

**COMPLEX CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS:  
ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, AN EXEMPLAR**

*Gregory S. Parks,<sup>†</sup> Rashawn Ray,<sup>‡</sup> and Shawna M. Patterson\**

The narrative about African American organizations and their role in Blacks' quest for social equality and civil rights in the United States is often a conventional one. Traditional civil rights organizations take center stage, with the efforts that they made and make, as well as the model that they employed and continue to employ, being the exemplar. Take, for example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ("NAACP"). After the civil war, a number of groups and movements attempted to organize and ensure franchise for African Americans.<sup>1</sup> From this collection of independent and sometimes fragmented enterprises rose the Niagara group, which held "strategic mass meetings and annual conventions."<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously, a small group of Whites who were concerned with the racial riots of the early 1900s organized a meeting in New York, which began the organization of the future NAACP.<sup>3</sup> That group, led by Mary White Ovington and English Walling, sought a larger conference with the Niagara group led by W.E.B. Du Bois.<sup>4</sup> The first conference was held on May 30, 1909.<sup>5</sup> Within a year, the group was incorporated in New York as the NAACP, with the five incorporators—W.E.B. Du Bois, Oswald Villard, Walter Sachs, John Haynes Holmes, and Mary Ovington.<sup>6</sup>

Much like the NAACP, the National Urban League (NUL) had its roots in several turn of the century organizations.<sup>7</sup> Groups like the

---

<sup>†</sup> Assistant Professor of Law, Wake Forest University School of Law. The authors thank Jordan Dongell, Kathryn Hughes, Kara Matejov, Justin Philbeck, and Elizabeth Woods for their diligent research assistance.

<sup>‡</sup> Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Maryland, College Park.

\* Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Institution, Florida State University.

<sup>1</sup> WARREN D. ST. JAMES, *THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE: A CASE STUDY IN PRESSURE GROUPS* 36 (1958).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 41.

<sup>7</sup> GUICHARD PARRIS & LESTER BROOKS, *BLACKS IN THE CITY: A HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE* 4 (1971).

Association for the Protection of Colored Women (1905), the Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of Negroes in New York (1906), the National League for the Protection of Colored Women (1906), and the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes (CUCAN, 1906) all addressed the plight of workers arriving in the North looking for jobs but finding poverty.<sup>8</sup> By 1911, a National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes (NLUCAN) federation began operating with delegates from the aforementioned groups.<sup>9</sup> It assumed the NUL name in 1920 for simplicity.<sup>10</sup> The early activities of the organization included putting pressure on businesses that refused to hire Black workers, encouraging the government to include Blacks in New Deal recovery programs, and increasing Black membership in previously segregated labor unions.<sup>11</sup>

By the mid 1950's, church-led bus boycotts were springing up across the South.<sup>12</sup> When White leaders pressed for negotiations to end the tensions, they found that Black preachers had supplanted Black teachers as the voice of the community.<sup>13</sup> The sudden empowerment of preachers arose, in part, because of their economic independence; professors and teachers could be pressured by their schools, but the preachers were beholden only to their supportive congregations.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, they were directly connected to Black communities in their professional capacity.<sup>15</sup> Without the boycotts, and particularly the Montgomery bus boycott, organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) would not have formed.<sup>16</sup> On January 10, 1957—following the Montgomery Bus Boycott—Martin Luther King, Jr. invited dozens of Black ministers and other leaders to Ebenezer Church in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>17</sup> Their goal was to form an organization that would coordinate and support nonviolent direct action as a method of

---

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 4-6.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 34.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 67.

<sup>11</sup> *Mission and History*, NAT'L URBAN LEAGUE, <http://nul.iamempowered.com/who-we-are/mission-and-history> (last visited Jan. 16, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> ADAM FAIRCLOUGH, *TO REDEEM THE SOUL OF AMERICA: THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE AND MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.* 12 (1987).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 22.

<sup>17</sup> *From Whence We've Come*, SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, <http://sclcnational.org/from-whence-weve-come/> (last visited Jan. 16, 2014).

desegregating bus systems in the South. That organization would become known as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).<sup>18</sup>

Other African American organizations, too, have played a critical role in the civil rights movement. For example, Theda Skocpol and colleagues, as well as Corey D.B. Walker, in their respective works, highlight the contributions that African American secret societies made to Blacks' struggle for social equality in the United States.<sup>19</sup> In this article, the authors analyze the role that another set of African American fraternal groups have played in African Americans' civil rights struggle and the challenges, and maybe opportunities, created from the complexity associated with these organizations as they pertain to carrying out this mission. African American collegiate-based fraternities and sororities—also known as Black Greek-letter organizations (BGLOs)—have existed for more than one hundred years. Despite their growth and longevity, critics and commentators have weighed in on these organizations' efforts, or lack thereof, to contribute to African Americans' quest for social equality and civil rights. E. Franklin Frazier, noted sociologist and Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity member, described BGLOs as plagued by “conspicuous consumption” rather than a genuine commitment to racial uplift activism.<sup>20</sup> In a 1958 Bennett College speech, Martin Luther King, Jr., also an Alpha Phi Alpha member, noted:

I know...we want to have some of the basic goods of life. We want to have some of the luxuries of life but what I'm saying is, let's maintain a sense of values. We don't have time to spend a lot of money on whiskey and big parties and a lot of stuff, and we aren't giving money to the basic causes that confront us now... It will be an indictment on the Negro if it is revealed that we spend more money on frivolities than we spend on the cause of freedom and justice... I remember one year that a certain fraternity assembled with other fraternities and spent in one week \$500,000 on whiskey. That's what the paper reported. Negroes spend more money...in one week than

---

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> See generally THEDA SKOCPOL ET AL., WHAT A MIGHTY POWER WE CAN BE: AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNAL GROUPS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL EQUALITY (2006); COREY D. B. WALKER, A NOBLE FIGHT: AFRICAN AMERICAN FREEMASONRY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA (2008).

<sup>20</sup> E. FRANKLIN FRAZIER, BLACK BOURGEOISIE: THE BOOK THAT BROUGHT THE SHOCK OF SELF-REVELATION TO MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS IN AMERICA 94 (1997).

the whole Negro race spent that whole year for the NAACP and the United Negro College Fund.<sup>21</sup>

Despite BGLOs' twentieth-century influence, many continue to question their relevance.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, the authors conceptualize BGLOs as organizations that must come to grips with their own complexity in order to remain sustainable and productive, especially in the realm of civic activism and shaping public policy around issues of race.

Organizational complexity may manifest itself in an organization's structure,<sup>23</sup> goals,<sup>24</sup> strategy,<sup>25</sup> or identity.<sup>26</sup> The authors here are most concerned with organizational identity—i.e., what is central, distinctive, and enduring about an organization. According to organizational behavior scholar Y. Sekou Bermiss, within the context of organizational identity, active management is required in order to militate against organizational problems.<sup>27</sup> For example, identity threat involves environmental forces that may contradict or challenge the legitimacy of an organization's identity. Conflicts arise when an organization has multiple identities and members may have allegiances to some but not all of those identities, resulting in an organizational identity crisis.<sup>28</sup>

In this article, the authors explore BGLOs as complex organizations. Specifically, we focus our analysis on one such organization, the first of the BGLO sororities—Alpha Kappa Alpha—as a way to conceptualize organized Black women's racial uplift activism. In doing so, it is the authors'

---

<sup>21</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Bennett College Speech* (1958).

<sup>22</sup> Sharon Jones, *Are Black Sororities and Fraternities Still Culturally Relevant?*, EXAMINER (Aug. 5, 2009) <http://www.examiner.com/article/are-black-sororities-and-fraternities-still-culturally-relevant>.

<sup>23</sup> Dennis S. Mileti et al., *Size and Structure in Complex Organizations*, 56 SOC. FORCES 208, 209-217 (1977).

<sup>24</sup> Sendil K. Ethiraj & Daniel Levinthal, *Hoping for A to Z While Rewarding Only A: Complex Organizations and Multiple Goals*, 20 ORG. SCI. 4 (Jan.-Feb. 2009).

<sup>25</sup> Robert B. Pojasek, *Improving Processes in Complex Organizations*, 14 ENVTL. QUALITY MGMT. 85 (Spring 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Greta Hsu & Michael T. Hannan, *Identities, Genres, and Organizational Forms*, 16 ORG. SCI. 474 (Sept.-Oct. 2005); M. G. Pratt & P. O. Foreman, *Classifying Managerial Responses to Multiple Organizational Identities*, 25 ACAD. OF MGMT. REV. 18-42 (Jan. 2000).

<sup>27</sup> Y. Sekou Bermiss, *What We Mean by Organizational Identity*, in ALPHA PHI ALPHA: A LEGACY OF GREATNESS, THE DEMANDS OF TRANSCENDENCE 9 (Gregory S. Parks & Stefan M. Bradley eds., 2012).

<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at 14-16.

hope that Alpha Kappa Alpha will serve as an exemplar for the challenges and opportunities that face all BGLOs in the area of racial uplift activism. We investigate how challenges within the various constituent features of Alpha Kappa Alpha's complexity may hamper its racial uplift activism. Racial uplift activism is conceptualized as promoting civic activism and efforts to shape public policy.<sup>29</sup> In the first section, the authors provide a history of the confluence of factors that gave rise to BGLOs generally, and to Alpha Kappa Alpha specifically. In the second section, the authors explore examples of racial uplift activism that Alpha Kappa Alpha performed in the twentieth century. The third section addresses challenges that Alpha Kappa Alpha faces in the twenty-first century as it continues to serve as a conduit for African American racial uplift.

### **I. THE HISTORY OF BGLOs: A COMPLEX EVOLUTION OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY**

Arguably, a confluence of factors gave rise to the founding of Alpha Kappa Alpha, both directly and indirectly. According to Marjorie H. Parker, Alpha Kappa Alpha's national historian, the sorority's founding is often associated with the establishment of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity's Beta chapter at Howard University in December 1907.<sup>30</sup> The inspiration for and "moving spirit" of Alpha Kappa Alpha was Ethel Hedgeman's high school sweetheart (and later husband), George Lyle, a member of the Beta chapter.<sup>31</sup> What follows is a review of the cultural, institutional, and organizational factors that gave rise to Alpha Phi Alpha directly, and to Alpha Kappa Alpha directly in some instances, and indirectly in others.

#### *Cultural-Political Context*

In 1865, the Civil War ended and the U.S. Congress passed the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, providing some

---

<sup>29</sup> See M. W. Hughey & G. S. Parks, *Introduction: Black Fraternal Organizations: Systems, Secrecy, and Solace*, 16 J. AFR. AM. STUD. 595, 599 (2012).

<sup>30</sup> Andre McKenzie, *In the Beginning: The Early History of the Divine Nine*, in AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE VISION 184 (Tamara L. Brown et al., eds. 2005) (citing Marjorie H. Parker's work).

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

constitutional basis for Black social equality.<sup>32</sup> Subsequently, Blacks witnessed a rise in political and economic power.<sup>33</sup> Within a decade after the end of the Civil War, southern White Democrats began to implement strategies that worked to reverse the gains that Blacks made.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, racial segregation began to spread throughout the United States. This propagated a period that has been described as “The Nadir”—the low point of American race relations. During this period, Blacks witnessed a spike in lynching and disenfranchisement.<sup>35</sup>

As historian Felix Armfield and colleagues indicate, Blacks created a host of institutions out of necessity to resist racial intimidation, exploitation, and oppression.<sup>36</sup> For example, W.E.B. DuBois argued that the “Talented Tenth”—the cadre of Blacks with academic training and resources—should uplift the race.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, in 1905, he and more than two dozen other activists met during the Niagara Conference—the precursor to the NAACP—to search for approaches to Black freedom.<sup>38</sup> It was within this cultural environment that academic institutions such as Cornell University and Howard University played a role in influencing how the Black fraternal movement unfolded.<sup>39</sup>

### *Institutional Effects*

The institutional ideals and factors of race at institutions like Cornell University and Howard University served to influence the form and function of the BGLOs founded on those campuses.<sup>40</sup> In 1865, Cornell University was founded to make education more applicable to the workforce and to “develop

---

<sup>32</sup> Felix L. Armfield et al., *Defining the “Alpha” Identity*, in ALPHA PHI ALPHA: A LEGACY OF GREATNESS, THE DEMANDS OF TRANSCENDENCE 23, 28 (Gregory S. Parks & Stephen M. Bradley eds., 2012).

