

# **Letter To The Editor: A Black History Tribute To The Devine 9**

by Rosetta Brown

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Black Greek-letter sororities and fraternities have been a pivotal part of African American history and culture since the early 20th century. Launched on the campuses of historically black colleges, these organizations have been a central resource for support and service in the educational advancement and strengthening of social bonds among black students, entrepreneurs and professionals, especially when the organizations expanded to majority white institutions of higher learning. Also, they were a way to combat racism, as many campus organization memberships were exclusionary to students and professionals of color.

The pioneer black Greek-letter organizations have become known as the Divine Nine, and among their ranks have been some of the most influential leaders of color in healthcare, fashion, business, global affairs, politics and more.

Among the ranks of black fraternities are leaders from W.E.B. DuBois; Martin Luther King Jr. and Al Sharpton to Hill Harper, Al Roker, Emmitt Smith, Robert Johnson, and hundreds of thousands more. And the [sororities boast](#) an impressive roster of sorors as well, from Vice President Kamala Harris, First Lady Michelle Obama, Shirley Chisholm, and Loretta Lynch to Nikki Giovanni, Soledad O'Brien, MC Lyte, and many more.

The National Pan-Hellenic Council Inc. (NPHC), formed on the campus of [Howard University](#) on May 10, 1930, is a collective of the nine pioneering black Greek-letter organizations: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Since these nine were started and incorporated, membership has spread globally, with chapters in Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and Africa. Their impact is also widespread professionally and financially, as they have contributed millions to uplift communities, send students to college via scholarships and support professionals in both corporate America and entrepreneurship via mentorship and sponsorship.

Alpha Phi Alpha is the oldest fraternity, founded in 1906, followed by Kappa Alpha Psi and Omega Psi Phi in 1911, Phi Beta Sigma in 1914 and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity in 1963. Among the sororities, Alpha Kappa Alpha is the oldest, founded in 1908, followed by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in 1913, Zeta Phi Beta in 1920 and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. in 1922.

Since the Divine Nine have been founded and incorporated, other black Greek-letter organizations have followed, and though they are not part of the Pan-Hellic Council, they have been vital in their impact of promoting service, scholarship, and fellowship among students and professionals of color around the world as well. These organizations include sororities such as the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., founded in 1923 for educators; Gamma Phi Delta Sorority, Inc., an affiliate organization of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) founded in 1942; Zeta Delta Phi founded 1962 at Bronx Community College, and fraternities such as Sigma Phi Rho, chartered at Wagner College; Delta Psi Chi, founded in 1985 at University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee; and Nu Gamma Alpha, which was founded on Howards University Campus in 1962.

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**Submitted by Rosetta Brown, Proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc**

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