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Why fraternities need to be abolished

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By Andrew Lohse

It's becoming difficult to keep track of all the disturbing fraternity stories in the news.

Between a Penn State fraternity's secret Facebook page for sharing photos of nude, passed out women and images of hazing, allegations of drug dealing and sexual assault in a North Carolina State frat, a group of University of Michigan frat brothers destroying a ski resort in a drunken rage, the revelation of a University of Wisconsin-Madison frat's degrading hazing, the publication of University of Maryland frat brothers' pro-rape emails, and the now-infamous racist video of Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) members calling for the lynching of African-Americans, it would be an understatement to say that Greek life has had a bad few weeks.

These stories aren't easy reads. They show in stark terms how fraternities are antithetical to the

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educational mission of their host institutions - because who has time to learn anything when you're starved and forced to sleep in the attic, like those UW-Madison pledges? Together these revelations paint a picture of endemic fraternity misbehavior that most people would more likely associate with a biker gang than the supposed future leaders of America. But we don't have the right to be surprised

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anymore. These incidents aren't outliers or cases of individual impropriety, but data points in a clear historical pattern showing the fraternity system to be a structurally flawed vestige of the 19th century. Simply put, fraternities need to be abolished. The idea that Greek organizations can selfreform or self-regulate – especially on an issue

in a clear historical pattern." as crucial as campus sexual assault - is as ludicrous as arguing that Goldman Sachs should run the SEC. After all, a much-cited 2007 study showed that fraternity members are 300% more likely to commit rape than non-affiliated students. This study wasn't an outlier, but the third of its kind confirming

the same data. Expanding sororities to counterbalance the power of frats is no solution, either. Numerous studies have shown that sorority membership is a clear risk factor for sexual assault, especially an assault involving

sorority house made a woman three times more likely to be raped. How can we expect higher education to be a ladder of opportunity for all students if neither universities nor the federal government can ensure basic safety by eradicating the hostile environment that is privileged, perpetuated, and protected by these organizations?

drug or alcohol coercion - a Harvard School of Public Health study indicates that even just living in a

how the hyper-masculine groupthink that supposedly builds a fraternity "brotherhood" is the same cult psychology that teaches young men to do things they'd never do on their own. These organizations' flaws are systemic, and the symptoms can't be comfortably reduced to questions of

As a former member of Dartmouth College's SAE – a house notorious for its foul hazing – I've witnessed

individual behavior. No frat bro exists in a vacuum. Not to mention how these organizations use secrecy to evade scrutiny, the "philanthropy defense" to get themselves excused, and Washington, D.C. lobbying to suppress any reforms.

arguing that Goldman Sachs should run the SEC." Fraternities are big business. They own and operate more than \$3 billion worth of real estate and take in

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more than \$150 million of tax-free revenue each year. They're represented by sophisticated trade organizations and a political action committee, FratPAC, that in 2013 succeeded in killing a piece of desperately-needed anti-hazing legislation in Congress. Believe it or not, we don't need fraternities to raise money for philanthropic causes. Corporations, religious organizations, non-profits, and student service groups easily produce a greater social good without the

obvious human cost inherent to exclusionary, sex-segregated clubs built around binge drinking and hazing. Unlike fraternities, neither the Salvation Army nor the United Way have ever beaten one of their volunteers to death or left them to die of alcohol poisoning with their hands zip-tied after an initiation. The "philanthropy defense" is a diversion. It always has been. The best available data puts Greeks' collective charitable giving at about \$7 million a year – a statistical anomaly compared to the more than

\$300 billion donated in America in sum total. Why do frat apologists believe that a small amount – or any amount - of philanthropy can wipe away the stain of repeated hazing deaths? Why do they argue that a few bake sales outweigh the rigorous research and high-profile documentaries like "The Hunting Ground" that show fraternities to be drivers of rape culture on campus? To be clear, fraternities aren't the only sketchy organization to use philanthropy to cover for "These organizations' flaws

symptoms can't be comfortably reduced to questions of individual behavior. No frat bro exists in a vacuum." Fraternities are out of excuses. It's finally time for Congress to repeal Title IX's fraternity and sorority

are systemic, and the

other activities. Hell's Angels donates toys to underprivileged children every year – but the Department of Justice still considers them an organized crime syndicate. Apparently, they just don't have good lobbyists. Why do we excuse some systems of organized crime, but censure others? It's not just white privilege, but something else ingrained in American life classism, sexism, elitism, and the fact that a different set of rules exist for the rich, their progeny, and their secret clubs. exemption - a loophole that has protected Greek organizations for decades, despite the fact that their

University presidents owe it to the next generation of students to abolish fraternities and replace them with a 21st century system that isn't hostile to minorities, women, and its own members – not to mention the very idea of learning. Andrew Lohse is a former member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon at Dartmouth College and the author of "Confessions of an Ivy league Frat Boy."

codified discrimination clearly undermines the legislation's aim to ensure gender equity in education.

