

history of the divine nine

history of the divine nine is a rich tapestry woven with threads of academic pursuit, social upliftment, and enduring sisterhood and brotherhood. This article delves deep into the origins and evolution of these esteemed African American fraternities and sororities, often referred to as the "Divine Nine." We will explore their foundational principles, the historical context that necessitated their creation, and the profound impact they have had on their members and the broader Black community. From the hallowed halls of academia to the forefront of social and political activism, understanding the history of the Divine Nine is crucial to appreciating their lasting legacy. Join us as we uncover the stories behind these iconic organizations and their vital role in shaping Black American life.

- Founding Principles and Early Years
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The Genesis of the Divine Nine: Founding Principles and Early Years

The history of the Divine Nine is inextricably linked to the era of segregation and systemic discrimination faced by African Americans in the United States. Established during a period when Black students were often excluded from mainstream social and professional organizations, these fraternities and sororities emerged as vital spaces for community, support, and advancement. The founding principles were rooted in a desire to foster intellectual growth, promote character development, and cultivate a sense of racial pride and solidarity. These organizations provided a crucial network for networking, mentorship, and mutual aid, enabling members to navigate the challenges of higher education and beyond.

The early years were marked by a commitment to scholarship, service, and the upliftment of the Black race. Members were not only dedicated to academic excellence but also to using their collective strength to address social injustices. This dual focus on personal development and community betterment became a hallmark of the Divine Nine, setting them apart as institutions deeply invested in the well-being of their

people. The rigorous initiation processes and the emphasis on lifelong commitment were designed to instill a profound sense of responsibility and dedication in each member.

The Emergence of Each Divine Nine Organization

The establishment of the Divine Nine spans several decades, with each fraternity and sorority carving out its unique identity and mission while adhering to shared foundational values. Understanding the specific founding dates and circumstances of each organization provides a deeper appreciation for the historical landscape and the evolving needs of Black students.

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Founded on December 4, 1906, at Cornell University, Alpha Phi Alpha is the first intercollegiate fraternity established for African American men. Its founders envisioned an organization that would go beyond social functions to provide a unified voice and a structured approach to racial uplift. The fraternity's motto, "First of Our Race, First of Its Kind," reflects its pioneering spirit and its commitment to excellence.

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Established on January 5, 1911, at Indiana University, Kappa Alpha Psi was founded by ten men who sought to create a fraternal organization that would embody high ideals of fellowship, honor, and achievement. The fraternity's core purpose is to unite college men of good character and to inspire service in the public interest.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Chartered on November 17, 1911, at Howard University, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. was founded by four Howard University students who wanted to create an organization that emphasized the cardinal principles of manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift. It is known for its distinctive approach to community service and its strong emphasis on scholarly achievement.

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. was founded on January 9, 1914, at Howard University by three men who believed in creating a fraternity that would promote scholarly achievement, brotherhood, and service, particularly within the Black community. Their motto, "Culture For Service and Service For Humanity," encapsulates their mission.

Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.

Founded on September 19, 1963, at Morgan State University, Iota Phi Theta is the youngest of the Divine Nine fraternities. It was established by thirteen men who sought to form an organization that transcended the social and political boundaries of the time, emphasizing brotherhood, scholarship, and service.

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Chartered on January 13, 1913, at Howard University, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. is one of the largest and most influential Greek-letter organizations for women. Its founders were driven by a desire to create a sisterhood that would focus on public service, scholarship, and the empowerment of Black women.

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Founded on January 16, 1920, at Howard University, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. was established by five women who envisioned a sorority that would serve as a sisterhood, a scholarship organization, and a community-conscious entity. It is unique as the first Greek-letter organization founded at a predominantly Black university that also admitted men.

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

Established on November 12, 1922, at Butler University, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. was founded by seven educators who aimed to create an organization that would address the social, political, and economic needs of the Black community, with a particular focus on education and public service.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Founded on January 15, 1908, at Howard University, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. is the first Greek-letter organization established by African American college women. Its founders sought to create a sisterhood that would promote personal growth, professional development, and a commitment to service and sisterhood.

The Historical Context of the Divine Nine

The period in which the Divine Nine emerged was one of profound racial inequality in the United States. African Americans faced pervasive discrimination in education, employment, housing, and public life. Universities, even those that admitted Black students, often lacked inclusive social structures, leaving Black

students to forge their own paths to community and belonging. The establishment of Black fraternities and sororities was a direct response to this exclusion, providing havens where Black students could find support, develop leadership skills, and build a collective identity.

