

alpha phi alpha history

Introduction to Alpha Phi Alpha

Alpha Phi Alpha is not only the first intercollegiate Greek-letter organization established for African American men but also a beacon of leadership, scholarship, and service. Founded on December 4, 1906, at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, this fraternity has played a pivotal role in advocating for civil rights, educational advancement, and social justice for the African American community. This article delves into the history of Alpha Phi Alpha, exploring its founding, significant milestones, and the impact it has had over the years.

Founding of Alpha Phi Alpha

Alpha Phi Alpha was conceived in a time when African American students faced significant societal challenges, including racial discrimination and exclusion. The founders sought to create a brotherhood that would provide support, foster academic excellence, and promote community service. The fraternity was established by a group of seven men, known as the "Seven Jewels":

1. Henry Arthur Callis
2. Charles Henry Chapman
3. Eugene Kinckle Jones
4. George Biddle Kelley
5. Nathaniel Allison Murray
6. Robert Harold Ogle
7. Vertner Woodson Tandy

These founders laid the groundwork for a fraternity that would not only focus on personal development but also the upliftment of the African American community.

Early Years and Expansion

Initially, Alpha Phi Alpha was a campus organization at Cornell University. However, it quickly recognized the need for a broader reach. The fraternity's first expansion occurred in 1907 when it established its second chapter at Howard University in Washington, D.C. This expansion marked the beginning of a deliberate effort to create a national presence.

The Role of Alpha Phi Alpha in the Civil Rights Movement

As the fraternity grew, so did its commitment to social justice. Members of Alpha Phi Alpha played crucial roles in various civil rights initiatives during the early to mid-20th century. Some notable contributions include:

- Participation in the establishment of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People).
- Involvement in the founding of the Urban League, which aimed to improve economic opportunities for African Americans.
- Support for the Brown v. Board of Education case, which led to the desegregation of public schools in the United States.

The fraternity's advocacy for civil rights was not only a reflection of its values but also an embodiment of the aspirations of many African Americans during a challenging historical period.

National Conventions and Leadership

Alpha Phi Alpha has held national conventions every two years, which serve as a platform for discussing fraternity business, planning future initiatives, and fostering unity among members. These conventions have been instrumental in shaping the direction of the fraternity and addressing contemporary social issues.

One of the most significant conventions was held in 1960 in New York City, where the fraternity adopted the "Go-to-High-School, Go-to-College" program. This initiative aimed to promote educational attainment among African American youth, emphasizing the importance of education as a tool for empowerment.

The Fraternity's Influence in Politics

The influence of Alpha Phi Alpha extends into the political realm as well. Many members have made notable contributions to public service and politics, including:

- Thurgood Marshall, the first African American Supreme Court Justice, was a member of the fraternity.
- Adam Clayton Powell Jr., a significant political figure and civil rights leader, was also an Alpha Phi Alpha member.
- Other prominent politicians and leaders, such as Andrew Young and Maynard Jackson, have been affiliated with the fraternity.

These leaders have helped advance the cause of civil rights and social justice, reflecting the fraternity's commitment to public service.

Programs and Initiatives

Throughout its history, Alpha Phi Alpha has implemented various programs aimed at community service and academic excellence. Some notable initiatives include:

Project Alpha

Launched in 1980, Project Alpha is a collaboration with the March of Dimes that focuses on educating young men about responsible fatherhood and healthy relationships. This program aims to empower young men to make informed decisions that positively impact their lives and communities.

Alpha Phi Alpha Educational Foundation

The fraternity established the Alpha Phi Alpha Educational Foundation to support educational initiatives and provide scholarships to deserving students. The foundation reflects the fraternity's commitment to academic excellence and the pursuit of higher education.

National Programs

Alpha Phi Alpha has developed several national programs that address various social issues, including:

- **Voter Registration Drives:** Encouraging civic engagement and participation in the electoral process.
- **Health Awareness Campaigns:** Addressing public health issues such as diabetes, hypertension, and HIV/AIDS in the African American community.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Providing guidance and support to young men and women in their personal and academic pursuits.

Alpha Phi Alpha Today

Today, Alpha Phi Alpha continues to thrive with hundreds of active chapters across the United States and internationally. The fraternity remains committed to its founding principles of scholarship, fellowship, good character, and the upliftment of humanity.

Legacy and Future

The legacy of Alpha Phi Alpha is profound. It has inspired countless men to pursue academic excellence and serve their communities. The fraternity's historical significance is evident through its contributions to civil rights, education, and public service.

As we look to the future, Alpha Phi Alpha faces new challenges and opportunities. The fraternity remains dedicated to adapting its programs to meet the evolving needs of its members and the communities it serves. Through continued advocacy and commitment to its core values, Alpha Phi Alpha is poised to remain a leader in promoting social justice and educational attainment for generations to come.

Conclusion

The history of Alpha Phi Alpha is a testament to the power of brotherhood, leadership, and service. From its humble beginnings at Cornell University to its prominent role in the civil rights movement, the fraternity has been a catalyst for change and empowerment within the African American community. As

it moves forward, Alpha Phi Alpha continues to inspire and uplift, ensuring that its legacy endures for future generations.

Frequently Asked Questions

What year was Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. founded?

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. was founded on December 4, 1906.

Where was Alpha Phi Alpha founded?

Alpha Phi Alpha was founded at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

Who were the founders of Alpha Phi Alpha?

The founders of Alpha Phi Alpha are Henry Arthur Callis, Charles H. Chapman, Eugene Kinckle Jones, George Biddle Kelley, Nathaniel Allison Murray, and Isadore A. A. McCauley.

What was the primary purpose of establishing Alpha Phi Alpha?

The primary purpose of establishing Alpha Phi Alpha was to provide support and advocacy for African American college students and to promote academic excellence and community service.

How does Alpha Phi Alpha contribute to civil rights?

Alpha Phi Alpha has a rich history of involvement in civil rights, with many members actively participating in the civil rights movement, including notable figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Thurgood Marshall.

What is the significance of the 'Go-to-High-School, Go-to-College' campaign?

The 'Go-to-High-School, Go-to-College' campaign, initiated by Alpha Phi Alpha in the 1920s, aimed to encourage young African Americans to pursue education and reduce dropout rates.

What are some notable programs or initiatives of Alpha Phi Alpha?

Notable programs and initiatives of Alpha Phi Alpha include the 'Brother's Keeper' program, which focuses on mentoring young men, and community service

projects that address issues like education, health, and social justice.

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