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Old Theory, New Practice

To 13 co-eds at Upsala college, East Orange, N.J., democracy is something more than a worn text-book theory. It is a living, though thorny, reality. Shortly before school's end, they formed one of the nation's first inter-racial, inter-faith college social sororities.

Because her old sorority refused to admit a Negro freshman, Naomi Charner, the vice-president and senior class valedictorian, resigned. A bitter campus wrangle followed, in which the sorority accused Naomi of breaking her "sacred" pledges. Then, with three Negroes, four Jews, four Protestants and one Catholic, she got official college approval to form the Delta Beta Delta sorority.

Boost. Naomi hoped the new group would "give courage to lots of girls all over the country." It was a heartening lift to the few stanch girls left in the local chapter of Alpha Xi Delta at the University of Vermont, Burlington. Because they pledged one Negro and two Jewish girls last year, national headquarters declared them inactive (which means no new members) for five years.

Neither the Alpha Xi Delta girls nor members of any of the other 19 national Panhellenic sororities think it likely that their rules, which bar all but white Christian members, will be relaxed. For the present, sorority girls who take democracy literally will have to take their chance at organizing local groups like the one at Upsala. Or they may follow the example set last winter by one California co-ed. A white girl, she joined Alpha Kappa Alpha, national Negro sorority.

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