One Jewish alumnus from the 1920s, when asked why he had joined Sigma Alpha Mu— the "Sammies"—at the University of Oklahoma, replied simply, "Because . . . Sigma Alpha Mu was the only Jewish fraternity on campus at Oklahoma, and I wanted to belong where I would be part of the organization and could walk with pride on the campus and say, 'I, too, am a fraternity man.' " The alumnus eventually became supreme prior, or national president, of his fraternity.[5]

Official Impediments

Unfortunately for the interested Jewish student, the way of Jewish fraternities and sororities on American campuses was often as fraught with difficulty as that of the individual Jew. To begin with, a fraternity could not officially be established or recognized on a campus without the permission of the dean of men or of women or

the president of the college. Failure to obtain this permission could—and did—result in expulsion from the school if illegal fraternity affiliation was discovered.

Permission for Jewish groups was not always forthcoming, especially in the well-established schools of the Northeast. The administrations of Bowdoin, Williams, Amherst, and Wesleyan, for example, would not permit any chapter of a Jewish fraternity to organize on their campus.[16] In the case of Wesleyan, this exclusion was especially painful, since in the mid-1920s 80 percent of its student body belonged to fraternities, none of which would admit Jews, and those who were not fraternity members were virtual pariahs.[17]

The official reasons given by university officials for their nonrecognition of Jewish fraternities were usually that they did not wish to segregate students along racial, religious, or sectarian lines. This of course completely ignored the reality of the restrictions against Jews in the existing gentile fraternities. The real reasons, as suggested in the correspondence of Jewish leaders and the deliberations of fraternity officials during that time, may have included blatant anti-Semitism, fear of a Jewish secret society à la the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a desire not to acknowledge to the world the presence of Jewish students on campus, or, if they were already there, a desire not to provide conditions that would encourage any more of them to come.[18]

Even if a Jewish fraternity or sorority achieved official recognition from the school, the other students could easily shun it by refusing to acknowledge its existence, by not listing it in the college yearbook, or by not allowing the Jewish group a place on the local interfraternity or pan-Hellenic council which governed and regulated fraternity affairs on each campus. As the number and size of Jewish fraternities grew, the issue of their official acceptance on individual American campuses became increasingly complicated and controversial. A member of the National Interfraternity Conference, the umbrella organization of all major men's college fraternities, had this to say on the subject at the group's annual meeting in 1927, at which, with great caution and hesitation, he actually defended the right of Jewish groups to be accepted:

In this growth of fraternities there is one very real difficulty which I would like to refer to quite frankly because it is a difficulty to be met and solved. I refer to the chapters of Jewish students which are multiplying with great rapidity. I feel that I at least can touch upon this delicate topic, because I have very many warm friends who belong to that gifted race. Now regardless of the merits of the case, or the reason therefore, this feeling of prejudice, what you will, is a fact to be reckoned with. It may be theoretically true that there should be no lack of complete sympathy between the Jewish and other race, and that in an ideal democracy there would not be—that racial and religious distinctions and an age-long alienation would disappear. . . . But it is too much to expect of our students that they shall be immune to the threefold and cumulative effect of racial, religious, and broadly speaking social differences that have profoundly moved the masses of men for centuries. No doubt our Hebrew friends realize this and will make allowances for it. We are entitled to ask them to look facts in the face as well as being under obligation to do so ourselves. Things being as they are, and not as we would have them . . . We must find some practical way of mutual adjustment, not always insisting upon attaining the full measure of our ideal. . . . American democracy is evolutionary and is content to take a step at a time.[19]

Columbia University

A notable example of nonrecognition by fellow students, even after recognition by the university administration, could be found at Columbia University in the fall of 1912. In November of that year Dr. Richard J. H. Gottheil, as a founder of Zeta Beta Tau and guardian of Jewish student interests on the Columbia campus, wrote to Felix Warburg at the American Jewish Committee to let him know of a serious situation concerning Jewish students that had developed on Morningside Heights.[20]

For several years, as Gottheil informed Warburg, the editors of the undergraduate yearbook, the *Columbian*, had refused to insert notices of any of the Jewish societies on the campus, even though the ostensible purpose of a yearbook was to include coverage of all student activities. This exclusion applied not only to the Jewish Greek-letter societies on campus but also to religious and cultural groups such as the Menorah Association.