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> *Id.* at 29.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.* at 32.

<sup>37</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Talented Tenth*, in THE NEGRO PROBLEM: A SERIES OF ARTICLES BY REPRESENTATIVE NEGROES OF TO-DAY (1903); Rashawn Ray, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Pioneering Social Theorist, Methodologist, and Public Sociologist*, in OXFORD BIBLIOGRAPHIES ONLINE: SOCIOLOGY (J. Mansa ed., 2011).

<sup>38</sup> ANGEL L. HARRIS, KIDS DON’T WANT TO FAIL: OPPOSITIONAL CULTURE AND THE BLACK-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP (2011).

<sup>39</sup> Armfield et al., *supra* note 32, at 40.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

the individual man... as a being intellectual, moral, and religious; and to bring the force of the individual to bear on society".<sup>41</sup> According to Cornell's Great Seal, written by founder Ezra Cornell and refined by Andrew Dickson White, the university's first president, "I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study."<sup>42</sup> Prior to 1900, however, fewer than a dozen Black students were enrolled at Cornell.<sup>43</sup> By 1918, forty-three Black students were attending the university, with their numbers continuing to increase.<sup>44</sup> Despite increased Black enrollment rates at Cornell, these students felt isolated amid the larger, White student population.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Alpha Phi Alpha's founders sought to organize towards the mutual support and the successful matriculation of Black students.<sup>46</sup>

Prior to the founding of Howard University in 1867, few Blacks had access to a formal education.<sup>47</sup> Freed slaves sought outlets for increasing their education, whether through self-teaching or unrecognized academic programs.<sup>48</sup> Howard University grew to symbolize the growing racial consciousness and desires for equality among the black populace.<sup>49</sup> At its founding, it was one of the few integrated universities to admit comparable numbers of Black and White students.<sup>50</sup> Howard would go on to excel at mobilizing Black students to become involved in racial uplift activism during college and after graduation.<sup>51</sup> As the university shared values of education and social justice, expectations for high-mindedness set the tone for the fraternities and sororities established at Howard.<sup>52</sup> Organizations such as

---

<sup>41</sup> CARL L. BECKER, *CORNELL UNIVERSITY: FOUNDERS AND THE FOUNDING* 133 (1943).

<sup>42</sup> Armfield et al., *supra* note 32, at 40.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.* at 41.

<sup>44</sup> CAROL KAMMEN, *PART AND APART: THE BLACK EXPERIENCE AT CORNELL, 1865-1845*, at 123 (2009).

<sup>45</sup> *Id.*

<sup>46</sup> CHARLES H. WESLEY, *THE HISTORY OF ALPHA PHI ALPHA: A DEVELOPMENT IN COLLEGE LIFE* (16th ed. 1996).

<sup>47</sup> RAYFORD W. LOGAN, *HOWARD UNIVERSITY: THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS, 1867-1967*, at 4 (1969).

<sup>48</sup> *Id.* at 6-8.

<sup>49</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Id.* at 25.

<sup>51</sup> LOGAN, *supra* note 47, at 12.

<sup>52</sup> JACQUELINE M. MOORE, *LEADING THE RACE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BLACK ELITE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL, 1880-1920*, at 131 (1999).

Alpha Phi Alpha and Alpha Kappa Alpha sought to select members from the social and academic elite.<sup>53</sup>

*Organizational Effects*

It was not only the spirit of the times and the accompanying campus environments that informed BGLO founders about what type of organizations to create; these men and women were also inspired by their engagement with a host of other types of organizations—i.e., the Black church, Black secret societies, collegiate literary societies, and White collegiate fraternities.<sup>54</sup>

The early Black church arose in the 1770s out of the conditions of slavery and, ultimately, racial segregation.<sup>55</sup> In fact, “whenever these [religious] societies were organized, they began to protest against White prejudice and neglect, and with the objective of providing not only for religious needs, but for social service, mutual aid and solidarity among people of African descent.”<sup>56</sup> The Black church served as the center of social and cultural life in Black communities and influenced BGLOs by providing their founders with guiding principles.<sup>57</sup> In fact, a predominant number of BGLO members were active parishioners of local Black churches and viewed BGLO membership as supplemental to their spiritual life.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, Black churches lent BGLOs the ideals of brotherhood/sisterhood, community service, and civic action.<sup>59</sup>

Black secret societies evolved as Blacks sought ways to deepen personal ties, embrace ritualized processes, and deal with exclusion from White secret societies.<sup>60</sup> In 1775, Prince Hall founded the Black Freemasonry.<sup>61</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, over sixty other Black

---

<sup>53</sup> *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> *Id.*

<sup>55</sup> Jessica Harris & Said Sewell, *Faith and Fraternalism*, in AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE VISION, SECOND EDITION 63 (Tamara L. Brown et al., 2012).

<sup>56</sup> Harris & Sewell, *supra* note 55, at 65.

<sup>57</sup> *Id.* at 63.

<sup>58</sup> *Id.* at 66-67.

<sup>59</sup> Armfield et al, *supra* note 32, at 37.

<sup>60</sup> Anne S. Butler, *Black Fraternal and Benevolent Societies in Nineteenth-Century America*, in AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE VISION 76-77 (Tamara L. Brown et al 2005); Harris & Sewell, *supra* note 55, at 66.

<sup>61</sup> Harris & Sewell, *supra* note 55, at 66-67.

secret societies were founded.<sup>62</sup> The first of these societies emerged in response to the oppression Blacks experienced during the American Revolution.<sup>63</sup> Among these societies were the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (1843), the Knights of Pythias (1864), and the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks of the World (1898).<sup>64</sup> By 1915, roughly two-thirds of prominent Blacks were members of multiple Black secret societies.<sup>65</sup> Freemasonry's inherent link to Christianity and emphasis on truth, charity, brotherhood, and community building made it the model of early Black secret societies.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, early Black secret societies, including Prince Hall Masonry, encouraged members to "respect and help each other, work to end slavery, and show love to all humanity."<sup>67</sup>

Black secret societies played three major roles in the development of Black fraternities. First, just as Black secret societies were created to give members "a sense of social relationship and responsibility to one another"<sup>68</sup> under the theme of racial uplift, Black fraternities were later created in response to racial hostility experienced by Black members of colleges and universities.<sup>69</sup> Second, Black secret societies provided Black fraternities with an effective organizational structure to carry out their mandates.<sup>70</sup> Finally, Black fraternities were organized under the same multidimensional purpose of providing mutual support to members and the greater Black community.<sup>71</sup> The role that Black secret societies played in the development of Black fraternities can be attributed to the fact that many Black fraternity founders were either members of Black secret societies or were connected to Black secret societies through family.<sup>72</sup>

Literary societies were founded at colleges and universities between 1760 and 1860 in response to the restrictive nature of the American collegiate

---

<sup>62</sup> *Id.*

<sup>63</sup> *Id.* at 76.

<sup>64</sup> Butler, *supra* note 60, at 80-83.

<sup>65</sup> Harris & Sewell, *supra* note 55, at 66-67 (citing WHO'S WHO OF THE COLORED RACE (Frank Lincoln Mather, ed., Gale Research Co. 1976)).

<sup>66</sup> Butler, *supra* note 60, at 74.

<sup>67</sup> *Id.* at 76. (quoting WILLIAM H. GRIMSHAW, OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE FREEMASONRY AMONG THE COLORED PEOPLE IN NORTH AMERICA, 79 (1903)).

<sup>68</sup> *Id.* at 68.

<sup>69</sup> *Id.* at 89.

<sup>70</sup> *Id.*

<sup>71</sup> *Id.*

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

curriculum.<sup>73</sup> They filled the void left in the restrictive curriculum by feeding students' desires to develop debating, writing, and public speaking skills.<sup>74</sup> Literary societies were on the decline decades before the first Black fraternity was created, yet literary societies indirectly influenced Black fraternities, because they gave rise to White fraternities, another influence on BGLOs.<sup>75</sup> Literary societies existed at Black colleges as early as the mid- to late nineteenth century.<sup>76</sup> They also uniquely contributed to Black fraternities by providing them with a template for a broad sense of intellectualism.<sup>77</sup> Finally, literary societies contributed to the structure of Black fraternities through their use of secret initiation rites, mottoes, and badges to distinguish members.<sup>78</sup>

Though literary societies ultimately lost traction, students who sought to obtain more rights, correct the perceived wrongs of college administrations, and facilitate social outlets developed college fraternities.<sup>79</sup> The first White college fraternity, Phi Beta Kappa, was founded at William and Mary in 1776, and by the 1820's the fraternity movement had become firmly established at colleges and universities across New York and Virginia.<sup>80</sup> Early fraternities contributed to student life by affording students a social network and engaging them in social activities.<sup>81</sup> In addition to setting goals for individual members, including high academic standards and the pursuit of excellence, fraternities also provided social escapes for students through drinking, card playing, smoking, and womanizing.<sup>82</sup> White fraternities served as the framework for the creation of Black fraternities.<sup>83</sup> For example, Alpha Phi Alpha's founders used their observation of White

---

<sup>73</sup> Craig L. Torbenson, *The Origin and Evolution of College Fraternities and Sororities*, in AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE VISION 387 (Tamara L. Brown et al., 2005).

<sup>74</sup> Armfield et al, *supra* note 32, at 34; Torbenson, *supra* note 73, at 37.

<sup>75</sup> Torbenson, *supra* note 73, at 38-39, 55.

<sup>76</sup> CLARENCE BACOTE, *THE STORY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY: A CENTURY OF SERVICE, 1865-1965*, at 240 (1969); H.M. BOND, *EDUCATION FOR FREEDOM: A HISTORY OF LINCOLN UNIVERSITY PENNSYLVANIA* 414-15 (1976); RODNEY T. COHEN, *FISK UNIVERSITY* 29 (2001).

<sup>77</sup> Armfield et al, *supra* note 32, at 34.

<sup>78</sup> Torbenson, *supra* note 73, at 38-39.

<sup>79</sup> *Id.*

<sup>80</sup> *Id.* at 39.

<sup>81</sup> Armfield et al, *supra* note 32, at 36.

<sup>82</sup> Torbenson, *supra* note 73, at 38.

<sup>83</sup> *Id.* at 56.

fraternities to form a similar organization for Black students.<sup>84</sup> Just as White fraternities provided a social escape for White students, Black fraternities “filled a niche in the college experience” for Black students.<sup>85</sup>

*The Founding of Alpha Kappa Alpha*

On December 4, 1906, seven men—Henry A. Callis, Charles H. Chapman, Eugene Kinkle Jones, George B. Kelley, Nathaniel A. Murray, Robert H. Ogle, and Vertner W. Tandy—founded Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity on the campus of Cornell University as the first continuous intercollegiate African American fraternity.<sup>86</sup> The fraternity’s Beta Chapter was established by founders Jones and Murray on December 20, 1907 at Howard University. The charter members were Welford W. Wilson, C. Edmund Smith, A. Peyton Cook, John A. McMurray, George A. Lyle, Carl A. Young, J. Oliver Morrison, Moses Alvin Morrison, James R. Chase, Cornelius S. Cowan, J. Russel Hunt, William D. Giles, Robert E. Giles, Daniel W. Bowles, Morris S. Walton, Junius W. Jones, and James E. Hayes.<sup>87</sup>

High school sweethearts and later husband and wife George A. Lyle and Ethel Hedgeman played crucial roles in expanding Black “Greekdom.”<sup>88</sup> In the fall of her junior year at Howard, Ethel Hedgeman began discussing with her friends and classmates the idea of creating a Greek-Letter campus sorority.<sup>89</sup> These colleagues—Beulah Burke, Lillie Burke, Margaret Flagg Holmes, Marjorie Hill, Lucy Slowe, Marie Woolfolk Taylor, Anna Easter Brown, and Lavinia Norman—are credited with creating Alpha Kappa Alpha in accordance with Hedgeman’s vision on January 15, 1908.<sup>90</sup>

During their first organizational meeting, the students elected Hedgeman as temporary chairwoman, and organized committees to draft a constitution and determine nomenclature and symbols.<sup>91</sup> Two faculty members, Ethel T. Robinson and Elizabeth Appo Cook-Robinson, agreed to

---

<sup>84</sup> *Id.* at 55.