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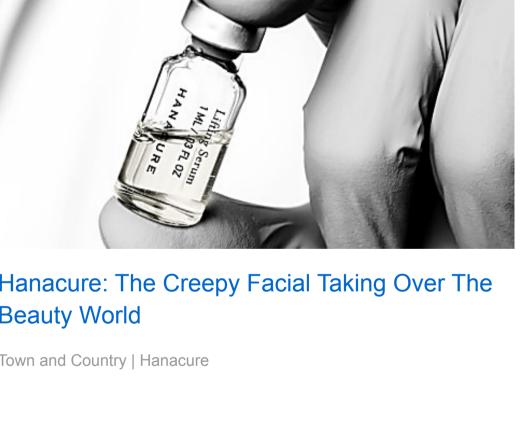
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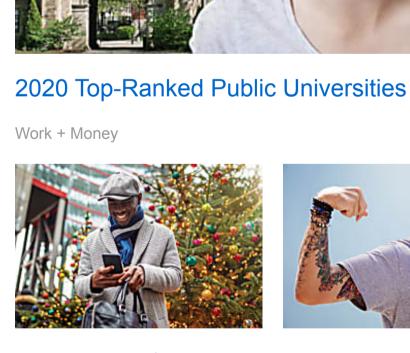
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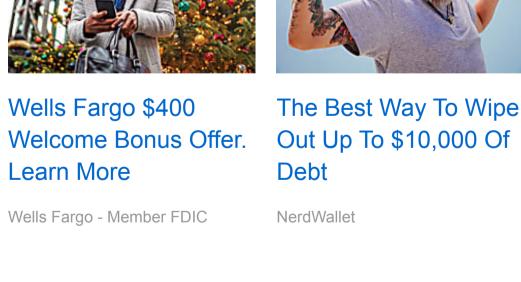
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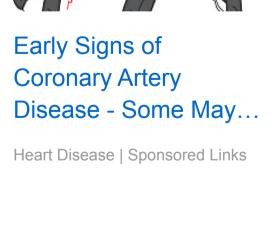
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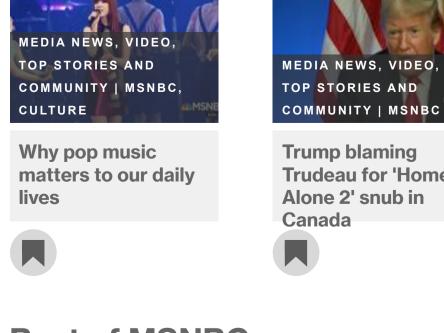
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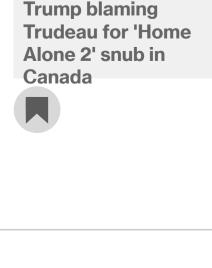
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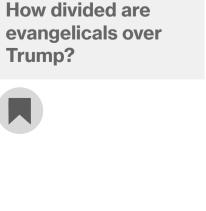
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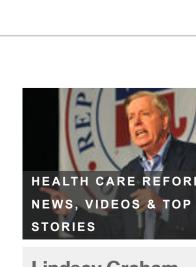


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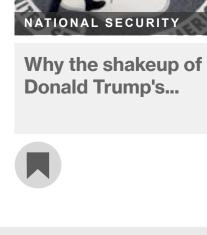


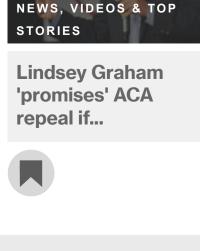




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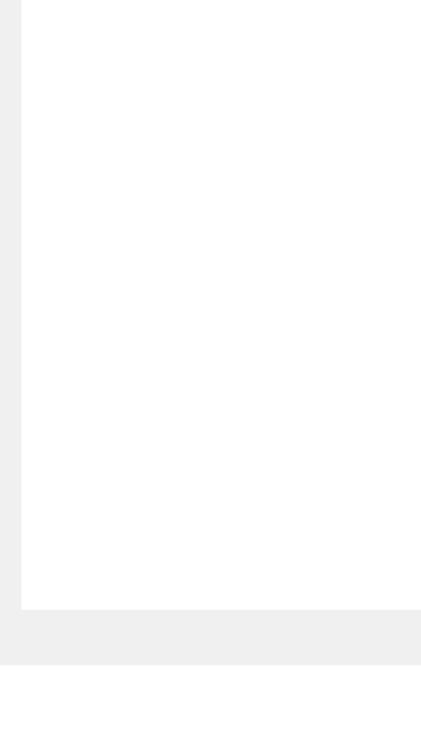


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