

Theta Tau, Professional Engineering Fraternity - Tau Chapter

Dear Syracuse University Community:

First and foremost, every single member of Theta Tau would like to apologize to everyone affected by the racist video that was recorded as a part of our new member process. Theta Tau is made up of a diverse group of engineering students from a variety of nationalities, beliefs, and backgrounds, and we strongly believe that racism has no place on a university campus. College is supposed to be about the ideals of the future – a new generation to replace the old one – and it's with profound embarrassment and disappointment in ourselves that we find our fraternity in this situation. Anyone of color or of any marginalized group who has seen this video has every right to be angry and upset with the despicable contents of that video.

For those of you who do not know Theta Tau, we are ashamed that this is the first time you're hearing of us. Our house is not and has never been a place for hate. We have a no tolerance policy for troubling and offensive behavior. We welcome members of all backgrounds. We support the shared community that we all live in with events, fundraisers, and any way that we can. Of course, none of this can possibly excuse the words that came from our fraternity house last month, no matter the context the words were used in.

However, we do believe that it is important to understand that context. Not to make excuses for the content of the video, but hopefully to make those who have been hurt by this video understand that Theta Tau is not a hate group in their midst—that we are not a house full of bigots or those willing to tolerate bigotry. Hopefully, understanding the circumstances of the video – as well as our initial response – will help ease some of the pain caused by the horrible words that this video contains.

Each semester our new members are given the opportunity to write and act out a skit, in order to roast the active brothers. This event was never intended to be centered around racism or hate. This year, one of these brothers is a conservative Republican, and the new members roasted him by playing the part of a racist conservative character. It was a satirical sketch of an uneducated, racist, homophobic, misogynist, sexist, ableist and intolerant person. The young man playing the part of this character nor the young man being roasted do not hold any of the horrible views espoused as a part of that sketch. We would like to believe that the new members seen in the video laughing at the horrible things being said were not laughing in concurrence with these beliefs, but in fact the opposite—that racism, sexism and homophobia are so wrong that they are laughable. None of the satire was said or done in malice.

That said, many bright lines were obviously crossed. The language used in this sketch is disgraceful, and it made the active brothers very uncomfortable. Our organization would

never demand, or even ask our new members to recite any of this. We spoke to the new members about their actual beliefs shortly after their parody and we all agreed that those words should never be spoken—in our house, or anywhere.

Engineers join our organization with the intent of entering a diverse group of people, so that we can all grow into better individuals. We are open-minded, scholarly leaders, both in our profession and in the community. We want to let everyone on our campus know that we are truly sorry, and that nothing like this will ever again be tolerated. Not in private, not as part of a joke—not ever. We cannot apologize enough for the pain, sadness and fear that this has caused. Our heart breaks when we see the protests and Hendricks Chapel congregations when we see the pain that our brothers have caused. As the diverse organization that we are, many of us have shared the same emotions regarding the toxic social and political environment in our country. We understand that we have thrown a lot of fuel into an intolerant fire burning throughout our community, and we know that this issue is much larger than just an isolated incident in our basement.

We hear you all, and we also want to take action, to make the world a better, safer, more inclusive place for everyone. We promise to maintain a dialogue with our peers about bettering our community. It is everyone's responsibility to help marginalized groups have power and a voice, and we want to create a platform to support doing so. We feel that it is crucial that the dialogue of intolerance at Syracuse does not end here, and we are calling for all other aligning organizations to contact us at tauthetatau@gmail.com so that we may realize change.

Sincerely, Tau of Theta Tau