<sup>85</sup> Torbenson, *supra* note 73, at 56-57.

<sup>86</sup> McKenzie, *supra* note 30, at 182-83 (providing an early history of Alpha Phi Alpha).

<sup>87</sup> *Id.*

<sup>88</sup> *Id.*

<sup>89</sup> MARJORIE H. PARKER, PAST IS PROLOGUE: THE HISTORY OF ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA 1908–1999, at 3 (B.J. Sessions ed., 1999).

<sup>90</sup> *Id.* at 3, 40.

<sup>91</sup> *Id.*

serve as informal advisors during the sorority's development.<sup>92</sup> The sorority sent Hedgeman and Woolfolk to meet with Howard's president and deans, and the group was granted permission to proceed with quick approval.<sup>93</sup>

The sorority decided to proceed under the name "Alpha Kappa Alpha," because those Greek letters were the first letters of the words contained in the sorority's motto, "by culture and by merit."<sup>94</sup> The sorority's symbol was designated as the ivy leaf, and the sisters chose the colors of salmon pink and apple green, which symbolized "abundance of life, womanliness, fidelity, and love."<sup>95</sup>

Although Hedgeman was credited with envisioning Alpha Kappa Alpha, the newly adopted constitution required that the organization's president be a senior, so Slowe was elected as the sorority's first president.<sup>96</sup> To ensure the sorority's continuity, the group invited seven sophomores to join Alpha Kappa Alpha without initiation: Joanna Berry, Norma Boyd, Ethel Jones, Sarah Meriweather, Alice Murray, Carrie Snowden, and Harriet Terry.<sup>97</sup> Alpha Kappa Alpha did not begin formal initiations until the following year.<sup>98</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Cultural-political context as well as institutional and organizational effects shaped the ideals and identity of Alpha Kappa Alpha. Arguably, it is defined by four elements: (1) scholarship; (2) sisterhood; (3) race consciousness; and (4) organizational commitment. Alpha Kappa Alpha has always displayed a sincere interest in the philosophy of academic achievement for its members.

## II. ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA AS A CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

In 1938, Alpha Kappa Alpha Founder and Incorporator Norma Boyd proposed a plan for a lobby to the three Washington chapters at the Joint

---

<sup>92</sup> See AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE VISION (T.L. Brown, G.S. Parks, & C.M. Phillips eds., 2d ed. 2012).

<sup>93</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 4.

<sup>94</sup> AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES, *supra* note 92, at 53.

<sup>95</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 4.

<sup>96</sup> *Id.*

<sup>97</sup> *Id.* at 5.

<sup>98</sup> *Id.*

Founders' Day Celebration at Howard University.<sup>99</sup> The "Non-Partisan Lobby for Economic and Democratic Rights, later renamed the National Non-Partisan Council of Public Affairs, aimed to improve conditions for African Americans through opportunities in public service, education, and employment.<sup>100</sup> To accomplish this goal, the Council encouraged the African American community to get fully integrated and increase participation in every aspect of democracy.<sup>101</sup> The Council focused its efforts on making African Americans informed voters by educating them about proposed and pending legislation and encouraging them to communicate with their respective congressmen.<sup>102</sup> It also influenced Congress to pass legislative provisions and programs ensuring "the equitable distribution of funds, facilities, and services" in various communities, and to provide the supervision necessary to make sure such policies remained enforced.<sup>103</sup> Howard University graduate and law student William P. Robinson was appointed as the Council's first legislative representative.<sup>104</sup> With its headquarters established in Washington, D.C., the Council had great access to both the public and the Nation's capital.<sup>105</sup> At the time, it was the first national African American women's organization in America with a "full-time office and a full-time staff devoted entirely to public affairs and paid for by the membership of the organization."<sup>106</sup> The Council was also the first full-time lobby for the Black community in America.<sup>107</sup>

The Council covered four areas: (1) information; (2) contacts; (3) presentations for Congressional committees; and (4) patronage endorsements.<sup>108</sup> Its initial objectives included eradicating police brutality in the District of Columbia and establishing home rule.<sup>109</sup> It also pushed for

---

<sup>99</sup> *Id.* at 194.

<sup>100</sup> *Id.* at 195.

<sup>101</sup> Jeanetta Welch & Kathryn Johnson, *National Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Mar. 1941 at 10.

<sup>102</sup> *Id.*

<sup>103</sup> Norma E. Boyd, *National Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs—Planning for Tomorrow*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Mar. 1944, at 7.

<sup>104</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89.

<sup>105</sup> Norma E. Boyd & Thomasina Johnson, *The Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Jun. 1943, at 6.

<sup>106</sup> Norma E. Boyd & Thomasina Johnson, *National Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Mar. 1945, at 8.

<sup>107</sup> *Id.*

<sup>108</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 4.

<sup>109</sup> *Id.*

extending the Public Works Program and setting a minimum wage for women in the laundry industry.<sup>110</sup> Its office reviewed important bills and sent its findings to Alpha Kappa Alpha chapters and other interested organizations.<sup>111</sup> Boyd intended for Alpha Kappa Alpha chapters to serve as representatives in their local political networks.<sup>112</sup> The chapters' first goal was to strengthen the Council's capacity for recognition and influence through an effort to register all eligible voters in their communities for the 1940 presidential election.<sup>113</sup>

The Council continued to grow in size and influence following World War II through such activities as its participation in passing antidiscrimination legislation in Congress in 1941 and its support of the National Recruiting Drive for Negro Women for the war program and the Farm Security Administration Act.<sup>114</sup> When the Farm Security Administration was at risk of being abolished, the Council helped to save it and prevented thousands of African American Farmers from becoming "hired hands."<sup>115</sup> The Council also saw the admission of African American women into the Navy.<sup>116</sup> As one of the sponsors of the National Wartime Conference, the Council was responsible for bringing in two African American speakers to talk about the lack of opportunities for Black women in the Navy.<sup>117</sup> These lobbying efforts were successful and led to the admission of Black women in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps at a time when the Navy was the only service in the armed forces where Blacks served on an integrated basis.<sup>118</sup>

The Council made great strides in influencing the Legislature as well as establishing projects to improve the lives of African Americans, and especially women, in the areas of housing, labor, and healthcare. With regard to housing, the Council pressured Congress into upholding the promise made when the Sojourner Truth Housing Project was created and ensured that Blacks officially retain the right to live in the housing project as originally planned.<sup>119</sup> Regarding the Lucy D. Slowe Housing Project for Defense Workers in Washington, D.C., the Council was able to get the rent lowered

---

<sup>110</sup> *Id.*

<sup>111</sup> *Id.*

<sup>112</sup> *Id.*

<sup>113</sup> *Id.*

<sup>114</sup> *Id.* at 196.

<sup>115</sup> Norma E. Boyd & Thomasina Johnson, *National Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Dec. 1943, at 8.

<sup>116</sup> Boyd, *supra* note 105, at 5.

<sup>117</sup> *Id.*

<sup>118</sup> Boyd, *supra* note 105, at 6, 8.

<sup>119</sup> Boyd, *supra* note 105, at 6.

from \$8.85 to \$7.00 a week, which led to a savings of more than \$12,000 a year for Black women.<sup>120</sup> In the healthcare and labor arena, the Council obtained a non-discriminatory amendment to the Nurse Training Act, which led to an increase in the funding appropriated for nurse training.<sup>121</sup> This was the first and only antidiscrimination amendment in that session of Congress, and it allowed for Black nurses in non-segregated areas to have access to training in nearby hospitals.<sup>122</sup> To protect labor in general, the Council successfully opposed the Austin-Wadsworth Bill or Draft Labor Bill, because it was unnecessarily aimed at conscripting labor during war time, which the Council and other Americans feared would be enforced unfairly.<sup>123</sup>

The Council was active in making other influential moves vis-à-vis Congress on a range of topics. It supported the Federal Aid to Education Act, which provided a raise in teacher's salaries in order to 'reduce the inequalities of educational opportunities' and to ensure schools remained open.<sup>124</sup> The Council also successfully lobbied for the passage of the Anti-Poll Tax Act, which prohibited charging a fee of any kind as a requirement for voting as well as an Act that devoted \$30,000 "for a shrine at the birthplace of George Washington Carver."<sup>125</sup> After aiding in the passage of the Lanham Act, which allotted \$300,000 for housing grants and \$200,000 for community service, the Council devoted efforts to a study of the Children's Bureau, which revealed inequities between Black and White children.<sup>126</sup> The Council also called a conference of representatives, organizations, and agencies to discuss the improvement of community services for Black children by the Children's Bureau.<sup>127</sup> Also in the education arena, the Council worked to establish price control for the cost of education and helped with efforts to get a civil rights bill for the District of Columbia.<sup>128</sup>

The Council cooperated with local and national organizations and agencies whose goals coincided with its own, such as the NAACP, The Urban

---

<sup>120</sup> *Id.*

<sup>121</sup> Norma E. Boyd, *The Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1943, at 8.

<sup>122</sup> *Id.*

<sup>123</sup> Boyd, *supra* note 105, at 7-8.

<sup>124</sup> Norma E. Boyd & Thomasina Johnson, *The Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.), March 1945, at 8.

<sup>125</sup> Zarella R. Turner, Ed., *National Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Dec. 1943, at 8.

<sup>126</sup> *Id.*

<sup>127</sup> *Id.*

<sup>128</sup> *Id.*

League, the Congress of Colored Women's Clubs, the American Federation of Churches, the United Office and Professional Workers of America, the National Association of Graduate Nurses, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Auxiliary, and New York Voter's League.<sup>129</sup> The Council's activities included collaborating with local and national organizations and agencies, efforts pushing legislation, distributing publications and information informing Sorority members and others of important social issues, and pursuing national integration through the Department of State, the United Nations, and the United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.<sup>130</sup> Along the way, the Council changed structurally. Previously, it had been a lobbyist group; later, a sole member prepared testimony for Congressional hearings and reporting the results back to the group.<sup>131</sup> The Council's final report was presented at the 1948 Boule in Washington, DC.<sup>132</sup> The Council was successful in forging relationships with other organizations and agencies, especially other Greek organizations; Alpha Kappa Alpha recognized that the Council's success depended on support from the Sorority, and that it hadn't provided sufficient support for the continuance of the Council.<sup>133</sup>

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority was a founding member of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights,<sup>134</sup> as well as the American Council on Human Rights (ACHR), to which the Sorority retained active membership for fifteen years.<sup>135</sup> Officially starting in June of 1948,<sup>136</sup> the ACHR came as a direct result of Alpha Kappa Alpha members choosing to expand the Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs (NPCPA).<sup>137</sup> The sorority invited other member organizations of the Pan-Hellenic council to join in sponsoring a non-partisan lobby program, which the Delta Sigma Theta, Sigma Gamma Rho, and Zeta Phi Beta Sororities and the Alpha Phi Alpha and Phi Beta

---

<sup>129</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 196.

<sup>130</sup> *Id.*

<sup>131</sup> Norma E. Boyd, *Dear Sorors...* IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) June 1947, at 18.

<sup>132</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 196.

<sup>133</sup> *Id.* at 197.