When repeated protests to student government and to faculty committees were to no avail, Gottheil reported, he had changed his tactics and concentrated on getting at least Zeta Beta Tau, the oldest and most prestigious of the Jewish fraternities and thus least likely to raise objections, into the yearbook. To his dismay the result had been a typed, two-page single-spaced resolution from the 1914 *Columbian* editorial board, passed unanimously, explain-

ing why they would not contemplate such an action. The reasons were given in highly convoluted language that went to great lengths to avoid using the word "Jew."

First, all the other fraternities, so the editors wrote, strongly objected to including "the fraternity under consideration." Leading men on campus said that recognizing it would be, as they delicately hinted, "not to the best interests of Columbia." In fact, the editors continued, it would be a menace. They clearly understood the attempt to breach the yearbook's barriers beginning with the insert of the top-ranked Jewish fraternity, and were determined to forestall it.

"By the recognition of the organization in question," they continued, "the way would be thrown open to the recognition of other such organizations, which would have the final effect of drawing to the University an increasing number of a class of men, who as a class, do very little for campus activities." The editors expressed the fear that recognition and upbuilding of such organizations might influence members of this "class of men" to come to Columbia.

It was believed that the alumni, whose support was so vital to Columbia, would also object to recognizing this "class of men," since their numbers in the alumni group were almost negligible. The resolution concluded:

> Be it further resolved that as these ideas surely point to the fact that we should not recognize the organizations of a class of men who do practically nothing, as a class, for campus activities . . . we cannot as a body . . . make any exceptions, since the recognition of one organization of this aforesaid class of men would lead to the recognition of all. Signed, the Board of Editors of the 1914 Columbian.

Richard Gottheil included a copy of this resolution in his letter to Warburg and begged him not to make it public, saying that nothing would be served by doing so.[21]

Gottheil also turned in this case to Nicholas Murray Butler, the powerful president of Columbia. Despite Butler's historical reputation for having negative attitudes toward Jewish students,[22] he and Gottheil apparently had a cordial and even warm relationship, dating back to their time together as Columbia undergraduates, separated by only one year—Gottheil in the Class of 1881, and

Butler in the Class of 1882. Gottheil reported having a "long and very sympathetic talk" with the president, who promised to speak to members of the editorial board and "infuse reason into their heads." As a result, that very afternoon the student board ordered the acceptance of the Zeta Beta Tau insertion.[23]

Gottheil's joy and gratitude at President Butler's decisive handling of the matter were short-lived, however. As Gottheil reported less than three weeks later, the Christian fraternities responded to the prospect with such "agitation" that the student editorial board voted to reverse itself. Moreover, the matter had become even more bitter by the concurrence of the one Jewish editor on the board. Gottheil suggested that he resign in protest, but the Jewish student refused.[24] Zeta Beta Tau, in short, did not make it into the Columbia yearbook of 1914, although with continued quiet protest, it made it the next year.[25]

Gottheil was philosophical about his failure in 1912, declining with thanks Warburg's offer to "bring in heavy artillery" from prominent Jewish leaders and the American Jewish Committee. "I am afraid there is no use of doing so, as the battle is lost," he wrote. The incident caused him to express a seldom-voiced belief that the only cure for campus anti-Semitism would be to form a Jewish-sponsored university:

> There is, of course, only one solution to the difficulty which is felt more or less at all our institutions of higher learning; but it is a solution which will never be envisaged by the Jews of this country. We need a Jewish University here—which, of course, need not be more Jewish than the University of Chicago is Baptist or Yale is Congregational. I am fully persuaded that this is the only solution. Of course, I shall never make any such a proposition in public. I should be a very small prophet in a very large wilderness.[26]

