

Message from the PRESIDENT

By the year 2000, one of every three United States citizens will be Hispanic or Asian. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing segment of our nation. Caucasians are fourth in growth rate, following Asians and blacks.

Why am I telling you this? How does it affect Kappa Alpha Theta? The most important implication is that our college chapters will exist in a much more ethnically diverse community, as the campuses reflect these demographics. Harold Hodgkinson, in a paper called "Diversity Is our Middle Name," points out that institutions in the Midwest will be much less affected than those in California, New York, Texas and Florida. But we have 23 chapters in those states alone.

Our college chapters will exist in a much more ethnically diverse community, as the campuses reflect the nation's changing demographics.

With the changing demographics of our campuses, are our chapters headed for reduced memberships and hard times? The answer, of course, is a resounding no. Our chapters reflect the campus population; for many years Kappa Alpha Theta has pledged and initiated young women without regard to race.

But we are not keeping pace with the changing face of America. We still have alumnae who are reluctant to recommend anyone other than the traditional white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant. And this is their right: The purpose of the recommendation system is to give alumnae the opportunity to highlight personal

friends and daughters of friends, not to provide a "ticket" for everyone. Our procedures allow collegians to make the final decisions regarding membership.

Last year, one of our chapters pledged the first black woman on a campus with traditionally "all-white" sorority membership. This year, another Theta chapter on an all-white Greek campus affiliated the first black woman. Both chapters are to be congratulated for not being afraid to take risks. And there were risks. Why? Because there were people who warned the chapters that if they pledged these women, they would not receive recommendations or pledges in the future. And some men's fraternities told the chapters they would not continue to "party" with the Thetas at these two schools.

But these are strong chapters. They are admired and respected on their campuses, and I am proud of the courage and leadership they demonstrated. These chapters are in step with Kappa Alpha Theta's history of firsts:

- First Greek-letter fraternity for women
- First two women to be initiated in Phi Beta Kappa
- First to install a Canadian chapter
- First woman to be elected to the U.S. Senate in her own right

Robert G. Bottoms, president of DePauw University, asked this question in his inaugural address: "Is DePauw reflective of the society which it seeks to represent?" He stated that it was not an issue of survival: DePauw will survive. But his question was whether DePauw could afford to be irrelevant to one-third of the country's population.

It is typical of DePauw to be concerned about the ethnic composition of its student body, even though the school is firmly planted



Grand President Sue F. Supple

in that heartland which Hodgkinson said would not be affected as much as other parts of the country. After all, it was Indiana Asbury, back in

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1867, that admitted another minority—women—when schools of equal caliber were admitting only male students. Because Indiana Asbury was willing to take a risk, Kappa Alpha Theta exists. Our tradition and history call for us to be aware of the changing times and to act accordingly.

We need to recognize and expand our concept and understanding of Theta. It is, and always has been, a support system, a sisterhood of love and friendship. As our young people grow up in this ethnically diverse world, they make friends from all races, and they believe these friends should be welcomed by everyone as sisters. Many of you would agree. However, *all* of us must come to grips with the changing face of America if Kappa Alpha Theta is to remain in the forefront of women's organizations, where I firmly believe it belongs.

Loyally,

Sue F. Supple
Grand President