<sup>134</sup> *Id.* at 50.

<sup>135</sup> *Id.*

<sup>136</sup> Thelma Thurston Gorham, *Editorially Yours: Will History Repeat Itself?*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1948, at 4.

<sup>137</sup> Edna Over Gray, *Message of the Supreme Basileus*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1948, at 5.

Sigma (PBS) Fraternities joined.<sup>138</sup> In 1949, the Fraternity Kappa Alpha Psi also joined.<sup>139</sup> The board of directors was composed of three members of each of the affiliated organizations, with Elmer W. Henderson serving as its first director.<sup>140</sup> The participating organizations cooperated in planning programs, providing financial support, and pursuing social initiatives.<sup>141</sup> The operating costs and representation of each organization on the board of directors was divided equally among cooperating organizations.<sup>142</sup>

The organization was divided into three sections: (1) Clearing House, which focused on collecting and disseminating information; (2) Social Action, which focused on planning the organization's strategy and action, as well as organizing social action campaigns; and (3) Education and Public Relations, through which the organization hoped to expand its understanding and good will as well as participation in and utilization of the program.<sup>143</sup> In her letter to the members of Alpha Kappa Alpha, the Supreme Basileus of Alpha Kappa Alpha and President of the ACHR, Edna Over Gray, asked that all chapters create a local committee "to serve as a connecting link between the central office and the local communities,"<sup>144</sup> and urged "every soror and every chapter to pledge full support to this significant new movement."<sup>145</sup>

The ACHR's purpose, like that of the NPCPA, was to extend "civil rights to all Americans, without regard to race, color or religion."<sup>146</sup> The

---

<sup>138</sup> *Id.*

<sup>139</sup> Marjorie Parker, *November 22, 1963 Milestone*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Mar. 1964, at 8.

<sup>140</sup> Edna Over Gray, *Message of the Supreme Basileus*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1948, at 5. The Board of Directors was as follows: Edna Over Gray (Alpha Kappa Alpha), President; Mae Wright Downs (Delta Sigma Theta), Vice President; Dr. R.O. Johnson (PBS), Recording Secretary; Emma V. Manning (Sigma Gamma Rho), Corresponding Secretary; Esther Peyton (ZPB), Treasurer; Belfor V. Lawson (Alpha Phi Alpha), General Council. *Id.* Norma Boyd and Beulah Whitby served as Alpha Kappa Alpha's original representatives. PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 197–98.

<sup>141</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 197.

<sup>142</sup> *Id.*

<sup>143</sup> Lucille McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1948, at 5.

<sup>144</sup> *Id.*

<sup>145</sup> *Id.*

<sup>146</sup> *Id.* President Edna Over Gray admits that, although they could only afford to focus on the United States, the Council "was fully aware of its responsibilities in regard to international problems." *Id.*

ACHR's objectives included: (1) social action for expanding employment opportunities; (2) achieving adequate housing for the underprivileged; and (3) supporting legislation favorable to its values and goals.<sup>147</sup> ACHR's plan was to "dedicate itself to a constant urging of the Congress and the Government to correct [the evils of racial discrimination] and through positive action bring into being a fuller realization of the basic principles of American democracy."<sup>148</sup> Recognizing that "reasoned argument is not sufficient to get action in Washington," the Director of ACHR, Elmer W. Henderson, asked that the individual members of the sororities and fraternities making up ACHR<sup>149</sup> place "constant pressure on individual Congressmen, Senators and Government officials."<sup>150</sup>

In September 1949, ACHR began publishing its bulletin, *Congress and Equality*, which covered the ACHR's progress in the current session of Congress.<sup>151</sup> In the year since its creation, the ACHR had thrown its support behind several major civil rights bills, as well as Housing and Education social legislation.<sup>152</sup> Not satisfied with its member participation, the bulletin called on the members to place more pressure on Congress regarding civil rights.<sup>153</sup> Additionally, the bulletin called out members of the Senate, indicating which were up for reelection in 1950 and who had voted against one of the most recent civil rights bills to enter the Senate floor, stating that they had "betrayed democracy, betrayed the cause of civil rights, betrayed the spirits of the platforms of both political parties and betrayed [African Americans] and other minorities who looked to them for redress from discriminations under which they have suffered so long."<sup>154</sup>

By early 1950, the ACHR had secured Secretary of the Interior Julius A. Krug's public promise that "[p]ublic facilities under the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior are going to be open to all on an equal basis and I

<sup>147</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 198.

<sup>148</sup> Lucille McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1948, at 22.

<sup>149</sup> The number of the constituency is estimated to include over 100,000 college students and graduates. PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 199.

<sup>150</sup> Lucille McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1948, at 22.

<sup>151</sup> Lucille McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your A.C.H.R. News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1949, at 6. The Bulletin was distributed to the local chapters and members of the Greek organizations making up ACHR. *Id.*

<sup>152</sup> *Id.*

<sup>153</sup> *Id.*

<sup>154</sup> *Id.*

don't mean 'separate but equal.'<sup>155</sup> The ACHR was heavily involved in the case *Henderson v. S. Railway Co.*, which was to be argued in front of the Supreme Court in the coming year.<sup>156</sup> It additionally became involved in the Fair Employment Practices Bill (FEPC bill), which was defeated in the House of Representatives by a coalition of Southern Democrats and Northern Republicans.<sup>157</sup> Although the ACHR considered the FEPC bill that passed to be "merely a pious resolution,"<sup>158</sup> it nevertheless devoted its resources to breaking what it predicted as "the inevitable filibuster,"<sup>159</sup> as well as "passing an FEPC bill with enforcement powers."<sup>160</sup> The ACHR's efforts proved to be fruitless, however: in 1950 the 81<sup>st</sup> Congress "expired without enacting the Fair Employment Practices Act, the anti-lynch and anti-poll tax bills."<sup>161</sup>

The ACHR was successful, however, in its support of the policy to end segregation of D.C. swimming pools, as Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman ordered that all swimming pools be operated on a non-segregated basis.<sup>162</sup> In addition to its work with Senators and Congressmen, the ACHR also asked President Truman to "end Army Jim-Crow, to act against colonialism, to step up the activity of his civil service Fair Employment Board and create machinery to enforce the non-discrimination provisions in all defense contracts."<sup>163</sup> In October 1950 the ACHR's board of directors met with President Truman and called on him "to act against racial and religious job discrimination in industries producing war materials and to

---

<sup>155</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Dec. 1949, at 6. The Bulletin was distributed to the local chapters and members of the Greek organizations making up ACHR. *Id.*

<sup>156</sup> *Id.*

<sup>157</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Mar. 1950, at 6.

<sup>158</sup> *Id.*

<sup>159</sup> *Id.*

<sup>160</sup> *Id.*

<sup>161</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Mar. 1951, at 8; *Congress and Equality* cited these actions as virtually amounting "to criminal negligence." Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF, Sept–Dec. 1950, at 10.

<sup>162</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept.–Dec. 1950, at 10.

<sup>163</sup> *Id.*

set up an agency similar to the Fair Employment Practices Committee which operated during World War Two.”<sup>164</sup>

In addition to its work in Congress, the ACHR continued to emphasize the need for the creation of local human rights councils in communities across the country, which were to be made up of local chapters of the member Fraternities and Sororities.<sup>165</sup> In 1950 one such council, the Howard University Council of the ACHR, held a series of informal teas for students from Catholic University, George Washington University, and Miner Teachers College as part of its project on “What Students Can do to Further Human Rights in the District of Columbia.”<sup>166</sup> Another local council, the New York Local ACHR, created a voter education plan for the 1950 primary and general elections and organized registration drives whereby the NY ACHR provided babysitter and transportation services to allow for increased registration.<sup>167</sup> In May 1950, the NY ACHR discussed starting a program meant to “convince realty interests that colored persons are good risks as property owners and to report evidences of discrimination by mortgage banks to the Justice Department as violations of the anti-trust laws.”<sup>168</sup> By June 1951, there were twenty-three operating local councils and twenty-five councils still undergoing the formation process.<sup>169</sup>

In 1951 Alpha Kappa Alpha voted to continue support for the ACHR for five years, and Alpha Kappa Alpha’s Supreme Basileus, Laura Lovelace, called on all local chapters to adhere to and follow the “program targets set up for the year by A.C.H.R.”<sup>170</sup> In her letter to the chapters, Laura Lovelace stated that “[e]fforts should be made at every opportunity to develop a readiness for integration.”<sup>171</sup> Alpha Kappa Alpha’s focus was to be on the creation and maintenance of a free and open housing market, and all legislative activity was to be aimed at ending the Senate rule which had led

---

<sup>164</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) March 1951, at 8.

<sup>165</sup> Scott, *supra* note 157, at 6.

<sup>166</sup> *Id.*

<sup>167</sup> Scott, *supra* note 164, at 11.

<sup>168</sup> *Id.*

<sup>169</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) June 1951, at 4.

<sup>170</sup> Laura Lovelace, *Message of Supreme Basileus*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Mar. 1951, at 4.

<sup>171</sup> *Id.*

to the failure of the FEPC bill in 1950<sup>172</sup> as the Sorority worked to become “effective tools of human betterment on the local scene,” and united “on the common cause of the rights of man.”<sup>173</sup>

In 1951 local California ACHR councils began a letter writing campaign promoting a state FEPC bill,<sup>174</sup> and by September the National ACHR had gathered the support of many national leaders to appoint a “qualified Negro American to fill the post made vacant by the resignation of David Niles, administrative assistant to President Truman.”<sup>175</sup> The director of ACHR urged Congress to “overhaul its legislative machinery” through the creation of standing Senate and House committees on civil rights; by revising Senate rules to eliminate the filibuster; by prioritizing elements of the majority party platform in Congress; and by developing a new system for the appointment of committee chairman.<sup>176</sup> By the end of 1951 ACHR had a list of eleven (11) legislative and governmental objectives:

- a. Passage of a Fair Employment Practice Act;
- b. Abolition of segregation and the assurance of equality of training and opportunity in the Armed Services;
- c. Passage of an anti-poll-tax bill and the adoption of any and all legislative and administrative measures to insure voting rights;
- d. Passage of an anti-lynching bill and the adoption of any and all administrative measures to end mob violence and protect the security of the person;
- e. Abolition of segregation in public transportation;

---

<sup>172</sup> *Id.* See also Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Chicago, Ill.) Sept.-Dec. 1950, at 10 (stating that the Senate Wherry rule, which requires 64 votes to shut off debate was a major reason behind the failed Employment bill); Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Chicago, Ill.) Mar. 1961, at 8-9 (stating that it was the opinion of ACHR as well as of several Senators that the Wherry Rule was one of the biggest obstacles for passing civil rights legislation like the FEPC bill, which was never allowed to come to a vote on the Senate floor).

<sup>173</sup> Lovelace, *supra* note 170.

<sup>174</sup> Scott, *supra* note 172, at 6.

<sup>175</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1951, at 4.

<sup>176</sup> *Id.* (noting that the appointment system in 1951 was a seniority system).

- f. Abolition of segregation and discrimination of all forms in the nation's capital;
- g. Passage of a Defense Housing Act with safeguards against discrimination;
- h. Passage of a Federal aid to education bill with safeguards against discrimination;
- i. Revision of the cloture rule to eliminate the undemocratic filibuster in the United States Senate;
- j. Fair representation of Negroes and other minorities in federal appointments; and
- k. Abolition of racial discrimination in immigration and naturalization.<sup>177</sup>

By December 1951 the organization was almost three years old and had accomplished many notable things, including: (1) helping to defeat the pro-segregation amendments to the Selective Service Act; (2) preventing the passage of a bill that would have interfered with the non-segregated swimming pool policy in D.C.; (3) successfully urging the President to appoint an African American to the advisory committee on the Point Four program; (4) continuously carrying out a campaign against segregation in the Army and making several recommendations which led to positive change in the Armed Forces; (5) supporting the successful suit *Henderson v. United States et al*, which outlawed discrimination in dining cars; (6) fighting for the passage of the National Housing Act, which contained features to help end discrimination; (7) joining other organizations to expand the Social Security Act to cover a greater range of workers; (8) striving (but failing) to pass the FEPC bill and other civil rights bills in Congress; (9) testifying before Congress on legislation involving minority interests; (10) helping to draft the Executive Order to prevent employment discrimination in defense industries and working to hold the President accountable to it; (11) participating in a Conference with President Truman discussing the needs of African American citizens; (12) leading the movement for the appointment of a qualified African American as White House Aide to the President; (13) striving to ensure full participation of African Americans and other minorities in defense programs; (14) joining other organizational leaders in working to further the employment of African American professionals; and (15) joining an *amicus*

---

<sup>177</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Dec. 1951, at 5.