Brown University

In other instances, as mentioned previously, Jewish fraternities were not allowed on the campus at all. Perhaps the most famous, or infamous, as well as the longest case of administrative refusal was that involving William Herbert Perry Faunce, president of Brown University from 1899 to 1929, and, as the university

required of its president in those days, a Baptist minister. At other schools, opposition to Jewish fraternities could be clothed in a general anti-fraternity sentiment, which grew increasingly strong in the American public during the 1920s. This could not be said in the case of President Faunce. He himself was a loyal fraternity brother and a strong supporter of the Greek system, having been a member of Delta Upsilon as an undergraduate. It was under Faunce that the National Interfraternity Conference had been formed in 1909, and he served as its third president. Among all Americans prominent in the field of higher education, there was hardly a more eloquent spokesman for the benefits of college fraternities than he. And yet, year after year, through the early 1900s and into the 1920s, long after Jewish fraternities were well established elsewhere, a steady stream of delegations seeking to organize a chapters of one or another of the Jewish or nonsectarian fraternities at Brown were always met with his firm refusal.[27]

Several small Jewish groups did manage to organize themselves at Brown, either as local fraternities or as nascent chapters of the national groups, but they always existed *sub rosa*, with members risking expulsion. In 1916 Isaac Y. Olch, head of an illegal chapter of Phi Epsilon Pi, wrote to the central office, after yet another rejection by Brown's president, saying that the members had to keep the existence of their group secret from both students and faculty, and begging the office not to send them any mail addressed directly to the chapter house.[28] Samuel Klivansky, Brown Class of 1918, a member of such a secret fraternity, remembered ten years later the difficulties of holding gatherings under such conditions. "I recall vividly the meetings at which we used to assemble," he wrote, "a small group of furtive, timid men with outposts stationed to give alarm upon the approach of a stranger—and a number of times the meetings broke up in confusion as some unwanted guest strayed in upon us."[29]

By 1928, Jewish fraternity officials as well as Brown University students and alumni were appealing to Louis Marshall, president of the American Jewish Committee, to see if something could finally be done. "You may ask," wrote Klivansky, "why this glorification of such a frail and meaningless institution as the college fra-

ternity. Brown is essentially a fraternity college. Every conceivable activity at Brown is dominated and controlled by the fraternities. A non-fraternity man is a non-entity at Brown. It is a most miserable and disheartening experience for the young Jewish freshman at Brown to find that with the advent of the rushing season, he is shunted into the questionable category of the unwanted, the ignored, the despised—perhaps to be tolerated, but not to be associated with."[30]

A similar letter was received from Louis Pomiansky, Class of 1928. In it he vividly described the lot of the Jewish student at Brown. "We Jewish men have always wanted our frats," he wrote to Marshall. "The Goy has his and more than enough to satisfy him. And since we are as good or as bad as he is, and since we are an integral part of the university, we have every right to have ours. We have our pathetic Menorah, and to us Jews who want our frats, it is like a decapitated rag doll, without an arm and a leg. It can no more take the place of a good frat than a stepmother the place of one's fine and loving mother—no matter how good she may be."[31]

Despite increasing pressure from Jewish leaders, President Faunce remained firm in his assertions that a Jewish fraternity at Brown would do damage to the university as a whole and still greater damage to the Jewish students. His defense, as expressed to one prominent Jewish fraternity member and supporter in January 1928, was that the Brown campus was a perfectly happy and peaceful place for Jews without it. As evidence, he cited the captain of the football team and the leader of the university band, both of whom were Jewish. To change the status quo would, as he put it, only "kindle the fires of racial antagonism." He concluded: "I do not believe that you and your friends would desire to inject an unwanted fraternity into a community where all is now peaceful and kind feeling prevails."[32]

Louis Marshall Steps In

Louis Marshall, upon being supplied with copies of this and other correspondence dealing with the matter, decided to take some action. His motivation was apparently not any great affection for the idea of Jewish fraternal societies themselves, but rather a sense

of injustice that Jewish students as a group should be denied the right to organize fraternities while other groups were not. Indicative of his general attitude toward Jewish fraternities was a decision he would make later that year, in December of 1928, when he refused to allow his name to be used for a society of exclusively Jewish law students at Syracuse University. The group was then being founded in response to exclusion by the existing student societies. In explanation of his decision, he wrote to the dean of the law school:

> While under ordinary circumstances I would consider it an honor to have my name associated with a Law Society, on mature reflection I feel constrained to decline it. To accept would impliedly approve what I regard to be a deplorable condition now prevailing in American colleges, namely, the exclusion of Jewish students, however exemplary morally and intellectually, from college societies. . . . This compulsory segregation of members of the same college class into distinct groups along religious or other lines, bodes ill to the public welfare. All of the members of these classes are Americans, all are engaged together under the same faculty in pursuing the study of law, all are to become members of the same great profession, in the practice of which they are likely to have constant business relations, and yet Christian students deliberately exclude their Jewish classmates from fellowship in societies devoted to the discussion of jurisprudential problems. If the Jewish students are to be thus arbitrarily discriminated against and were to accept the edict of inferiority and unfitness thus pronounced against them, and nothing is done to redress what is unquestionably a moral wrong of which they are the victims, I would not be true to myself and to the principles which I have advocated all my life were I, a Trustee of Syracuse University, to sanction by indirection what I consider to be an unspeakable disgrace.[33]

If Marshall could muster at least some pride in the idea of a law students' society, he felt none at all in the case of Jewish undergraduate social fraternities. Privately, as he confessed to the national president of Tau Epsilon Phi, who had been a member of the most recent delegation to visit President Faunce, Marshall loathed the entire institution of college fraternities:

> The only phase of the subject which interests me is that of discrimination. To my mind they are an absurd exhibition of infantilism. They involve criminal waste of time. For grown men to make them the center of thought and activity seems to me to be inexpressibly silly. . . . I am filled with disgust and contempt at the mental attitude exhibited. There is a total lack of a sense of propriety and of moral values. Booze and sex and their concomitants seem to constitute the be-all and end-all of their mental lucubrations. Any movement which would forbid secret fraternities in our colleges and universities would have my whole-hearted support. Personally I think it would be a blessing in disguise if our Jewish students were deprived of this great boon. They could form organizations in which serious work requiring thought and industry could be accomplished.[34]

This having been said, however, Marshall was able to look at the matter from the viewpoint of a lawyer defending his client—in this case, the Jewish people—as well as his long-standing anger against any obvious violation of their rights. As he wrote: "from the standpoint of an unjust and unreasonable discrimination, the action of President Faunce stirs my fighting blood." He immediately sent a long and eloquent letter to Faunce pleading the case for Jewish fraternities at Brown. Both this letter and Faunce's answer were released to the general press, where they were eagerly read by Brown's Jewish students and alumni, and were published in full in the *American Jewish Yearbook* for 1929–1930.

In addition, Marshall's followers went so far as to collect historical evidence to support their case. It was soon discovered, based on research that had already been done by an attorney who was also a historian, that colonial Jews had donated generously to the fledgling Brown University. One Moses Lindo, "a Jewish merchant of Charleston," had contributed the especially noteworthy sum of 20 pounds in 1770, whereupon the officers of the university had resolved: "Voted, That the children of Jews may be admitted into this Institution, and entirely enjoy the freedom of their own religion without any restraint or imposition whatever."[35]

In his major letter to Faunce, Marshall wrote of the exclusion that Jewish students suffered on the campus, the unjust segregation that already existed, the vital role that fraternities had come to play in college life, and the harmlessness of Jewish fraternities elsewhere. "The Jews are in a minority," he wrote, "and as such are placed under a ban. Is it sportsman-like to increase these artificial disadvantages by withholding from them the right of associating among themselves? Are they dimming the light of learning, or muddying the stream of knowledge, or interfering with the flow of goodwill, by seeking a more limited brotherhood because a broader spirit of fraternity is denied them?"[36]

