

ASU Fraternity Under Scrutiny For MLK Day Party

PHOENIX (AP) — An Arizona State University fraternity's operations have been suspended following accusations that the local Tau Kappa Epsilon chapter hosted a distasteful party in commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, replete with racist stereotypes and offensive costumes.

"We regard the behavior exhibited as completely outrageous, extraordinarily offensive and wholly unacceptable," said James Rund, ASU's senior vice president for Educational Outreach and Student Services. "This kind of behavior is not tolerated by the university, and we intend to take swift and immediate action.

"We just don't have room at the university to tolerate that kind of conduct."

Alex Baker, a spokesman for the national fraternity organization, said the group does not condone racist or discriminatory behavior.

"It is with embarrassment and regret when a few individuals within our organization make decisions that do not align with the values and principles of Tau Kappa Epsilon," Baker said in a statement.

University officials had planned to meet Tuesday with fraternity representatives regarding the off-campus party over the weekend.

Pictures from the party made their way onto social media websites, depicting guests dressed in basketball jerseys, flashing gang signs and holding watermelon-shaped cups.

"How can you not realize how stupid this is?" said Cuyler Meade, 25, an ASU junior. "It's embarrassing if people look at ASU and think we're all like that."

The Rev. Jarrett Maupin, an Arizona civil rights activist, said the party antics were outrageous and offensive. He is calling on the school to expel all students involved and permanently ban the fraternity from affiliation with ASU.

"It was just a raucous, racist rally, and they used Dr. King's holiday as a mask for racial villainy and harassment," Maupin said Tuesday.

Activists at an afternoon news conference also called on the university to require that all staff and students take diversity classes.

The Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity was already on probation for an off-campus fight in 2012, according to ASU. The university did not provide additional details of the incident or disciplinary action.

Founded in 1899 at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, Ill., the fraternity has about 257,000 members at 291 chapters and colonies across the United States and Canada, according to its website.

In 2012, the University of Arizona stripped its local chapter of Tau Kappa Epsilon of recognition after an investigation showed multiple instances of dangerous hazing. •