*curiae* brief in the *Thompson Restaurant Case*, which led to a revived anti-discrimination ordinance in D.C.<sup>178</sup>

In 1952, ACHR threatened to pursue the *Smith v. Hotel Phillips* case, which was an important step in the “fight for equal accommodations for all persons in public places.”<sup>179</sup> The ACHR also filed an *amicus curiae* brief in the Thompson Restaurant Case, “which aims to validate the anti-discrimination ordinance in the District of Columbia.”<sup>180</sup> In an attempt to combat the “confederate flag craze” that was “sweeping the country” the ACHR began a movement “to encourage the public to fly the American flag as a symbol of faith in ultimate victory of the principles of equality of citizenship for all without regard to race or color in the United States.”<sup>181</sup> The ACHR submitted presentations to the platform committees for both the Republican and the Democratic national conventions, and were successful in keeping the issue of civil rights “in the ascendancy in both parties.”<sup>182</sup> Although ACHR considered the Republican Platform to be a “step backward” from its plan in 1948 and the Democratic Platform to be an “advance over 1948,” the ACHR strove to remain bipartisan and urged its members to urge as many African Americans to vote during this election, regardless of their presidential choice.<sup>183</sup>

Through the 1950s the ACHR continued to work both with government officials as well as through local actions within the communities.<sup>184</sup> In early 1953, ACHR sent nine proposals to President Eisenhower, including: (1) to appoint African Americans to positions of responsibility within agencies; (2) to strengthen the Fair Employment Board of the Civil Service Commission, which was created in 1949 with the purpose of eliminating “discrimination throughout the federal establishment;” and (3) to reconstitute and strengthen the committee on contract compliance within the Department of Labor, whose job it is to prevent discrimination by

---

<sup>178</sup> 339 U.S. 816 (1950); *D.C. v. John R. Thompson Co.*, 346 U.S. 100 (1953); Scott, *supra* note 177, at 6.

<sup>179</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Mar. 1952, at 5.

<sup>180</sup> *Id.*

<sup>181</sup> *Id.*

<sup>182</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept.-Dec. 1952, at 4-5.

<sup>183</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>184</sup> Lucile McAllister Scott, Ed., *Your ACHR News*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Chicago, Ill.) June 1952, at 8-9.

government contractors.<sup>185</sup> The ACHR also cooperated with other organizations as amici curiae in support of the plaintiffs in the *Bolling v. Sharpe* school segregation case from D.C., one of the cases that joined *Brown v. Topeka, Kansas, Board of Education*, the landmark case in which the Supreme Court outlawed segregation in public schools in 1954.<sup>186</sup> In response to *Brown v. Board of Education*, in June 1954 the ACHR created a pamphlet<sup>187</sup> to help local councils as well as cooperating organizations implement the decision and integrate public schools.<sup>188</sup> Recognizing that this case was the result of legal efforts put forth by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the council nevertheless urged its local counsel to “take all possible steps and even to adopt as a major project the implementation and proper execution of this great decision.”<sup>189</sup>

Following its October 1956 Board meeting, the ACHR submitted a list of problems, including the fact that school desegregation was “being denied citizens by threats, violence, and deceits,”<sup>190</sup> as well as the fact that there was a “continued policy and practice of racial discrimination in housing finances and urban re-development.”<sup>191</sup> In response, the council urged the president to “put the full force of the Executive Offices behind school desegregation,” and to establish “a President’s Committee on Fair Housing” for the “express purpose of eliminating segregated housing.”<sup>192</sup> Additionally, in 1957 the council hosted a National Workshop on Leadership Responsibilities and Techniques, focusing on: “(1) newer problems in racial discrimination; (2) techniques in the solution of these problems; and (3) the transition from

---

<sup>185</sup> Dorothy H. Davis, *ACHR Sends Proposal to President Eisenhower*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) June 1953, at 3.

<sup>186</sup> 347 U.S. 497 (1954); 347 U.S. 483 (1954); PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 198.

<sup>187</sup> 347 U.S. 483 (1954); The title of the pamphlet was “Integrating Our Schools,” and was available at the ACHR headquarters in D.C. Dorothy H. Davis, Ed., *ACHR Urges Steps to Integrate our Schools*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1954, at 25.

<sup>188</sup> *Id.*

<sup>189</sup> *Id.*

<sup>190</sup> Nancy Bullock McGhee, *Report of the President Board of Directors, American Council on Human Rights*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Dec. 1956, at 36.

<sup>191</sup> *Id.*

<sup>192</sup> *Id.*

desegregation to integration.”<sup>193</sup> In 1958, the ACHR voted to support legislation that would allow the Justice Department to act on “behalf of parents seeking to enter their children in a school,” and to act on “behalf of any person denied his civil rights.”<sup>194</sup> In 1960 the ACHR objectives were social action that would continue to work to eliminate discrimination and segregation based on race, color, religion or national origin, as well as continuing to educate both the council’s members and the public through workshops as well as registration and voting campaigns.<sup>195</sup>

The ACHR and the Non-Partisan Council significantly influenced the grassroots support for the civil rights movement.<sup>196</sup> The ACHR sponsored campaigns for both voter registration and education.<sup>197</sup> The ACHR sponsored a drive collecting funds for students whose education finances were withheld as punishment for their participation in desegregation activities.<sup>198</sup> Included in these students were the “young men who staged the first sit-ins in North Carolina.”<sup>199</sup>

Although the ACHR continued to fight for social change until 1963,<sup>200</sup> in early 1955 the ACHR experienced “depletions in membership and finance,” and Alpha Phi Alpha left the organization.<sup>201</sup> Focusing on three areas of concern: “(1) strengthening and improving human resources in staff personnel; (2) increasing financial support; and (3) reactivating and expanding the program of the Council in necessary areas, particularly with reference to grass roots participation,”<sup>202</sup> the Council’s Board of Directors strove to increase its membership numbers.<sup>203</sup> The results were positive:

---

<sup>193</sup> Laura K. Campbell, Ed., *ACHR Holds National Workshop on Leadership Responsibilities and Techniques*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Dec. 1957, at 10.

<sup>194</sup> Laura K. Campbell, Ed., *Supreme Basileus Participates in ACHR Future Program*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Sept. 1958, at 3.

<sup>195</sup> Mabel Bell Croos, Ed., *Among Our National Programs: ACHR*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Feb. 1961, at 7.

<sup>196</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 199.

<sup>197</sup> Parker *supra* note 139, at 9.

<sup>198</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 199.

<sup>199</sup> Parker *supra* note 139, at 9.

<sup>200</sup> *Id.*

<sup>201</sup> Nancy Bullock McGhee, *Report of the President Board of Directors, American Council on Human Rights*, IVY LEAF (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Chicago, Ill.) Dec. 1956, at 34.

<sup>202</sup> *Id.*

<sup>203</sup> *Id.*

Alpha Phi Alpha voted to reconsider its withdrawal, Zeta Phi Beta voted to continue its support through 1956, and, in 1956, Kappa Alpha Psi voted to continue its support as well.<sup>204</sup> Success was also found in expanding the Council's grass roots participation,<sup>205</sup> but by 1956 the organization was still not seeing the financial gains it wanted.<sup>206</sup> In response, the Council began to discuss new ways to increase financial support without relying on memberships.<sup>207</sup> By 1957, Alpha Phi Alpha had still not rejoined the Council.<sup>208</sup> By 1959 both Kappa Alpha Psi and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternities had also left, leaving only the Sororities Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Phi Delta Kappa, Sigma Gamma Rho, and Zeta Phi Beta.<sup>209</sup> Eventually, membership would drop down to four, as Delta Sigma Theta Sorority left, leaving Alpha Kappa Alpha, Phi Delta Kappa, Sigma Gamma Rho and Zeta Phi Beta.<sup>210</sup> Finally recognizing that "the focus and characteristics of ACHR had been modified, [and] its supporters had changed in their approach to problems and in the resources available to them," members of the four remaining sororities decided to offer the recommendation to terminate the Council.<sup>211</sup> The Board of Directors accepted this recommendation, and on November 22, 1963,<sup>212</sup> a gala was held, and the Council's funds were distributed<sup>213</sup> amongst the Prince Edward County Free School Association, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.<sup>214</sup>

---

<sup>204</sup> *Id.*

<sup>205</sup> *Id.* at 35.

<sup>206</sup> *Id.*

<sup>207</sup> *Id.*

<sup>208</sup> *ACHR Holds National Workshop on Leadership Responsibilities and Techniques*, *supra* note 196, at 11.

<sup>209</sup> *ACHR Board Meets in Washington*, IVY LEAF, (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Chicago, Ill.), Sept. 1959, at 6.

<sup>210</sup> *Id.*

<sup>211</sup> Parker *supra* note 139, at 9.

<sup>212</sup> Former Supreme Basileus Marjorie Parker noted that the committee in charge of the gala decided to go on, despite President Kennedy's assassination, and, "in a very real sense the event became tribute to a martyr." *Id.*

<sup>213</sup> *Id.*

<sup>214</sup> PARKER, *supra* note 89, at 199.

### III. ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA'S ORGANIZATIONAL COMPLEXITY AND THE CHALLENGES TO RACIAL UPLIFT ACTIVISM

Despite their high ideals and laudable history, Alpha Kappa Alpha's complex identity may pose some challenges for the organization in its ability to properly address racial uplift activism in the twenty-first century.<sup>215</sup> Specifically, undergraduate members' marginal or poor academic performance, fissures in sisterhood bonds, members' marginal or nonexistent race consciousness, and their lack of organizational commitment may hamper Alpha Kappa Alpha's racial uplift thrust, particularly in the areas of civic activism and shaping public policy.<sup>216</sup>

#### *Academic Achievement*

Though Black fraternities have worked to inculcate their members with the importance of scholastic achievement, evidence does not support the notion that members gain any advantage over their non-affiliated counterparts in the classroom. In a review of university grade reports, Shaun Harper and colleagues found that a large percentage of GPAs of Black fraternities have fallen well below the overall average GPAs of other college fraternities.<sup>217</sup> In their study, Chambers and colleagues found that the mean GPAs of NPHC members fell between 2.59 and 2.97.<sup>218</sup> With the exception of Alpha Phi Alpha, sororities statistically outperformed every other fraternity observed in the study.<sup>219</sup> These achievement gaps were not indicative of students' propensity to perform, as they were enrolled in flagship, research-intensive institutions and their GPAs were relatively strong prior to college enrollment.<sup>220</sup>

Harper and colleagues provide a cautionary, though not alarmist, perspective.<sup>221</sup> For example, research illustrates a link between BGLO membership and positive gains in the ability to acquire and apply knowledge

---

<sup>215</sup> See generally Shaun R. Harper & Frank Harris III, *The Role of Black Fraternities in the African American Male Undergraduate Experience*, in AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN IN COLLEGE, 128, 128-50 (Michael J. Cuyjet ed., 2006)(discussing the history of the positive effects of BGLO affiliation, as well as the contemporary negative aspects).

<sup>216</sup> See *id.* at 141-49.

<sup>217</sup> *Id.* at 146-47.