Once again, the appeal was to no avail. Faunce wrote back that the establishment of any fraternity along racial or religious lines at Brown was out of the question. To do so would constitute "a confession of failure on the part of the American democracy." He continued:

Some of the fraternities undoubtedly have clauses in their constitutions which prevent the admission of any but white Protestants. I trust such narrowness will soon be outgrown. But we can hardly expect the immature minds of American college students to share the broader views which you and I have attained by long experience in living. We must have patience with them and seek to lift them out of all exclusiveness and littleness into the true democracy of emancipated spirits. . . . If some limitations on true democracy still remain among certain fraternities, we can only hope and believe that by the slow processes of education reforms may be achieved which are impossible through revolution.[37]

Openly and specifically Jewish fraternities never did gain a strong foothold at Brown, despite the publicity granted the Marshall-Faunce exchange. A chapter of Pi Lambda Phi, one of the officially nonsectarian Jewish fraternities, was established the next year, in 1929, but only after continued pressure from the American Jewish Committee, major media controversy, threats of a lawsuit by the fraternity's officers, and the coincidental but timely retirement of William H. P. Faunce.[38]

Conclusions

The incidents at Brown and Columbia, in the long run, did not affect the overall health of the Jewish fraternity system, which continued to flourish elsewhere. However, these incidents do serve as an example of some of the opposition that Jewish college students faced when they attempted to form their own recognizably Jewish institutions, and as a reflection of the upheavals their new presence there was causing among members of older, more established groups. They also illustrate the reality that mere admission to a university could never be enough. Jewish students wanted to have a normal American student life, with all its social, extracurricular, and athletic aspects. In the 1920s much work remained to be done in surmounting the barriers to this devoutly desired normal life, even after the walls surrounding the college admissions office had been breached.

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Notes

1. Among the most pioneering and notable of these works are Harold S. Wechsler, *The Qualified Student: A History of Selected College Admission in America* (New York: Wiley, 1977); Marcia Graham Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale and Princeton 1900–1970* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979); and most recently Dan A. Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), which deals most extensively with the social life of Jewish students and faculty.

2. See Richard Nelson Current, *Phi Beta Kappa in American Life: The First Two Hundred Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

3. For background, history, lists, and statistics of all major American fraternities and sororities, see *Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities* (Menasha, Wis.: George Banta Publishing). Twenty editions of *Baird's Manual* were published between 1879 and 1991.

4. For a fine historical and sociological overview of the American college fraternity system and an analysis of its rise to prominence in the 1920s, see Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 141–167.

5. For descriptions of specific discriminatory clauses and membership practices, see Alfred McClung Lee, *Fraternities Without Brotherhood: A Study of Prejudice on the American Campus* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

6. The upsurge in overall American nativism and anti-Semitism around the turn of the twentieth century, and particularly after World War I, has been extensively documented. For particularly helpful and detailed analyses, see John Higham's *Send These To Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), esp. "Social Discrimination Against Jews, 1830–1930," pp. 138–173.

7. See George S. Toll, "Colleges, Fraternities, and Assimilation," *Journal of Reform Judaism* 13, no. 4 (Summer 1985). The best available summary of the history of the Jewish Greek-letter system, by the same author, is "The Jewish Fraternities: Their Rise and Fall," chap. 2 of *Alpha Epsilon Pi: The First Sixty-Five Years, 1913–1978* (Alpha Epsilon Pi Foundation, 1980). Also helpful is Maurice Jacobs, "Fraternities, Jewish," *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (1941), vol. 4, pp. 423–425. For a specific sample of the discussion concerning separate fraternity systems at the University of Pennsylvania and an attempt to eliminate them, see Phi Epsilon Pi Collection, minutes of Roundtable Discussion, 1938 annual convention, Box 7, Folder: "1938," American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass. See handwritten notation, most probably by Maurice Jacobs: "It is the only school in the country with an A and B Interfraternity Council, B being the Jewish group. This should not exist."

