

African American Fraternities and Sororities

In the early 19th century (Jan. 1801-Dec. 1900), social Greek organization, known as sororities and fraternities, began forming on college campuses across the United States to provide a sense of community and unique opportunities for students. These organization were often highly exclusive and barred membership to students of certain genders or races, specifically Black students.

At the start of the 20th century (Jan. 1901-Dec. 2000) a small number of Black students came together from mainly Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to form their own sororities and fraternities. These organizations are known collectively as the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) or the “Divine Nine.” These organizations were established with unique core values but shared a common goal to educate and uplift the Black community from racial inequities.

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Founded 1906, Cornell University

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Founded 1908, Howard University

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Founded 1911, Indiana University

Omega Psi Fraternity, Founded 1911, Howard University

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, founded 1913, Howard University

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Founded 1914, Howard University

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Founded 1920, Howard University

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Founded 1922, Butler University

Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Founded 1963, Morgan State University

Members of these sororities and fraternities were and continue to be involved in several social justice movements such as the Women’s Suffrage, Civil Rights, Movements and Black Lives Matter. These organizations have made significant strides to help unite Black communities across the US and continue to collectively organize to serve various social causes.

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

This is the oldest intercollegiate historically African American fraternity. It was initially a literary and social studies club organized in the 1905-1906 school year at Cornell University but later evolved into a fraternity with a founding date of December 4, 1906. It uses an icon from Ancient Egypt, the Great Sphinx of Giza, as its symbol.

The seven visionary founders were known as the “Jewels”

Its aims are “Mainly Deeds, Scholarship, and Love for All Mankind.”

Its motto is “First of All, Servants of All, We Shall Transcend All.”

Its colors became black and old gold.

The fraternity has over 290,000 members and has been open to men of all races since 1945 with more than 730 active chapters in the Americas, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and Asia. It is the largest predominantly African American intercollegiate fraternity and one of the ten largest intercollegiate fraternities in the nation.

Alpha Phi Alpha is a social organization with a service organization mission and provided leadership and service during the Great Depression, World Wars, and Civil Rights Movements.

The fraternity addresses social issues such as Apartheid, AIDS, urban housing, and other economic, cultural, and political issues of interest to people of color. National programs and initiatives of the fraternity include A Voteless People is a Hopeless People, My Brother’s Keeper, Go to High School, Go to College, Project Alpha, and the World Policy Council. It also conducts philanthropic programming initiatives with the March of Dimes, Head Start, the Boy Scouts of America, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

AKA is an international service organization that was founded on January 15, 1908, on the campus of Howard University. And, incorporated on Alpha January 29, 1913, in Washington, D. C. It is the oldest Greek-letter organization established by African American college-educated women.

The Founders are Ethel Hedgemon, Lyle, and Harriet Josephine Terry, Joanna Berry Shields, Margaret Flagg Holmes, and Beulah Burke.

This sorority has more than 325,000 members in graduate and undergraduate chapters located in 12 countries: the United States, Bahamas, Bermuda, Canada, Dubai, Germany, Japan, Liberia, Nigeria, South Korea, South Africa, and the U. S. Virgin Islands.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated was founded on a mission of five basic tenets that have remained unchanged since the sorority's inception

Our Mission is

- **To promote unity and friendship among college women,**
- **To cultivate and encourage high scholastic and ethical standards,**
- **To study and help alleviate problems concerning girls and women in order to improve their social stature,**
- **To maintain a progressive interest in college life,**
- **And to be of "Service to All Mankind.**

Its motto "By Culture and By Merit

Its symbol the Ivy Leaf

Its flower is the Pink Tea Rose

Its colors are salmon pink and apple green

In 1921 the sorority sent a telegram to President Warren C. Harding urging the present administration use its influence for the passage of the Dryer Anti-lynching Bill.

In 1934, The Mississippi Health Project (MHP) was a Great Depression era public health initiative sponsored by Alpha Kappa Alpha. The project aimed to provide proper health care to the African American community in the Mississippi Delta that often-lacked access to proper health care. The MHP is called AKA's "most widely known expression of social

responsibility," which immortalized AKA as a national organizational force. In 1939, Alpha Kappa Alpha became the first organization to take life membership to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) earning another distinction as a trailblazer for AKA. This inspired other Greek organizations to join with the NAACP in their fight for justice.