<sup>218</sup> Crystal Renee Chambers et al., *Academic Achievement of African American Fraternities and Sororities*, in AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE VISION 189, 198-203 (Tamera L. Brown, G.S. Parks, 2d ed. 2012).

<sup>219</sup> *Id.* at 242.

<sup>220</sup> *Id.*

<sup>221</sup> Chambers et al., *supra* note 218, at 201.

in complex ways.<sup>222</sup> In a more obvious and direct way, poor academic achievement, along with poor critical thinking and weak problem-solving capabilities, may negatively affect BGLOs' ability to positively influence the social and cultural capital of their members. In this sense, social and cultural capital refers to an individual's network, access to resources, and ability to acquire knowledge.<sup>223</sup> Poor academic performance can lessen a person's opportunity to expand his or her social and cultural capital.<sup>224</sup> When Black students' social and cultural capital is limited, their ability to secure top internships, graduate and professional school admissions, and employment opportunities decreases.<sup>225</sup> For example, in their research, Stephen Knouse and colleagues found that undergraduate GPA predicted one's ability to not only secure an internship in college, but also a job upon graduation.<sup>226</sup> Even more, Cecil Johnson found in his study of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity members that ultimate educational attainment predicted career success.<sup>227</sup> In this way, poor academic performance can negatively impact a BGLO's ability to advocate for racial uplift activism from a position of power and influence within the larger community, as its members may be professionally and financially constrained. This constraint may limit the amount of time and financial resources members can allocate to their respective organizations in the service of the greater community good.

Contemporary racial uplift activism may require creative and nontraditional solutions to recurring problems. Thus, current BGLO members should, but may not, possess a certain level of critical-thinking and "out-of-the-box" thinking skills needed to be effective community problem-solvers. Without a motivated force of critical thinkers, BGLOs will lack the ability to effectively design and develop socially-based projects that successfully address the diverse set of needs that are prevalent in the Black community. Even more, poor undergraduate academic performance on the part of BGLO members may further handicap these organizations' racial

---

<sup>222</sup> *Id.*

<sup>223</sup> PRUDENCE L. CARTER, *KEEPIN' IT REAL* 137 (Cathy Cohen & Fredrick Harris eds. 2005).

<sup>224</sup> *See id.* at 50.

<sup>225</sup> *Id.* at 29.

<sup>226</sup> Stephen B. Knouse et al., *The Relation of College Internships, College Performance, and Subsequent Job Opportunity*, 36 J. EMP'T COUNSELING 35 (1999).

<sup>227</sup> Cecil Douglas Johnson, *In Search of Traditional and Contemporary Career Success: What's an African American Male to Do?* (Mar 26, 2001) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation University of Georgia) (on file with author).

uplift activities where members are left unemployed, underemployed, or without a reasonable modicum of job and financial security, all of which may be set in motion by undergraduate academic performance.

### *Sisterhood*

In keeping with the notion of social capital, research indicates that social networking and civic activity are interconnected.<sup>228</sup> Social networks are formed when individuals feel a sense of belonging within a group. Social identity—the process people use to classify themselves and others in the social world—helps to shape these networks.<sup>229</sup> The “oneness” felt within the social network creates a sense of belonging for the members of the group and creates an exclusive environment.<sup>230</sup>

Social networks can create fissures within an organization based upon individual characteristics, including age, race, religion, and sexual orientation. Within BGLOs, age and generational differences can play a role in undermining racial uplift activism. As individual BGLOs approach and exceed one hundred years of existence, the ages of members vary widely. These age gaps could be responsible for generational divides between younger and older members.<sup>231</sup> Age gaps have been particularly relevant for younger members identifying with hip-hop culture and for older members with more “traditional and mainstream views” on how BGLOs should promote themselves.<sup>232</sup> Diverging expectations on issues such as fraternal

---

<sup>228</sup> Michael J. Stern & Andrew S. Fullerton, *The Network Structure of Local and Extra-Local Voluntary Participation: The Role of Core Social Networks*, 90 SOC. SCI. Q. 553 (2009).

<sup>229</sup> Reynaldo Anderson et al., *Black Greek-Letter Fraternities and Masculinities*, in BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS 2.0: NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES 114, 120-31 (M. W. Hughey & G. S. Parks eds., 2011); Rashawn Ray et al., “*Invictus*” and “*If—*”: *Meaning Making and the Shaping of a Collective Black Greek identity*, in AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE VISION 445, (Tamara L. Brown et al., eds., 2d ed. 2012).

<sup>230</sup> Anderson et al., *supra* note 229, at 130; Lindsay H. Hoffman & Osei Appiah, *Assessing Cultural and Contextual Components of Social Capital: Is Civil Engagement in Peril?*, 19 HOW. J. COMM. 334, 334 (2008).

<sup>231</sup> Anderson et al., *supra* note 229, at 130.

<sup>232</sup> Matthew W. Hughey, “‘Cuz I’m Black and my Hat’s Real Low?’: A Critique of Black Greeks as “Educated Gangs,” in BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: OUR FIGHT HAS JUST BEGUN 385, 401-02 (Gregory S. Parks ed., 2008).

reputation, the representation of fraternal symbols, presentation of self, and academic attainment can limit interaction between younger and older members.

While interracial pledge classes have existed in BGLOs since the 1950s, some BGLOs and members still debate the propriety of admitting non-Black members.<sup>233</sup> Criticism of non-Black BGLO members derives from BGLO members and, more frequently, individuals of the non-Black member's racial group.<sup>234</sup> The potential fissures created by racial issues within BGLOs are quite varied. Some fear the loss of tradition with the initiation of non-Blacks, while others are concerned about the direction of civic engagement with non-Blacks as members. There are members, however, who believe that the inclusion of non-Blacks is in keeping with the ideals of BGLOs.<sup>235</sup>

Religious affiliation also may create fissures in civic involvement within BGLOs. The vast majority of BGLO members are Christians, of various denominations.<sup>236</sup> However, there is a small subset of BGLO members who believe that there is a tension between their BGLO affiliation and Christian identity.<sup>237</sup> Frequently, these individuals renounce their BGLO membership.<sup>238</sup> In their exploration of the experiences of non-Christian, non-heterosexual, and non-Black members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Rashawn Ray and Kevin W. Spragling found that religion is an important dimension that influences members' social interactions with and treatment from other members.<sup>239</sup> Ray and Spragling found that over half of non-

---

<sup>233</sup> Matthew W. Hughey, "I Did It for the Brotherhood": Nonblack Members in Black Greek-Letter Organizations, in *BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: OUR FIGHT HAS JUST BEGUN* 313, 318-20 (Gregory S. Parks ed., 2008).

<sup>234</sup> *Id.*

<sup>235</sup> *Id.*

<sup>236</sup> Kenneth I. Clarke Sr. & Tamara L. Brown, *Faith and Fraternalism: A Doctrinal and Empirical Analysis*, in *BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS 2.0: NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES* 69, 70-71 (Matthew W. Hughey & Gregory S. Parks eds., 2011).

<sup>237</sup> *See id.*

<sup>238</sup> *See* Brother P., *Ex-BGLO Union's Weblog*, WORDPRESS.COM, <http://exbglounion.wordpress.com/> (last updated Apr. 23, 2010).

<sup>239</sup> RASHAWN RAY & KEVIN W. SPRAGLING, *Am I Not a Man and a Brother? Authenticating the Racial, Religious, and Masculine Dimensions of Brotherhood within Alpha*, in *ALPHA PHI ALPHA AND THE CRISIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL*

Christian fraternity members report experiencing forms of mistreatment and isolation from Christian members based on their religious beliefs.<sup>240</sup>

Sexual orientation serves as a rather controversial issue, particularly within Black Greek-letter fraternities (BGLFs).<sup>241</sup> While religious interpretations of homosexuality vary, in keeping with traditional Christian beliefs, many African American fraternity members struggle with the notion of homosexuality. Black fraternal membership carries with it a strong sense of collective and personal masculinity, which many members perceive as contrary to homosexuality.<sup>242</sup> One study found that homophobia within BGLFs was not an unexamined prejudice, but rather an ideology in keeping with a belief system that is “discussed, debated, and refined.”<sup>243</sup> While homosexuality may appear contrary to ideals of Black masculinity cultivated by BGLFs, homophobia will only exclude potential leaders in the ongoing crusade for social justice and equality.

In a study of social capital formation within a voluntary youth association, researchers found that White participants exhibited a tendency toward racial homophily, while Black participants were equally likely to form interracial ties with socially dissimilar peers as with socially similar peers.<sup>244</sup> Thus, Whites were shown to be less likely to create relationships that transcended race, gender, and educational boundaries, thereby limiting their ability to create network ties and accumulate social capital.<sup>245</sup> Black Greek-letter organizations place a similar limitation on their ability to foster network ties across all social boundaries where age, race, and religious chasms exist.<sup>246</sup> This may be no more clear than in the context of BGLFs vis-à-vis gay membership. This is in part due to the homophobic views of BGLF members and the failure of BGLF leadership to address the issues or create safe spaces where the issue can be discussed.

---

IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY WITHIN BLACK GREEKDOM 207, 207 (Gregory Parks & Stefan Bradley eds., 2011).

<sup>240</sup> *Id.* at 219.

<sup>241</sup> ALAN D. DESANTIS & MARCUS. COLEMAN, *Not on My Line: Attitudes about Homosexuality in Black Fraternities*, in BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY 291, 291 (Gregory S. Parks ed., 2008).

<sup>242</sup> RAY & SPRAGLING, *supra* note 239, at 225.

<sup>243</sup> DESANTIS & COLEMAN, *supra* note 241, at 308.

<sup>244</sup> LYNN A. HAMPTON & EBONY M. DUNCAN, *Identities and Inequalities: An Examination of the Role of Racial Identity in the Formation of Social Capital Inside a Voluntary Youth Organization*, 17 SOC. IDENTITIES 477, 477 (2011).

<sup>245</sup> *Id.* at 487.

<sup>246</sup> *See generally id.*

The case of Brian Stewart presents a paradigmatic instance of this phenomenon. Stewart, a bright young man who had served as a White House intern, was rejected one day after interviewing to join Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity at Morgan State University.<sup>247</sup> Stewart was later sent a series of social media messages between fraternity members discussing Stewart, one of which included a homophobic slur.<sup>248</sup> After Morgan State investigated his complaint, the university placed the Kappa Alpha Psi chapter on probation for discriminating against Stewart on the basis of his sexual orientation.<sup>249</sup> Black Greek-letter fraternities cannot hope to bring in members of the homosexual community so long as they allow incidents like this to continue.

### *Racial Consciousness*

For decades, psychologists and political scientists have been researching the extent to which individuals identify with their own racial group and the influence that such identity has on political engagement. In 1961, Donald Matthews and James Prothro examined the attitudes and behaviors of Blacks, as well as the reactions and attitudes of Whites, in the U.S. South. In the researchers' assessment of the prerequisites of Black leadership, they identified "an interest in and identification with other members of the race."<sup>250</sup> Such racial "interest and identification" can more broadly be conceptualized in the context of group identity, racial identity, and race consciousness.<sup>251</sup>

Group identification is "an individual's awareness of belonging to a certain group and having a psychological attachment to that group based on a perception of shared beliefs, feelings, interests, and ideas with other group

---

<sup>247</sup> Carrie Wells, *Morgan State Student Says Fraternity Rejected Him for Being Gay*, BALTIMORE SUN (Oct. 28, 2013),

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/blog/bs-md-morgan-fraternity-conflict20131028,0,6909785.story>.

<sup>248</sup> *Id.*

<sup>249</sup> Carrie Wells, *Morgan Fraternity Accused of Rejecting Gay Student is Put on Probation Until 2015*, BALTIMORE SUN (Dec. 3, 2013),

[http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-12-03/features/bs-md-morgan-frat-probation-20131203\\_1\\_fraternity-chapter-kappa-alpha-psi-morgan-state](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-12-03/features/bs-md-morgan-frat-probation-20131203_1_fraternity-chapter-kappa-alpha-psi-morgan-state).