These organizations also played a critical role in the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. Members of the Divine Nine were often at the forefront of protests, boycotts, and advocacy efforts aimed at dismantling segregation and achieving racial equality. The networks and leadership skills cultivated within these groups provided a strong foundation for activism and social change. The shared experiences and commitment to service fostered by the Divine Nine empowered its members to become agents of transformation within their communities and the nation.

Impact and Legacy of the Divine Nine

The impact of the Divine Nine extends far beyond the college campus. Over the decades, members have excelled in virtually every field imaginable, including politics, law, medicine, education, arts, and business. Many prominent figures in Black history and contemporary society are proud members of the Divine Nine, demonstrating the enduring influence of these organizations on leadership development and professional achievement.

Furthermore, the Divine Nine have consistently engaged in significant community service initiatives. Their programs focus on areas such as education, health awareness, economic empowerment, and political action, directly addressing critical needs within the Black community. These philanthropic efforts have generated millions of dollars and countless volunteer hours, creating a tangible positive impact on society.

The legacy of the Divine Nine is also one of fostering a strong sense of cultural identity and pride among African Americans. By providing a space for shared experiences and traditions, these organizations help to preserve and celebrate Black heritage. The rituals, anthems, and symbols associated with each group contribute to a rich cultural tapestry that strengthens the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood.

The Divine Nine Today: Continued Relevance

In the 21st century, the Divine Nine continue to be highly relevant and influential organizations. While the societal landscape has changed considerably since their founding, the core values of scholarship, leadership, service, and sisterhood/brotherhood remain as important as ever. These organizations continue to attract ambitious and community-minded students, providing them with valuable networks, mentorship, and opportunities for personal and professional growth.

The Divine Nine actively engage with contemporary social issues, advocating for social justice, economic equity, and educational advancement. Their philanthropic efforts remain robust, addressing current challenges and supporting community development. The enduring appeal of the Divine Nine lies in their ability to adapt to changing times while staying true to their foundational missions, continuing to shape leaders and serve communities for generations to come.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the Divine Nine organizations and when were they founded?

The Divine Nine, also known as the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), are the nine historically Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) founded between 1906 and 1963. They include Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, Phi Beta Sigma, Iota Phi Theta (fraternities), and Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta, Sigma Gamma Rho (sororities).

What is the primary mission and purpose of the Divine Nine organizations?

The primary mission of the Divine Nine organizations revolves around uplifting African American communities through service, scholarship, sisterhood/brotherhood, and promoting cultural awareness and social justice. They aim to foster personal development and create leaders.

How did the Divine Nine emerge as a response to racial segregation in the United States?

The Divine Nine were founded during a period of intense racial segregation and discrimination in the U.S. They provided a space for Black students to build community, support each other academically and socially, and organize for advancement at a time when they were excluded from mainstream organizations.

What is the significance of 'MIP' (Mascot, Initiation Period, Pledge) or 'Crossing' traditions within the Divine Nine?

These terms refer to the process through which individuals become members. Historically, these traditions have been shrouded in secrecy and are designed to instill discipline, loyalty, and a deep understanding of the organization's history and values. While evolving, the core purpose remains the cultivation of strong bonds and commitment.

How do the Divine Nine contribute to public service and social action

today?

The Divine Nine are highly active in public service, with many organizations focusing on areas like education, health awareness (e.g., sickle cell, breast cancer), voter registration, economic empowerment, and addressing social injustices through advocacy and community programs.

What role do Divine Nine organizations play on college campuses?

On college campuses, the Divine Nine are significant student organizations that provide mentorship, leadership opportunities, academic support, social events, and contribute to campus culture. They often sponsor programming that benefits the wider student body and the local community.

Are there any controversies or criticisms associated with the Divine Nine?

Historically, and sometimes in contemporary discussions, criticisms have included the exclusivity of membership, the perceived secrecy of initiation processes, and occasional incidents involving hazing. However, organizations have made efforts to address these concerns and prioritize safety and positive member development.

What is the historical connection between the Divine Nine and the Civil Rights Movement?

Many members of the Divine Nine were instrumental in the Civil Rights Movement. Their organizational structures, leadership skills, and commitment to social justice provided a foundation for many activists and leaders who fought for equality and desegregation.