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity

A college Fraternity was born in an environment saturated in racism. Indiana became the 19th state of the Union in 1816 and founded Indiana University in Bloomington. The city was largely populated by settlers from below the Mason-Dixon line and therefore found many sympathizers of the Southern cause. The few Blacks who took up residence in Bloomington in those early years were socially ostracized and encountered extreme acts of prejudice and discrimination. (??The state of Indiana became a stronghold for the Ku Klux Klan. Their intolerance toward Blacks fueled the negative mindset of other Whites residing there. Vigilante lynchings of Blacks were commonplace.??) Despite the growing hostility of Whites toward blacks in Indiana, some Black students sought a college education at Indiana University, as it was a tuition-free university of the highest quality.

The percentage of Blacks on campus was less than 1%. Blacks were not allowed to reside in on-campus dormitories, were not afforded off-campus accommodations, and they were also denied the use of all other university facilities and were barred from participating in contact sports. Track and Field was the only sport in which Blacks were able to demonstrate their athleticism.

In the school years of 1910-1911, a small group of Black students attended Indiana University. Most of them were working their way through school. The number of places where they might assemble was limited. Realizing that they had no part in the social life of the university and drawn together by common interests, they decided that a Greek-letter fraternity would do much to fill the missing link in their college existence.

Two of the first founders had previously attended Howard University and had met men belonging to the only national Black Greek-Letter Fraternity currently in existence, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. Their experiences at Howard gave rise to the chief motivating spirits which sowed the seed for a fraternity at Indiana University and crystallized the idea of establishing an independent Greek-letter organization.

The 10 Founders were God-fearing, and serious-minded young men who possessed the imagination, ambition, courage, and determination to defy custom in pursuit of a college education and career. The ideals of the church were an important foundation for the Fraternity. One of the 5 objectives of the Fraternity is: "To promote the spiritual, social, intellectual and moral welfare of members." These men of vision decided the Fraternity would be more than another social organization. Reliance would be placed upon high Christian ideals and the purpose of ACHIEVEMENT.

Originally founded as Kappa Alpha Nu, the fraternity officially changed its to Kappa Alpha Psi effective April 15, 1915.

Kappa alpha Psi is the 2nd oldest existing collegiate historically Black Greek Letter Fraternity and the 1st intercollegiate Fraternity incorporated as a national body. It remains the only Greek letter organization with its Alpha Chapter on Indiana University's campus. The Fraternity has over 125,000 members with 700 undergraduate and alumni chapters in nearly every state of the United States, and international chapters in Nigeria, South Africa, the West Indies, the United Kingdom, Germany, Korea, and Japan. Through its worldwide prominence, Kappa Alpha Psi has had a global impact on events which affect our local communities and places worldwide. Local chapters participate in community outreach activities to feed the homeless, provide scholarships to young people matriculating to college, serve as mentors to young men, participate in blood drives and serve as hosts of seminars for public health awareness. Nationally, Kappa Alpha Psi has provided summer enrichment camps and provided funds for St. Jude Medical Research Center to assist in the fight against childhood catastrophic diseases by raising more than \$1Million. Internationally, members have answered the call to service by proudly serving our military in wars since WWI and raising funds to assist those in need following natural disasters around the world, including hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons, and earthquakes.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. is a historically African American fraternity. The fraternity was founded on November 17, 1911, by three Howard University juniors. Since its founding, the organization has chartered over 750 undergraduate and graduate chapters. Omega Psi Phi is the first fraternal organization founded at a historically black university. Since its founding in 1911, Omega Psi Phi's stated purpose has been to "attract and build a strong and effective force of Handsome men dedicated to its Cardinal Principles of manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift".

Motto: Friendship is Essential to the Soul

Colors: Royal purple and Old Gold

Symbol: Lamp

Mascot: dog

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

It is a private, not for profit organization, whose purpose is to provide assistance and support through established programs in local communities throughout the world. It is ranked as the largest Black sorority in the world. The sorority currently has 1,000 collegiate and alumnae chapters located in the United States, Canada, Japan (Tokyo) and Okinawa), Germany, the Virgin Islands, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, West Africa, Southern Africa, United Arab Emirates, and the Republic of Korea. Delta Sigma Theta was founded in 1913 at Howard University. The Founders first act of public service was participating in the Suffrage March of 1913.

