Forward by Shagranda M. Traveler, 2018-2019 Walden University DNA President

African American Greek-letter organizations have contributed significantly to American culture by establishing themselves as political, social and humanitarian activists.

As we celebrate black history month, we would like to recognize each Divine Nine sorority and fraternity by highlighting a member focused on community volunteerism and leadership.
**SORORITIES**

**Alpha Kappa Alpha (1908)**

**Senator Kamala Devi Harris** was born 1964 and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1986. After graduation, leading civil rights lawyers Thurgood Marshall and Constance Baker Motley encouraged her to become an attorney. In 1989 Harris received a J.D. degree from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, California. Three years later, she was admitted to the California Bar. From 1990 to 1998, Harris served as a deputy district attorney in Alameda County, California, where she prosecuted hundreds of violent felonies. In 1998 she entered the office of the San Francisco district attorney and became managing attorney of the Career Criminal Unit. She also headed the Division on Children and Families. California’s Attorney General, Kamala Harris, also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. made history becoming the second black woman to be elected to the U.S. Senate ever. On January 21, 2019, Senator Harris announced that she will run for President of the United States.


**Delta Sigma Theta (1913)**

**Loretta Elizabeth Lynch** (born May 21, 1959) is a lawyer and from 2015 to 2017 served as the 83rd Attorney General of the United States, the first African American woman to hold that Cabinet position. Nominated by President Barack Obama in 2014, Lynch’s nomination drew support from congressional representatives from each of the other black sororities and her confirmation signaled achievement for all black women, whose power and political influence has been on the rise in the last decade. Loretta Lynch co-founded the Xi Tau chapter of Delta at Harvard University, where she graduated in 1984 with a Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School.


**Zeta Phi Beta (1920)**

**Violette Neatley Anderson (1882 – 1937)** became the first African American female attorney admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court in 1926. Anderson graduated from the Chicago law school and established a private practice after passing the bar and being licensed before the United States Eastern District of Illinois. Anderson was one of the first women of any race in the state of Illinois to engage in private law practice. In 1922, Anderson successfully defended a woman accused of murdering her husband; this courtroom success resulted in her being appointed to assistant prosecutor in Chicago. She was both the first African American and the first woman appointed to that post.

Anderson was a member of the Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs and the Chicago Council of Social Agencies. She also served as the vice-president of the Cook County Bar Association and was the eighth Grand Basileus (President) of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated. Zeta Phi Beta continues to honor her legacy annually during the month of April with “Violette Anderson Day.”

SORORITIES

Sigma Gamma Rho (1922)

Alice Allison Dunnigan (1906-1983) was an activist, author, and the first African American female journalist credentialed to cover the White House. Dunnigan was the first black female member of the Senate and House of Representative press galleries as well as the Department of State Press Corps. A true Sigma Gamma Rho trailblazer, in 1985, Dunnigan was inducted into the Black Journalist Hall of Fame, two years following her death. In 2018, Dunnigan’s legacy and achievements in the field of journalism were honored with a life-sized bronze statue.


FRATERNITIES

Alpha Phi Alpha (1906)

Justice Thurgood Marshall was born on July 2, 1908 in Baltimore, Maryland, the great-grandson of a slave. His father, William Marshall, a railroad porter, instilled in him an appreciation of the Constitution at an early age. When young Marshall got in trouble at school he was required to memorize sections of the US Constitution. His mother, Norma Arica Williams, an elementary school teacher for 25 years, placed great emphasis on his overall scholarship. Marshall grew up in Baltimore, graduating from Frederick Douglass High School in the city in 1925 and from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1930. Marshall, who had decided to become an attorney, was rejected by the University of Maryland School of Law in 1930 because of his race. He instead entered Howard University Law School, graduating in 1933. After initially setting up a private practice in Baltimore, he in 1934 began his long history with the NAACP. He won his first major legal victory as an NAACP lawyer the following year on behalf of Donald Gaines Murray, a black student, who like Marshall was also denied admission to the University of Maryland Law School. With that victory Marshall now realized the courts could be a powerful weapon against racial discrimination. Justice Thurgood Marshall retired from the Court in 1991 and died in 1993 in Bethesda, Maryland of heart failure at the age of 84. His membership of the Lincoln University fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha is to be memorialized by a sculpture by artist Alvin Pettit in 2013. The University of California, San Diego renamed its Third College after Thurgood Marshall in 1993.