<sup>250</sup> DONALD R. MATTHEWS & JAMES WARREN PROTHRO, *THE NEGROES AND THE NEW SOUTHERN POLITICS* 446 (1966).

<sup>251</sup> *Id.*

members.”<sup>252</sup> Group identity has further been framed within the context of social identity theory such that an individual’s identity is largely defined by group membership.<sup>253</sup> In turn, racial identity is the “awareness of and identification with a racial group based on feelings of in-group closeness.”<sup>254</sup> Black racial identity is the extent to which Blacks identify with Blacks. Psychologist William Cross articulated a five-stage theory of Black racial identification, called Nigrescence, which translates as: “the process of becoming Black.”<sup>255</sup>

The model progresses through the Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion, Emersion, and Internalization stages.<sup>256</sup> In the pre-encounter stage, the individual is unaware of his or her race and the social implications that come with racial categorization.<sup>257</sup> In the encounter stage, the individual experiences a situation that suddenly and sharply raises race as an issue; it is generally an awakening to race consciousness. This encounter makes the individual open to a new, racialized worldview.<sup>258</sup> In the immersion stage, the individual becomes consciously Black, though this consciousness is often provincial where Blackness is oversimplified.<sup>259</sup> The emersion stage is characterized by a growth from the oversimplified ideologies.<sup>260</sup> During the internalization stage, an individual has internalized their Blackness and no longer feels the need to “wear it on their sleeve.”<sup>261</sup> In turn, they are comfortable rejoining society with a strong sense of their racial self to be able to forge relationships with members from other racial/ethnic groups.<sup>262</sup> Not surprisingly, researchers have found that Black racial identity predicts community outreach such that the pre-encounter stage negatively (i.e., weaker racial identity), and the immersion-emersion and internalization

---

<sup>252</sup> Paula D. McClain et al., *Group Membership, Group Identity, and Group Consciousness: Measures of Racial Identity Politics?*, 12 ANNU. REV. POL. SCI. 471, 474 (2009).

<sup>253</sup> *Id.* at 474.

<sup>254</sup> *Id.* at 475.

<sup>255</sup> WILLIAM E. CROSS, *SHADES OF BLACK: DIVERSITY IN AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY* 157 (1991).

<sup>256</sup> *Id.* at 158-59.

<sup>257</sup> *Id.* at 190-91.

<sup>258</sup> *Id.* at 159.

<sup>259</sup> *Id.* at 159.

<sup>260</sup> *Id.* at 207.

<sup>261</sup> *Id.* at 210.

<sup>262</sup> *Id.* at 212.

stages positively (i.e., stronger racial identity), predict community outreach among Black college students.<sup>263</sup>

Moving beyond simply group and racial identity, race consciousness is the “willingness of an individual not only to identify with her racial group but also to work with the collective group.”<sup>264</sup> Other scholars have defined it as “in-group identification politicized by a set of ideological beliefs about one’s group’s social standing, as well as a view that collective action is the best means by which the group can improve in status and realize its interests.”<sup>265</sup> Internal and external influences shape the ways in which an individual develops his or her racial identity, including social norms and social institutions. Group consciousness plays a pivotal role in racial uplift activism, as it is utilized to mobilize Blacks to confront racism and protect the interests of the community.<sup>266</sup> Research has demonstrated that Blacks’ race consciousness explains Black political involvement in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>267</sup>

The question for BGLOs is the extent to which their membership’s racial identity and race consciousness impact these organizations’ racial uplift agenda. Participation in BGLOs has shaped the ways in which members progress through the racial identity development process. Shaun Harper and colleagues explored how Cross’ Nigrescence theory, and Parham and Helm’s theory of Blacks’ self-actualization, highlight the importance of providing Black students with the space to conceptualize and experience Blackness.<sup>268</sup> Those who viewed their racial identity in favorable terms developed higher levels of self-esteem and effectively achieved their academic goals.<sup>269</sup> According to Harper and colleagues, BGLOs serve as an important vehicle for the exploration of racial identity, and they provide Black students with

---

<sup>263</sup> See Joe L. Lott, II, *Racial Identity and Black Students’ Perceptions of Community Outreach: Implications for Bonding and Social Capital*, 77 J. NEGRO EDUC. 3 (2008).

<sup>264</sup> Jane Junn & Natalie Masuoka, *Identities in Context: Politicized Racial Group Consciousness Among Asian American and Latino Youth*, 12 APPLIED DEV. SCI. 93, 95 (2008).

<sup>265</sup> McClain et al., *supra* note 252, at 476.

<sup>266</sup> Junn & Masuoka, *supra* note 264, at 95.

<sup>267</sup> McClain et al., *supra* note 252, at 478 (citing sources); see also Arthur H. Miller et al., *Group Consciousness and Political Participation*, 25 AM. J. POLI. SCI. 494, 503-04 (1981).

<sup>268</sup> Harper et al., *supra* note 215, at 135.

<sup>269</sup> *Id.* at 136.

the opportunity to negotiate their understandings of race within a safe environment.<sup>270</sup>

Implicit, subconscious racial bias offers a counter-narrative to research that suggests that BGLO members have stronger racial identities than Blacks who are non-members. Expressions of implicit racial bias among BGLO members may go unrecognized by those possessing bias.<sup>271</sup> According to measures like the Implicit Association Test (IAT), approximately seventy percent of Whites in the United States maintain automatic, implicit anti-Black/pro-White biases.<sup>272</sup> Similar studies have established that fifty to sixty percent of Blacks harbor similar biases, though less consistently than Whites.<sup>273</sup> When BGLO members took the race IAT during one study, nearly twenty-three percent reported implicit racial bias for Whites.<sup>274</sup> When college-age members were more closely scrutinized, forty percent demonstrated an implicit anti-Black/pro-White bias.<sup>275</sup> In contrast, no participant expressed an explicit preference for Whites over Blacks.<sup>276</sup> This research suggests that implicit racial biases may undermine a significant portion of BGLO members' race consciousness and, in turn, commitment to racial uplift activism.

#### *Organizational Commitment*

There is no guarantee that BGLO members will remain financially and physically engaged in their respective organization for life. As it relates to how new members are brought into BGLOs, studies show that members who are hazed may be more likely to be active long-term.<sup>277</sup> A number of theories have been put forth to explain this. First, cognitive dissonance theory posits that incongruous cognitions create uncomfortable psychological tensions, and a person experiencing dissonance will alter cognitions to

---

<sup>270</sup> *Id.* at 137.

<sup>271</sup> Shanette C. Porter & Gregory S. Parks, *The Realities and Consequences of Unconscious Anti-Black Bias among BGLO Members*, in *BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS 2.0: NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES* 162, 165 (Matthew W. Hughey & Gregory S. Parks eds., 2011).

<sup>272</sup> *Id.* at 163.

<sup>273</sup> *Id.* at 165.

<sup>274</sup> *Id.* at 168.

<sup>275</sup> *Id.*

<sup>276</sup> *Id.*

<sup>277</sup> See, e.g., Elliott Aronson & Judson Mills, *The Effects of Severity of Initiation on Liking for a Group*, 59 *J. ABNORMAL & SOC. PSYCHOL.* 177 (1959).

achieve a greater degree of consonance and reduce the tension.<sup>278</sup> In the context of BGLOs, a member who underwent a severe initiation enjoys membership but did not enjoy the initiation experience; the member overvalues membership to compensate for the severity of the initiation and thereby lessen dissonance.<sup>279</sup> Alternatively, under affiliation theory, BGLO members who have gone through the trauma of a severe initiation will naturally seek out the company and comfort of those who have shared the experience.<sup>280</sup> Dependence theory holds that members of BGLOs that go through severe initiations develop dependency on those administering the initiation.<sup>281</sup> More recent studies have cast doubt on the relationship between hazing and group commitment.<sup>282</sup>

Organizational theorists suggest that “organizational effectiveness is multidimensional.”<sup>283</sup> Although a solid infrastructure contributes to an organization’s success, effectiveness is not ensured by “organizational design alone... [M]embers of the organization [must] behave in a manner supportive of organizational goals.”<sup>284</sup> Organizational effectiveness depends upon the willingness of its members to remain active and display “dependable role behavior, as prescribed by the organization, and spontaneous and innovative behavior which go beyond explicit behavioral prescriptions.”<sup>285</sup> A committed member’s participation and production promote organizational effectiveness.

Accordingly, that is why reclamation—the reclaiming of inactive members—is focused upon these groups. In fact, even where engaged, there is no promise that there will be a commitment on the part of BGLO members to racial uplift activism via their fraternity or sorority. Consequently, BGLOs can be only as effective in the realm of racial uplift activism as their active and engaged members demand and to the extent that they are willing to participate.

---

<sup>278</sup> Gregory S. Parks et. al., *Belief, Truth, and Positive Organizational Deviance*, 56 HOW. L.J. 399, 427 (2013).

<sup>279</sup> *Id.* at 427-28.

<sup>280</sup> *Id.* at 431.

<sup>281</sup> *Id.* at 430.

<sup>282</sup> *Id.* at 441-43.

<sup>283</sup> H. L. Angle & J. L. Perry, *An Empirical Assessment of Organizational Commitment and Organizational Effectiveness*, 26 ADMIN. SCI. Q. 1, 2 (1981).

<sup>284</sup> *Id.*

<sup>285</sup> *Id.*

## CONCLUSION

Many believe that the accomplishments achieved during the twentieth century solved America's race problem.<sup>286</sup> With the election of the first Black president, Barack Obama, this sentiment has been further solidified for some.<sup>287</sup> However, President Obama's symbolic victory for racial progress cannot be misconstrued with the lack of real social change in the lives of Black Americans. Research on education,<sup>288</sup> the labor market,<sup>289</sup> housing,<sup>290</sup> law and crime, and health<sup>291</sup> show that significant racial differences still exist.

America has never fully departed from separate and unequal educational practices. Neighborhoods are more segregated now than in the

---

<sup>286</sup> See RACE AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: HISTORY, THEORY, INSTITUTIONS, AND POLICY (Rashawn Ray ed., 2010).

<sup>287</sup> See THE OBAMAS AND A (POST) RACIAL AMERICA? (Matthew W. Hughey & Gregory S. Parks eds., 2011).

<sup>288</sup> PRUDENCE L. CARTER, KEEPIN' IT REAL: SCHOOL SUCCESS BEYOND BLACK AND WHITE (2005); see also ANGEL L. HARRIS, KIDS DON'T WANT TO FAIL: OPPOSITIONAL CULTURE AND THE BLACK-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP (2011); JONATHON KOZOL, THE SHAME OF A NATION: THE RESTORATION OF APARTHEID SCHOOLING IN AMERICA (2006); KAROLYN TYSON, INTEGRATION INTERRUPTED: TRACKING, BLACK STUDENTS, AND ACTING WHITE AFTER BROWN (2011).

<sup>289</sup> See Mary Hunt & Rashawn Ray, *Social Class Identifications Among Black Americans: Trends and Determinates, 1974-2010*, 56 AM. BEHAV. SCIENTIST 1462 (2012); see also DEVAH PAGER, MARKED: RACE, CRIME, AND FINDING WORK IN AN ERA OF MASS INCARCERATION (2007); DEIRDRE A. ROYSTER, RACE AND THE INVISIBLE HAND: HOW WHITE NETWORKS EXCLUDE BLACK MEN FROM BLUE-COLLAR JOBS (2003).

<sup>290</sup> See Karyn Lacy, *All's Fair? The Foreclosure Crisis and Middle-Class Black (In)Stability*, 56 AM. BEHAV. SCI. 1565 (2012); see also DOUGLAS S. MASSEY & NANCY A. DENTON, AMERICAN APARTHEID: SEGREGATION AND THE MAKING OF THE UNDERCLASS (1993); MELVIN L. OLIVER & THOMAS M. SHAPIRO, BLACK WEALTH, WHITE WEALTH: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON RACIAL INEQUALITY (1995).