8. Interview with William P. Schwartz, executive director, Sigma Alpha Mu Fraternity, Carmel, Indiana, April 26, 1991.

9. See Jacobs, "Fraternities, Jewish," p. 423. In their periodic entries in *Baird's Manual,* as well as in all its public literature, Pi Lambda Phi officials so constantly repeated the claim that the fraternity had been founded by "a group of undergraduates of various faiths" that

it was completely believed and became a virtual fact. During the controversy of 1929, in which Pi Lambda Phi sought to gain recognition at Brown University over the objections of President William H. P. Faunce, the myth of its nonsectarian founding was a powerful weapon. In an article in the *Jewish Daily Bulletin* ("J.D.B. News Letter: The Fraternity Issue at Brown University: Corporation to Decide: Pi Lambda Phi Chapter Disbands," May 3, 1929, p. 6) one of the founders is cited as being "Rev. Henry Mark Fisher of Atlantic City, who is a Christian." In fact Henry Mark Fisher (Yale '97) was at the time a prominent rabbi, having been ordained at Hebrew Union College in 1903. Examination of the class records, yearbooks, and obituaries available at the Manuscripts and Archives section of the Yale University Library confirms the Jewish identity of the second founder, Frederick Manfred Werner (Yale '98), and strongly suggests the Jewish origins of the third, Louis Samter Levy (Yale '98), although his early conversion to Christianity is a possibility. Werner prepared for college at the well-known Dr. Sach's Collegiate Institute, whose pupils were primarily German Jews, and died in New York City on March 8, 1909, of acute nephritis. His obituary in the *Decennial Record: Class of Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-Eight, Yale College* (New Haven: Yale College, 1910) specifically notes when describing his untimely passing, "he was of the Jewish faith." For Louis Samter Levy, born in Forklands, Alabama, to Maurice Levy and Jennie Samter, and raised in Scranton and St. Louis, there is no equivalent statement of his Jewishness or indeed of any religious identity at all, and it is possible that he or his parents adopted some other faith later in life. However, aside from the evidence of his surname, his two roommates at Yale were Jewish, he joined the predominantly Jewish law firm of Boskowitz and Levy and then Levy and Rosenthal after graduating from Columbia Law School, where he was one of the founders of the Law Review, and on Oct. 27, 1903 he married Irma O. Boskowitz, daughter of Ignatz Boskowitz of New York City. That Levy (who made his home in Dobb's Ferry) was not at least of Jewish origin, and hence ineligible for admission to a gentile fraternity, is highly unlikely.

10. Zeta Beta Tau, Minutes of the Supreme Council, vol. 1, 1906–1915 (National Office Archives, New York City).

11. Toll, "Colleges, Fraternities, and Assimilation," p. 96.

12. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, p. 150.

13. H. S. Linfield, "The Communal Organization of the Jews in the United States, 1927," *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 31 (1929–30), pp. 141–143. Quoted in Harold S. Wechsler, "The Rationale for Restriction: Ethnicity and College Admission in America, 1910–1980," *American Quarterly* 36, no. 5 (Winter 1984): 658.

14. Jacobs, "Fraternities, Jewish," p. 425.

15. Address by David R. Milsten, past supreme prior, in *The Octagonian* 46, no. 4 (November 1958): 19.

16. Toll, "Colleges, Fraternities, and Assimilation," p. 97.

17. Phi Epsilon Pi Collection, Box 12, Folder: "Extension Committee." Newsclipping from *Wesleyan Argus*, Feb. 18, 1932, by Austin M. Fisher, '32, entitled: "Is Wesleyan Fair to Jews?" American Jewish Historical Society.

18. Letters of refusal of recognition from university officials, as well as extensive discussions and speculations on the reasons and possible strategies for overcoming it, are found in the early records of all Jewish fraternities and sororities. See especially the Phi Epsilon Pi Collection, passim; also Louis Marshall correspondence, Folder: "Fraternities," American Jewish Committee Archives, Blaustein Library.

19. Frederic R. Mann, National President Tau Epsilon Phi, to Louis Marshall, February

14, 1928. (See attached excerpts from the National Interfraternity Conference.) American Jewish Committee Archives, Folder: "Fraternities."