How has the digital age impacted Divine Nine organizations?

The digital age has allowed Divine Nine organizations to increase their visibility, engage with a wider audience, and communicate more effectively. They utilize social media for public awareness campaigns, recruitment, and sharing their philanthropic efforts, while also navigating the complexities of online presence and brand management.

What are some notable achievements or influential members associated with the Divine Nine?

The Divine Nine boast a vast array of influential members who have excelled in politics, arts, sciences, education, and business. Notable figures include Martin Luther King Jr. (Alpha Phi Alpha), Thurgood Marshall (Alpha Phi Alpha), Toni Morrison (Delta Sigma Theta), Maya Angelou (Sigma Gamma Rho), and countless others who have made significant contributions to society.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to the history of the Divine Nine, each formatted in italics with a brief description:

1. *The Legacy of the First Ten: A Divine Nine Chronicle*

This foundational text delves into the earliest days of the Divine Nine, exploring the historical context and societal forces that led to the establishment of each of the nine historically Black Greek-letter organizations. It meticulously details the founding principles, core values, and initial challenges faced by these trailblazing groups. The book highlights the vision and dedication of the founding members, laying the groundwork for a rich and enduring legacy.

2. *Brothers and Sisters United: The Evolution of Divine Nine Sisterhood and Brotherhood*

This insightful work examines the crucial evolution of the bonds within the Divine Nine, focusing on the development of both brotherhood and sisterhood across the various organizations. It traces how these relationships have shaped the experiences of members, fostering lifelong connections and supportive networks. The book also explores the unique dynamics and shared commitments that define these fraternal and sororal ties.

3. *From Campus Roots to Global Reach: The Impact of the Divine Nine*

This comprehensive study tracks the expansion and influence of the Divine Nine beyond their initial campus settings, charting their growth into national and international presences. It highlights how these organizations have become significant forces in civic engagement, social justice advocacy, and community upliftment. The book showcases the diverse ways members contribute to society and advance the missions of their respective fraternities and sororities.

4. *Voices of Influence: Presidential Narratives of the Divine Nine*

Featuring firsthand accounts and reflections from past and present presidents of the Divine Nine organizations, this collection offers a powerful glimpse into the leadership and strategic direction of these fraternities and sororities. It explores the challenges and triumphs of steering these influential bodies through changing times. The narratives provide invaluable perspectives on the ongoing commitment to service, scholarship, and upliftment.

5. *The Color of Scholarship: Academic Excellence in the Divine Nine*

This illuminating book investigates the profound emphasis on academic achievement within the Divine Nine, showcasing how these organizations have consistently championed scholastic excellence. It highlights the programs, initiatives, and mentorships designed to support student success and intellectual growth. The book celebrates the numerous members who have excelled in various academic fields and contributed to knowledge creation.

6. *Sacrifice and Service: The Social Justice Roots of the Divine Nine*

This critical examination uncovers the deep-seated commitment to social justice that has characterized the Divine Nine since their inception. It meticulously documents their historical involvement in civil rights

movements, anti-lynching campaigns, and other efforts to combat racial injustice and inequality. The book underscores the courage and dedication of Divine Nine members who have actively worked towards a more equitable society.

7. The Art of the Stroll: Expression and Identity in the Divine Nine

Exploring the vibrant cultural expressions and symbolic languages of the Divine Nine, this book delves into the significance of traditions, step routines, and artistic forms. It analyzes how these elements serve as powerful vehicles for conveying organizational pride, shared history, and individual identity. The work celebrates the creativity and cultural contributions that are integral to the Divine Nine experience.

8. Beyond the Yard: Divine Nine Alumni and Community Empowerment

This in-depth exploration focuses on the enduring impact of Divine Nine members after their collegiate years, examining their contributions to community empowerment and professional development. It highlights how alumni networks provide ongoing support, mentorship, and resources for members and their communities. The book showcases the lasting commitment to service and leadership that extends far beyond campus boundaries.

9. A Sister's Strength, A Brother's Bond: The Enduring Spirit of the Divine Nine

This evocative volume captures the essence of the Divine Nine, celebrating the enduring bonds of sisterhood and brotherhood that transcend time and circumstance. It shares inspiring stories of camaraderie, mutual support, and the shared pursuit of personal and collective growth. The book serves as a testament to the resilience, purpose, and unwavering spirit that defines these historic organizations.

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