The National Library Project established in 1934 by the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority was a traveling library that served the rural areas of the South.

In 1941 the Deltas became the first sorority provide a program of employment counseling and career development for Black women.

In 1992 the sorority established a partnership with Habitat for Humanity in which the sorority built homes in the United States and Africa.

In 2003 the Delta Sigma Theta became the first Black Greek-letter organization to be named a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) by the United Nations.

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

Phi Beta sigma Fraternity was founded at Howard University in Washington, D.C., January 9, 1914, by three young African American male students. The Founders wanted to organize a Greek letter Fraternity that would truly exemplify the ideals of brotherhood, scholarship, and service. The founders deeply wished to create an organization that viewed itself as “a part of” the general community rather than “apart from” the general community. They believed that each potential member should be judged by his own merits, rather than his family background or affluence...without regard to race, nationality, skin tone or texture of hair. They desired for their fraternity to exist as part of an even greater brotherhood which would be devoted to the “inclusive we” rather than the “exclusive we.”

From its inception, the Founders also conceived Phi Beta Sigma as a mechanism to deliver services to the general community. Rather than gaining skills to be utilized exclusively for themselves and their immediate families, they held a deep conviction that they should return their newly acquired skills to the communities from which they had come. This deep conviction was mirrored in the Fraternity’s motto, “Culture for Service and Service for Humanity.”

Today, Phi Beta sigma has blossomed into an international organization of leaders. No longer a single entity, members of the Fraternity have been instrumental in the establishment of Phi Beta Sigma National Foundation, the Phi Beta Sigma Federal Credit Union, and the Sigma Beta Club foundation. Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, founded in 1920 with the assistance of Phi Beta sigma, is the sister organization of the Fraternity.

Mission: The brothers of Phi Beta Sigma are the Fraternity’s most valuable resource and strength. They are the primary means by which the Phi Beta Sigma objective will be achieved. In order to accomplish the Fraternity objectives, it is essential that systems are instituted that effectively embody “Culture for Service and Service for Humanity” and promote brotherhood, scholarship, and service.

To optimize Phi Beta Sigma's effectiveness, the Fraternity will:

- **Strengthen and proactively serve the brotherhood, as a supportive resource that positively impacts the Fraternity's growth and financial solvency.**
- **Reaffirm and maintain a strong commitment to brotherhood, scholarship, and service.**
- **Ensure that the Fraternity programs are focused and committed to serving humanity.**
- **Create an environment that respects the dignity and worth of each brother.**
- **Exhibit integrity and ethical behavior in conducting the Fraternity's business, serving as a model for all Greek-letter organizations.**
- **Maintain and improve the Fraternity's technology literacy, in order to better service its members and the community at large.**
- **Foster and nurture our constitutional bond with Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.**
- **Encourage a closer and mutually beneficial working relationship with fellow Greek-letter organizations. Other community service organizations businesses, and government.**
- **Select leaders who are committed and have demonstrated their ability to lead.**

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority was founded on January 15, 1920, at Howard University, Washington, D.C. The Klan was active during this period, and the Harlem Renaissance was acknowledged as the first important movement of Black artists and writers in the U.S. This same year the Volstead Act became effective, heralding the start of Prohibition and Tennessee delivered the crucial 36th. Ratification for the final adoption of the 19th. Amendment giving women the right to vote. The worst and longest economic recession to hit the U.S. would define the end of the decade-The Great Depression.

Within this environment, five coeds envisioned a sorority that would directly affect positive change, chart a course of action for the 1920s and beyond, raise people's consciousness, encourage the highest standards of scholastic achievement, and foster a greater sense of unity among its members. These women believed that sorority elitism and socializing overshadowed the real mission of progressive organizations and failed to address fully the

societal mores, ills, prejudices, and poverty affecting humanity in general and the black community in particular

Since its inception, Zeta has continued its steady climb into the national spotlight with programs designed to demonstrate concern for the human condition both nationally and internationally. The organization has been innovative because it has chronicled several first. It was the first National Pan-Hellenic Council organization to centralize its operations in a national headquarters, first to charter a chapter in Africa (Monrovia, Liberia, and most recently in Accra, Ghana), first to form auxiliary groups, and first to be constitutionally bound to a fraternity, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated. The sorority takes pride in its continued participation in transforming communities through volunteer services from members and its auxiliaries. Zeta Phi Beta has chartered hundreds of chapters worldwide and has a membership of 100,00 plus.