FRATERNITIES

Kappa Alpha Psi (1911)

Cedric Antonio Kyles, known by his stage name Cedric The Entertainer (born April 24, 1964) is a comedian, writer, actor, former game show host, philanthropist, and activist. Kyles pledged Kappa Alpha Psi in 1984 while at Southeast Missouri State University. The Cedric The Entertainer Charitable Foundation provides scholarships and outreach programs to youth and families in his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. Cedric Kyles is passionate about diabetes awareness and is the spokesman for Pfizer's “Step On Up” campaign, a program developed in collaboration with the American Diabetes Association to encourage people to discuss diabetic nerve pain with their physicians.

Omega Psi Phi (1911)

Carter G. Woodson (1875 – 1950) born in New Canton, Virginia, a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. and Father of Black History. The precursor to Black History Month was created in 1926 in the United States when historian Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History announced the second week of February to be "Negro History Week." This week was chosen because it coincided with the birthday of Abraham Lincoln on February 12 and of Frederick Douglass on February 14, both of which dates black communities had celebrated together since the late 19th century.

At the time of Negro History Week's launch, Woodson contended that the teaching of black history was essential to ensure the physical and intellectual survival of the race within broader society. Negro History Week was met with an enthusiastic response; it prompted the creation of black history clubs, an increase in interest among teachers, and interest from progressive whites. Negro History Week grew in popularity throughout the following decades, with mayors across the United States endorsing it as a holiday.
Sources: [https://www.blackpast.org/?s=Carter+G.+Woodson](https://www.blackpast.org/?s=Carter+G.+Woodson); [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_History_Month](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_History_Month)

Phi Beta Sigma (1914)

George Washington Carver began life inauspiciously on the frontier of southwestern Missouri. Born a slave, the precise date, indeed, even the year (1864? - 1943), is unknown. He never knew either of his biological parents, but was raised by his former owners as if he were their own. A sickly child, his workload on the Carvers’ farm was reasonably light. Consequently, he spent much of his childhood wandering through fields and woods where he developed an affinity for the natural world. Faced with limited educational opportunities, he left Missouri for Kansas, where he graduated from high school. After a try at homesteading on the western plains of Kansas, he found his way to Iowa where he enrolled at the Iowa Agricultural College in Ames. Recruited by Booker T. Washington to head up Tuskegee's Agricultural Department, Carver left the Midwest for Alabama’s cotton belt shortly after he became the first African American to secure an advanced degree in agricultural science.

Following his rise to fame, Carver sought to persuade southerners to find new uses for neglected natural resources and alternative ones for underutilized crops. His work with the latter made him a pioneer in the chemurgy movement, a movement that was eventually overwhelmed by the proliferation of petrochemical products. His deeply-held religious beliefs shaped his appreciation of
FRATERNITIES

the natural world, making him something of an environmental mystic, particularly in his later years. George Washington Carver died at Tuskegee Institute on January 5, 1943.


Iota Phi Theta (1963)

Bobby Lee Rush, born in 1946, a member of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, served in the Army from 1963 to 1968 when he was honorably discharged. Rush relocated in Chicago where he attended Roosevelt University. He received a B.A. degree with honors in 1973. Twenty-one years later (1994) he received a master's degree in political science from the University of Illinois at Chicago. In 1998 Rush received a second master’s degree in theological studies from McCormick Seminary and soon afterwards became an ordained Baptist minister.

While in college Rush joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1968 but soon afterwards became a co-founder of the Illinois Black Panther Party. Rush ran the Panther Party’s Free Breakfast for Children program and also organized a free medical clinic. The clinic developed the nation’s first mass testing program for sickle cell anemia while simultaneously raising awareness of the disease’s impact on African Americans in Chicago. In 1992, Rush won Illinois’s First Congressional District Seat. Currently, Rush is the chair of the Committee on Energy and Commerce and co-chair of the Congressional Biotech Caucus. Bobby Rush is the only former member of the Black Panther Party seated in Congress.

Source: https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/rush-bobby-l-1946

If you or someone you know is interested in DNA membership, please visit our Divine Nine Alliance Website for more information.

“And when you can’t go back, you have to worry only about the best way of moving forward.”
~Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist
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