<sup>291</sup> See Pamela Braboy Jackson & Quincy Thomas Stewart, *A Research Agenda for the Black Middle Class: Work Stress, Survival Strategies, and Mental Health*, 44 J. HEALTH & SOC. BEHAV. 442 (2003); see also Thomas LaVeist, et al., *Place Not Race: Disparities Dissipate in Southwest Baltimore When Black and Whites Live Under Similar Conditions*, 30 HEALTH AFFAIRS 1880 (2011); Thomas LaVeist & John M. Wallace, *Health Risk and Inequitable Distribution of Liquor Stores in African American Neighborhoods*, 51 SOC. SCI. MED. 613 (2000); KHALIL GIBRAN MUHAMMAD, THE CONDEMNATION OF BLACKNESS: RACE, CRIME, AND THE MAKING OF MODERN URBAN AMERICA (2010); David R. Williams & Chiquita Collins, *U.S. Socioeconomic and Racial Differences in Health: Patterns and Explanations*, 21 ANN. REV. SOC. 349 (1995).

1950s.<sup>292</sup> Consequently, schools are highly segregated by race.<sup>293</sup> In turn, the quality of schooling across districts is unequal because of the link between property taxes and school funding. As a result, minority students overwhelmingly attend underfunded schools in comparison with their White counterparts.<sup>294</sup> Even when minority students are bussed to high-achieving schools, they are more likely to be tracked into lower-level courses.<sup>295</sup> Despite claims that Blacks are genetically inferior, culturally inept, or “acting White,” empirical research shows that Blacks are actually more engaged in school than some of their White counterparts and that school and neighborhood resources have been attributed to most of their low academic outcomes.<sup>296</sup> The poor caliber of schools that minority students attend is coupled with the continued deconstruction of Affirmative Action policies which would otherwise counter inequities prevalent at the university level.<sup>297</sup>

In addition, labor market outcomes are bleak in the Black community. Black unemployment rates remain twice as high as those of Whites and are even higher for Black men. Sociological research points to discrimination as a main culprit.<sup>298</sup> Further, Blacks face egregious forms of discrimination in the housing market. The current recession has affected the wealth of Blacks in crippling ways. It is estimated that Blacks have lost over fifty percent of their wealth in the past five to seven years. Besides Blacks living in more

---

<sup>292</sup> Jeffery C. Dixon, *The Ties that Bind and Those that Don't: Toward Reconciling Group Threat and Contact Theories of Prejudice*, 84 SOC. FORCES 2179 (2006).

<sup>293</sup> PAUL STREET, SEGREGATED SCHOOLS: EDUCATIONAL APARTHEID IN POST-CIVIL RIGHTS AMERICA 11-18 (2005).

<sup>294</sup> KOZOL, *supra* note 288, at 236.

<sup>295</sup> TYSON, *supra* note 288, at 8.

<sup>296</sup> See CARTER, *supra* note 288, at 8; see also R. L. Lewis & E. Pattison, *Cracking the Education Achievement Gap(s)*, in RACE AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: HISTORY, THEORY, INSTITUTIONS, AND POLICY 297 (R. Ray ed., 2010).

<sup>297</sup> Brief for Harvard Graduate School of Education Students for Diversity as Amici Curiae Supporting Respondents, *Fisher v. Univ. of Texas at Austin*, 133 S. Ct. 2411 (2013) (No. 11-345).

<sup>298</sup> See Marianne Bertrand & Sendhil. Mullainathan, *Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination*, 94 AM. ECON. REV. 991, 992 (2004); see also Devah Pager & Diane. Karafin, *Bayesian Bigot? Statistical Discrimination, Stereotypes, and Employer Decision Making*, 621 ANNALS AM. ACAD. POL. & SOC. SCI. 70 (2009); ROYSTER, *supra* note 289, at 7.

fragile housing markets situated closer to poorer neighborhoods,<sup>299</sup> Blacks are more likely than Whites to receive subprime housing loans even when they have better credit and higher incomes.<sup>300</sup> In fact, recent multimillion-dollar settlements with the federal government by Wells Fargo, Bank of America, and Morgan Stanley have resulted in these companies admitting predatory lending against Blacks and Latinos.

Moreover, neighborhood segregation leads to the profiling and criminalization of Blacks. Compared to Whites, Blacks are more likely to be stopped by the police and are sanctioned with longer sentences for similar crimes. As a result, studies show that one-third of Black men will spend some time during their lives in the criminal justice system.<sup>301</sup> The proliferation of Black-on-Black crime, mostly among young Black males in urban areas, must also be acknowledged for spikes in mortality rates. In turn, Blacks have higher rates of mortality, morbidity, obesity, and chronic diseases than Whites.<sup>302</sup>

The disparities detailed above are not only emblematic of the experiences of poor and working-class Blacks but transcend social class to affect middle-class Blacks as well. Middle-class Blacks are more likely than middle-class Whites to live beside or in poorer neighborhoods that do not appreciate on par with the national housing market and are zoned for subpar schools.<sup>303</sup> As a result, professional Blacks who work with professional Whites do not share in the middle-class lifestyle of economic security, safety and good health. The problems that Blacks face give further credence to the importance of racial uplift activism in the twenty-first century. The question is what organized Blacks can and will do to systematically address these issues. The resistance that one might get to such an inquiry from BGLOs and their members is likely to be in the realm of a denial that BGLOs are anything more than fraternities and sororities that, at best, are charged with doing community service and being philanthropic. But their history and

---

<sup>299</sup> MARY PATTILLO-MCCOY, *BLACK PICKET FENCES: PRIVILEGE AND PERIL AMONG THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS* (1999); Abigail A. Sewell, *A Different Menu: Racial Residential Segregation and the Persistence of Racial Inequality*, in *RACE AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: HISTORY, THEORY, INSTITUTIONS, AND POLICY* 287 (R. Ray ed., 2010).

<sup>300</sup> Oliver & Shapiro, *supra* note 290, at 10-11.

<sup>301</sup> MUHAMMAD, *supra* note 291, at 1.

<sup>302</sup> Williams & Collins, *supra* note 291, at 359-61.

<sup>303</sup> Mary Pattillo-McCoy, *Investing in Poor and Black Neighborhoods 'As Is'*, in *PUBLIC HOUSING TRANSFORMATION: CONFRONTING THE LEGACY OF SEGREGATION* (Susan J. Popkin & Lynette Rawlings eds., 2008).

organizational precepts militate against such a belief. This is particularly the case with certain of the BGLOs vis-à-vis the others. By way of example, Alpha Phi Alpha founder Henry Arthur Callis framed the fraternity's founding with the following quote: "Society offered us narrowly circumscribed opportunity and no security. Out of our need, our fraternity brought social purpose and social action."<sup>304</sup>

The overriding and lingering question is, how can BGLOs become relevant in the areas of civic activism and shaping public policy around racial-justice issues? The answer to such a question necessitates a monumental shift in organizational culture. Arguably, for many decades, each national president of each of these organizations has been able to put his or her personal touch on their respective organization. In essence, by executing their platform, they shape their organization during the course of their term. Some leaders wish to be engaged around racial-justice issues; some do not. This creates a chicken and egg problem: a national president must press forward on racial-justice issues but, as a candidate, he or she must get elected by a membership that may or may not be particularly concerned with such issues. If BGLOs are to be relevant in the area of racial-justice, there must be an organizational culture that takes such issues seriously. Potential leaders within these organizations must then run for offices where they can execute on these organizational ideals. Members must then buy into the vision of such candidates and elect them. Then, the newly elected leaders must execute on that vision, with the tangible support of the members.

As this article suggests, the problems that BGLOs face cannot be separated and isolated. In order to address the four domain issues holistically, BGLOs need to reconsider how they identify, recruit, and educate potential members. In fact, they must start young. Given that these organizations largely comprise African American, college-educated men and women, BGLOs need several things: (1) a large pipeline of black boys and girls going to college, (2) boys and girls who are prepared for the academic rigors of college, and (3) boys and girls who are inculcated with the broad ideals associated with BGLOs. This necessitates two things. One is that BGLOs are engaged in the racial-justice activities needed to keep the doors of higher education institutions open to African American high school graduates. The other is the facilitation of such a pipeline by mentoring (e.g., Big Brothers/Big Sisters) and tutoring African American youth.

In order to address the marginal to poor academic performance of undergraduate members and college chapters, BGLOs should consider raising their undergraduate GPA requirements. This would allow

---

<sup>304</sup> WESLEY, *supra* note 46, at 31.

undergraduate chapters to institute their own higher GPA requirements for membership than the national organization, and/or require chapters to maintain a certain GPA to remain active. These organizations should develop and institute structured programs around raising and sustaining high undergraduate GPAs. This could include more systematic mentoring programs between alumni members and college members centered on professional development, including the academic performance needed to maximize professional opportunities. BGLOs must more effectively grapple with the issue of hazing, because it is inextricably intertwined with undergraduate membership and chapter GPAs.<sup>305</sup> Even more, BGLOs may raise the intellectual environment of their organizations by starting national, monthly book clubs, assigning readings to broaden the intellectual horizons of the membership, especially around issues of pressing concern for the organizations. The organizations might also, during the process whereby they initiate new members, have aspiring members work together to solve a racial-justice problem confronting the local community. As a test, it would be determined how effectively the aspiring members work together to use their, and other, resources to solve the problem. If more than a mere hypothetical, the solution could then be implemented after the individuals are initiated.

In the area of brotherhood and sisterhood, BGLOs, as organizations comprising highly educated, largely Black people, must be places where any issue can be discussed. Leaders in these organizations must find a way to facilitate discussions among members around issues of age, race, and faith, including what those factors mean with regard to organizational membership. Black Greek-letter fraternities, in particular, must grapple with what it means to be a man and a member in the context of questions about the role of non-heterosexual members. Without such a dialogue, BGLFs will not thrive and will be less effective in their racial-justice initiative.

With regard to the racial identities and race consciousness of BGLO members, BGLOs need to make Black history more a part of the initiation process of members. The organizations must also make the racial uplift history of BGLOs a part of this education. Arguably, most members know little that is meaningful about their own organizations and what they have historically stood for. Researchers have found that by inculcating African Americans with a strong sense of racial pride, in part via an understanding of

---

<sup>305</sup> Gregory S. Parks et al., *Belief, Truth, and Positive Organizational Deviance*, 56 *How. L.J.* 201, 326 (2013).

Black history, enhances their Black racial identity.<sup>306</sup> The same can be found where individuals are exposed to positive African American representations.<sup>307</sup>

With regard to organizational commitment, BGLOs must first find ways to make themselves relevant to the lives and needs of initiated members. Once initiated, individuals are forever members of their BGLOs. They do not need to pay dues or attend meetings to maintain that status. BGLOs must spend some time studying their membership to discern why members go inactive and reconcile the findings with the extant scholarly literature on organizational commitment. Even more, however, BGLOs must come to grips with the fact that, if they are not meaningfully engaged in racial-justice issues, members who are committed to such issues will cease to be active in BGLOs. Individuals have finite time and money. Accordingly, if BGLOs wish to compete with organizations like the NAACP, National Urban League, National Bar Association, etc., for members—or at least have their members hold dual memberships—then BGLOs must show meaningful commitment to racial-justice issues.

It is not the authors' contention that addressing these issues will be easy. With visionary BGLO leadership, however, and a membership that seeks to agitate for greater engagement around these issues, BGLOs can be a transformative force for the greater good of Blacks.

---

<sup>306</sup> Leachim Semaj, *Racial Identification and Preference in Children: A Cognitive-developmental Approach* (May 1979) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University) (on file with author).

<sup>307</sup> Cf. Nilanjana Dasgupta & Anthony G. Greenwald, *On the Malleability of Automatic Attitudes: Combating Automatic Prejudice with Images of Admired and Disliked Individuals*, 81 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 800 (2001).