

Alpha Phi Alpha

Paving the Way With Black and Gold

Editor's Note: The following is the second of a series profiling the Black Greek organizations.

By Beth Glenn
Ink Staff Writer

First of all, servants of all, we shall transcend all.

That's the guiding principle behind the men of Alpha Phi Alpha, Fraternity Inc., the nation's first black Greek organization.

What was first founded in 1906 at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, as a social study group, has since evolved into an organization of men dedicated and devoted to community and service.

Both nationally and locally, the fraternity has devoted itself to uplifting the black race and black manhood. Alpha's history, as well as its membership roll, reads like a Who's Who in Black America.

"Reading Alpha history is like reading black history," said George Battle, a junior political science major from Charlotte who has been a member of the fraternity for two years. "It testifies to the strength of the fraternity, that so many of our brothers, nationally and locally, are doing so many positive things."

At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where the Mu Zeta Chapter of A Phi A is 18 years old, Alpha membership reads like a Who's Who in black leadership on campus.

From former Black Student Movement president Arnie Epps to Malcolm Turner, former Chief Justice of the Student Supreme Court and Rhodes Scholar semi-finalist, to former Student Body Treasurer Nigel Long, to Mark

Bibbs, former Chief Justice of the Student Supreme Court and

fraternity member Andrew Duncan of Newark, NJ. "Alpha

and help them along. We realize that we did not get to where we are by ourselves. It's refreshing to help other people out."

Ellis Carson, who pledged last semester, said, "Alpha men have always led. It has always been my purpose to uplift the Black community and Alpha gave me a means to do so."

It is, however, Alpha's desire to lead and put its philosophy into action, which is the driving force behind its activities and the very thing that attracted junior Philip Charles-Pierre to the organization.

"Before I became an Alpha I knew that brotherhood in the black community was possible, but I never lived it," said

Charles-Pierre, who pledge the fraternity last semester. "To see so many positive black men doing positive things in the community gives me encouragement to go on."

It is this brotherhood and service, fraternity members say, that binds them together, especially when interfraternity competition takes a sour turn.

"The competition itself stems

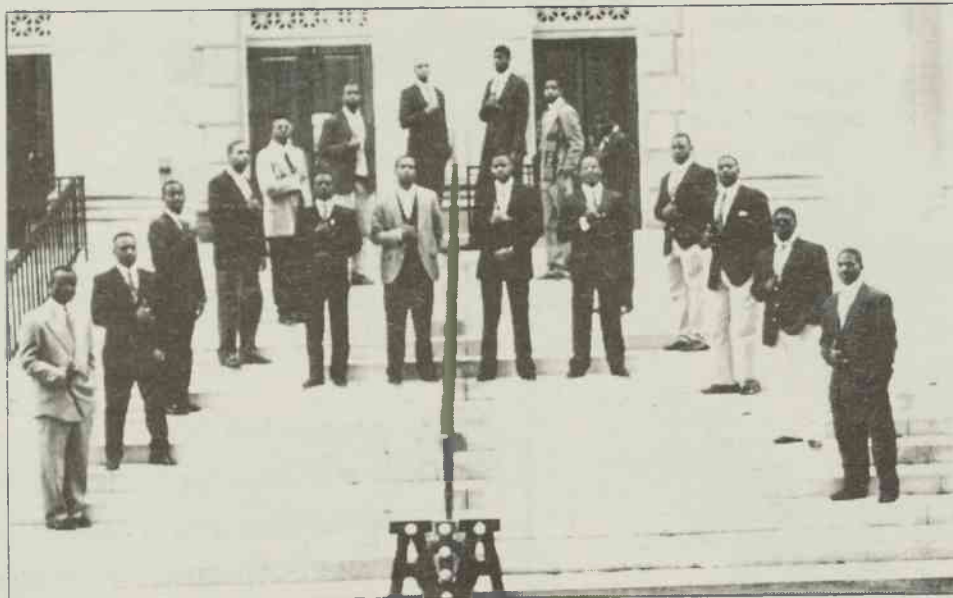
from pride in your organization, which is healthy," Duncan said of the rivalries that sometimes arouse between the traditionally four black fraternities. "Anything taken out of context, though can be counterproductive."

While Harris stressed the importance of not stereotyping individuals by their organization, Charles-Pierre said he views competition as something that's unnecessary.

"I don't feel we need to compete with anybody, because no matter what color we wear we're all supposed to be about the same things," he said. "Nobody's inherently better than anyone else. I hope all my brothers can act as beacons of light in their areas of interest."

Despite the fact that everyone is equal, there's something to be said to be a member of a group of unique individuals with their own aspirations and goals.

"I never have to look for inspiration and motivation, but there are many Alphas who have had a personal impact on me," Harris said. "I have a common bond with my brothers that breaks down barriers worldwide. Being an Alpha helps me wherever I go."



Members of the Mu Zeta chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha

the first student ever elected to the NC Board of Governors, Alpha leadership is everywhere.

"Being an Alpha is a great social responsibility," said Jarvis Harris, a senior political science major and fraternity president. "It means being on the cutting edge of various movements. Throughout history, you'll find Alpha men at the forefront."

Last semester, the fraternity, which has 20 members, sponsored a winter coat drive, blood drive, black women's appreciation luncheon and a myriad of outreach programs in the community.

This semester, A Phi A will continue its community outreach programming as well as a Ladies' Appreciation party from 10 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. Feb. 4; a Spades Tournament on February 13; and the annual Greek Freak Invitational Step Show competitions on April 16. There's also Alpha Week in March and the annual Black & Gold Formal Ball, both in March.

These programs are a vital part of the organization.

"It encourages me to see brothers doing something positive rather than being passive," said

inspires other positive brothers to put their philosophy into action."

Part of this putting the organization's philosophy into action is participating in programs that will strengthen the black community, especially the young black males who at times, seem to be without hope.

Taking brotherhood and fostering leadership development for black men of all ages seriously, A Phi A's Brother's Keeper program matches Alpha mentors with students from Chapel Hill's Seawall Elementary School.

Another program, Project Alpha, encourages young men to stay in high school and go on to college. The program also encourages male responsibility while teaching the males about teenage pregnancy.

"It's a very rewarding experience for both us and them," said Battle, who is a candidate for student body president. "They get to see older black men trying to do something positive in the community as opposed to what they see on television and in their communities."

"We strongly believe that it is our obligation to lift our brothers

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