Zeta Phi Beta is non-profit organization that is divided into eight intercontinental regions and 800 plus Chapters located in the U.S., Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean. In 1948 Zeta Phi Beta became the first Greek-letter organization to charter a chapter in Africa (In Monrovia, Liberia). Zeta Phi Beta is the third largest predominantly African American sorority.

Zeta's national and local programs include the endowment of its National Educational Foundation community outreach services and the support of multiple affiliate organizations. Zeta chapters and auxiliaries have given hours of voluntary service to educate the public, assist youth, provide scholarships, support organized charities, and promote social and civic change legislation. As the sorority moves toward its centennial, it retains its original zest for excellence. It espouses the highest academic ideals, resulting in its members serving in groundbreaking roles in all fields of endeavor. Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, is poised for perpetual service to humankind into the second century and beyond.

Mission Statement: To foster ideas of service, charity, scholarship, civil and cultural endeavors, sisterhood, and finer womanhood. These ideas are reflected in the sorority's national program for which its members and auxiliary groups provide voluntary service to staff, community outreach programs, fund scholar ships, support organized charities, and promote legislation for social and civic change.

Motto: A community-conscious, action-oriented organization.

Colors: Royal Blue and White

Symbol: Dove

Flower: White rose

Mascot: Dove

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. was organized on November 12, 1922, in Indianapolis, Indiana by seven young educators. The group became an incorporated national collegiate sorority on December 30, 1929, when a charter was granted to the Alpha chapter at Butler University. The sorority has more than 100,000 collegiate and professional women from every profession. The sorority has more than 500 chapters in the United States, Bahamas, Bermuda, Canada, Germany, South Korea, U.S. Virgin Islands and The United Arab Emirates. The organization also has active affiliate groups devoted to empowering women at different stages in life. The Rhoer Club Affiliates (teenage girls) and Philos Affiliates (friends of the sorority) also assist alumnae chapters with various service efforts and programs. The sorority has a proud history of providing positive and proactive community outreach nationally and internationally. The programs, partnerships, and sponsorships represent Sigma Gamma Rho's commitment to promoting the greater good in education, service, and leadership in development. The sorority visualizes a world in which all women and families reach their full potential in all aspect of life and is able to create unlimited opportunities for future generations.

Mission: It is the mission of sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. to enhance the quality of life for women and their families in the U.S. and globally through community service, civil, and social action. Our goal is to achieve greater progress in education, health awareness, and leadership development. Our members, affiliates, staff, and community partners work to create and support initiatives that align with our vision.

Sorority Slogan: Greater Service, Greater Progress

Sorority Colors: Royal Blue and Gold

Sorority Mascot: The Poodle

Sorority Flower: The Yellow Tea Rose

Sigma Gamma Rho is the only:

- **member of the NPHC which started as a professional organization**
- **NPHC sorority founded at a predominately white institution**
- **NPHC sorority not founded at Howard University**
- **Sorority founded at Butler University**
- **Sorority with a poodle as its mascot**

Iota Phi Theta Fraternity

On September 19, 1963, at Morgan State College (now Morgan State University) 12 students founded what is now the nation's fifth largest, predominately African American social service fraternity: The Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Incorporated. This group of men was unique for several reasons. First, many were longtime friends. Even more uniquely, many of these men were what are now referred to as "Non-Traditional Students" and were 3-5 years older than the average college student. Three of the men were service veterans, three were married with small children. Of this group of 12, several were also working full-time jobs, and all were full-time students.

Based upon their ages, heightened responsibilities, and increased level of maturity, this group had a slightly different perspective than the norm for college students. It was this perspective from which they established the Fraternity's purpose, "The development and perpetuation of Scholarship, Leadership, citizenship, Fidelity, and Brotherhood among Men."

The Fraternity was officially and legally incorporated on November 1, 1968, as a National Fraternity under the laws of the State of Maryland. Today, Iota Phi Theta consists of over 300 chapters located in 40 States, the District of Columbia and internationally as well as Japan, the Republic of Korea, Columbia, South America, and the Bahamas.

Motto: Building a Tradition, Not Resting Upon One

Colors: Charcoal Brown and Gilded Gold

Symbols: Centaur

Flower: Yellow Rose

