

Why I Don't Support Hazing

by Abigail Blaes

I am incredibly proud to say that I have never felt belittled, pressured, or degraded to obtain membership into any organization I am a part of. It very much frustrates me to know that there are people out there who would

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support the degrading, dehumanization, and humiliation of an individual.

Because that's what hazing is.

Hazing is defined as "any action taken or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's willingness to participate."

Sounds like a whole lot of fun, team building exercises, right? Believe it or not, that's how some people view the practice of hazing. The idea that hazing is anything but damaging to the members and the organization is, quite frankly, shocking to me.



Abby Blaes is a sophomore student at Missouri State University majoring in Public Relations and minoring in Creative Writing. She is a proud member of Sigma Kappa sorority. Abby felt a strong sense of responsibility to defend against those who feel that hazing is not a problem on college campuses. Hazing prevention is a cause very close to her heart and she is immensely proud to be a part of an organization who continually rejects any and all hazing practices. Abby wrote this article to try to raise awareness about this topic which may college students don't seem to want to address. She hopes that this piece will help to spread awareness and give a new perspective on the hazing epidemic.

I'm going to tell my side of the story in response to one particular article that I read recently because ever since I've read it, I've felt the need to clarify my side of the argument.

Contrary to popular belief, not all organizations like sororities and fraternities haze. And I am proud to be a part of a community and a sorority that strongly rejects all forms of it.

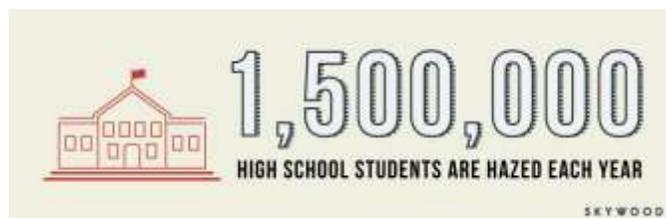
There are some who believe that hazing encourages fellowship, loyalty and respect. And to that, I just have to say... bs. I can't imagine believing that berating, embarrassing and hurting another human being would be at all beneficial in any form.

Some may say that hazing is voluntary. But, here's the thing. For an act to be voluntary, it must be done without any form of "pressure, force, or coercion." If there's a risk of being kicked out of the organization if the "required" hazing is not fulfilled, then this certainly counts as pressure, force, or coercion. Further, without the full disclosure of everything that will happen to a potential member upon membership, then in no way is this a voluntary act. People are being coerced and pressured into completing mentally and physically damaging tasks in order to gain membership into an organization.

Now, to tackle the other argument that hazing promotes unity and respect. If you have to physically and/or mentally berate any individual into respect, perhaps you do not deserve it.

The glorification of hazing as supporting camaraderie and respect seems so incredibly contradictory. Members of an organization are meant to pick each other up, show support no matter the circumstances, and stand by one another. How can that be achieved when you set the precedent of humiliation and physical and emotional harm?

In the article that ignited this response, it is quoted, "Without a hazing process, your membership is the equivalent to a participation trophy." I hold my membership to my organization with a higher respect than a "participation trophy" and I have never been hazed. Membership in my organization is a privilege and I have worked hard to maintain the position that I have. Except I do not define that hard work as hazing, but by dedicating my time, efforts, creativity, passion and voice in each and every way.



I do not feel the need to be physically and mentally abused in order to feel respect; to feel friendship towards other members of my organization. And I do not feel the need to subject another person to that kind of cruelty either. I, and the other members of my organization, have that admiration and appreciation for one another inherently.

I have more respect, love and appreciation for the future members of my organization than to support hazing. I have more respect, love and appreciation for my organization than to allow something as toxic and damaging as hazing to taint it.

We know the statistics about hazing. We know that an incredibly long list of people have been killed or have killed themselves because of hazing practices. We know that hazing causes physical and emotional damage. And if you don't know these things, I encourage you to look at the links I have included because they are very enlightening. If we know all of this and if there is such resounding evidence, my question is this: why is this even still a conversation?

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