20. The correspondence on this incident is found in the Felix Warburg Papers, Box 163, Folder 19, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

21. Richard Gottheil to Felix Warburg, November 1, 1912, Box 163 Folder 19, Warburg Papers. See attached memo: "Resolutions drawn up and unanimously passed by the 1914 *Columbian* Board of Columbia University, on the thirty-first day of October, 1912, in regard to their action taken in answer to the application of the Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity for placing their insertion in the 1914 *Columbian.*"

22. See the work of Harold S. Wechsler, in particular his *The Qualified Student: A History of Selected College Admissions in America*, which includes extensive coverage of Butler's attempts to limit Jewish enrollment at Columbia.

23. Richard Gottheil to Felix Warburg, November 1, 1912 (handwritten postscript to previous letter on same day), Warburg Papers.

24. Richard Gottheil to Felix Warburg, November 18, 1912, Warburg Papers. "Evidently I cried victory too soon."

25. The Zeta Beta Tau insert first appears in the 1915 *Columbian.*

26. Richard Gottheil to Felix Warburg, November 21, 1912, Warburg Papers.

27. See especially Eleanor F. Horvitz and Benton H. Rosen, "The Jewish Fraternity and Brown University," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 8, no. 3 (November 1981). The available papers and records of all Jewish fraternities reveal constant frustration of their efforts to establish chapters at Brown, where by the 1920s the proportion of Jewish students reached perhaps 20 percent. Aside from an extended student campaign, several attempts were made to enlist the aid of prominent leaders to speak on their behalf. For example, Louis Marshall, as president of the American Jewish Committee, was asked to intervene with Faunce on behalf of Zeta Beta Tau, which in 1921 had already been seeking recognition at Brown for more than two years (see Louis Marshall Papers, Box 62, Folder Z). A secret chapter of Phi Epsilon Pi, formed at Brown in the 1910s, repeatedly solicited letters of support and wrote directly to Faunce to request recognition; the request was always denied, and the chapter folded in 1921 (see Phi Epsilon Pi Collection, Box 31, Folder "Sigma," correspondence 1916–1921).

28. Phi Epsilon Pi Collection, Box 31, Folder "Sigma" (Brown University), Isaac Y. Olch to Jesse Acker, February 23, 1916. The file mentions an attempt to get Oscar Straus, former ambassador and the first Jew holding a presidential cabinet post, to intervene on their behalf.

29. Samuel M. Klivansky to Morris D. Waldman, December 27, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, Folder: "Fraternities."

30. Ibid.

31. Louis Pomiansky, Brown '28, to Louis Marshall, November 12, 1928. American Jewish Committee Archives, Folder: "Fraternities."

32. William H. P. Faunce to Louis S. Lebenthal, January 20, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, Folder: "Fraternities."

33. Louis Marshall to Paul Shipman Andres, Esq., Dean, College of Law, Syracuse University, December 12, 1928. Box 1600, Louis Marshall Papers.

34. Louis Marshall to Frederic R. Mann, February 16, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, Folder: "Fraternities."

35. Leon Huhner to Louis Marshall, November 15, 1928, American Jewish Committee

Archives, Folder: "Fraternities." The information is taken from an article by Huhner which appeared in no. 19 of the *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, entitled "Jews in Connection with the Colleges of the Thirteen Original States Prior to 1800" (1910), p. 101.

36. Louis Marshall to William H. P. Faunce, February 21, 1928, American Jewish Archives, Folder: "Fraternities." See also *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 31 (1929–30), pp. 354–358.

37. William H. P. Faunce to Louis Marshall, March 1, 1928, American Jewish Archives, Folder: "Fraternities." See also *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 31 (1929–30), p. 357.

38. See Horvitz and Rosen, "Jewish Fraternity and Brown University," esp. pp. 305–333. For samples of massive press coverage, including in the Yiddish newspapers, see MSS Coll. #2, Henry Hurwitz collection, Folder 70 Box 4, "Brown University—Clippings" (ca. April–May 1929), American Jewish Archives.