

Lifting As They Climb: Race, Sorority, and African American Uplift in the 20th Century

Gregory S. Parks* and Caryn Neumann**

INTRODUCTION

In the July 2015 issue of *Essence* magazine, Donna Owens wrote an intriguing piece on black sororities within the Black Lives Matter Movement.¹ Owens addressed the complicated and somewhat standoffish position of four major black sororities—Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta, and Sigma Gamma Rho—in light of the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner.² Among them, only Zeta Phi Beta had taken an unwavering stance from the outset to allow their members to wear sorority letters while participating in protests.³ This narrative probably would seem insignificant, except for the following: First, black sororities have a unique structure. Not only do they have collegiate chapters; they also have highly functioning alumni chapters.⁴ It is often through these alumni chapters and networks that black sororities are able to flex their political muscle. One of the clearest modern examples of this was Loretta Lynch's confirmation hearing for United States Attorney General, where her sorority sisters showed up *en masse* to support her confirmation.⁵ Second, these organizations have a long legacy of racial uplift engagement, dating back one hundred years.⁶

*Assistant Professor of Law, Wake Forest University School of Law.

**Lecturer in Integrative Studies and Affiliate in History, Miami University of Ohio.

1. Donna M. Owens, *Sister Soldiers: A Look at Black Sororities in the Black Lives Matter Movement*, *ESSENCE* (June 8, 2015, 9:53 PM), <http://www.essence.com/2015/06/09/sister-soldier-look-black-sororities-black-lives-matter-movement>.

2. *Id.*

3. *Id.*

4. See Marcia D. Hernandez, *Sisterhood Beyond the Ivory Tower: An Exploration of Black Sorority Alumnae Membership*, in *BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: OUR FIGHT HAS JUST BEGUN* 253 (Gregory S. Parks ed., 2008) [hereinafter *BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS*].

5. Theodore R. Johnson, *The Political Power of the Black Sorority*, *THE ATLANTIC* (Apr. 26, 2015), <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/loretta-lynch-and-the-political-power-of-the-black-sorority/391385/>.

6. See, e.g., Marybeth Gasman, *Giving and Getting: Philanthropic Activity among Black Greek-letter Organizations*, in *BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS*, *supra* note 4, at 187–88; Marybeth Gasman, *Passive Activism: African American Fraternities and Sororities and the Push for Civil Rights*, in *BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS*, *supra* note 4, at 27; Robert L. Harris Jr., *Lobbying Congress for Civil Rights: The American*

Among these organizations, Alpha Kappa Alpha was the first, founded in 1908 on the campus of Howard University.⁷ Five years later, a group of Alpha Kappa Alpha members would breakaway to found Delta Sigma Theta, also at Howard University.⁸ Scholars have recently begun analyzing the racial uplift activities of these two organizations.⁹ However, for Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho, stories remain untold and unanalyzed. Zeta Phi Beta was founded in 1920, and—like its predecessors—at Howard University.¹⁰ In 1919, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity founder, Charles Robert Samuel Taylor, encouraged his girlfriend, Arizona Cleaver, to create a sorority. Cleaver would go on to found Zeta Phi Beta with Pearl Anna Neal, Myrtle Tyler Faithful, Viola Tyler Goings, and Fannie Pettie Watts.¹¹

Council on Human Rights, 1948-1963, in AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE VISION 211—12 (Tamara L. Brown et al. eds., 2d ed. 2012); Jessica Harris & Vernon C. Mitchell Jr., *A Narrative Critique of Black Greek-Letter Organizations and Social Action*, in BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS, *supra* note 4, at 143—44; Robert E. Weems Jr., *Alpha Phi Alpha, Civil Rights, and Public Policy*, in ALPHA PHI ALPHA: A LEGACY OF GREATNESS, THE DEMANDS OF TRANSCENDENCE 233 (Gregory S. Parks & Stefan M. Bradley eds., 2011).

7. André McKenzie, *In the Beginning: The Early History of the Divine Nine*, in AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE VISION, *supra* note 6 at 184—186.

8. *Id.*

9. Some scholars have focused on the work of these groups in the area of Civil Rights activism and efforts to shape public policy. See Gregory S. Parks et al., *Complex Civil Rights Organizations: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, An Exemplar*, ALABAMA C.R.-C.L. L. REV. (forthcoming 2015). Others have also explored the role of these groups in the areas of community service and philanthropy in addition to Civil Rights activism and efforts to shape public policy. See Marcia Hernandez & Gregory S. Parks, *Fortitude in the Face of Adversity: Delta Sigma Theta's History of Racial Uplift*, HASTINGS RACE & POVERTY L.J. (forthcoming 2016).

10. McKenzie, *supra* note 7.

11. *Id.* Arizona Leedonia Cleaver was born in 1898 in Pike County, Missouri. She received her initial education from the public schools in Hannibal, Missouri, and conducted her graduate and postgraduate work at Howard University and at the Pennsylvania School of Social Work. She held numerous professional positions, including: high school teacher, director a residence hall at Morgan State College in Baltimore, case worker for the Philadelphia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and Juvenile Court Probation Officer in Philadelphia. She also served in the Department of Public Assistance of Philadelphia as an investigator, a “message adjustor,” and interviewer. Founder Cleaver was the first Basileus of Alpha Chapter and the first Grand Basileus of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. She was a Life Member and held membership with Beta Delta Zeta Chapter in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On June 1, 1928, Cleaver married James S. Stemons, a racial activist and author. She passed away in March of 1980 and was buried at Eden Cemetery in Philadelphia. Matthew W. Hughey, *Constitutionally Bound: The Founders of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority*, in BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS 109.

Pearl Anna Neal was born in Charlotte, North Carolina. Early on, she exhibited a degree of excellence in music and attended the Lincoln Academy in Kings Mountain, North Carolina. Upon completion of her studies at the Academy, she continued her education at Howard University where she graduated from the Conservatory of Music, the Julliard School of Music, and the Chicago Music Institute. She became the first black woman in New York to earn a master's degree in music from Columbia University. Founder Neal began her career

Sigma Gamma Rho was founded in 1922, at what is now Butler University in Indiana.¹² Its founders included Mary Lou Allison Gardner Little, Dorothy Hanley Whiteside, Vivian Irene White Marbury, Nannie Mae Gahn Johnson, Hattie Mae Annette Dulin Redford, Bessie Mae Downey Rhoades Martin, Cubena McClure.¹³ Sigma Gamma Rho was organized at

in the field of education in Americus, Georgia, and then taught briefly in Crockett, Texas. An extremely accomplished musician, Neal then taught music in the North Carolina public schools and served as a director of seniors majoring in music at Teachers College in Winston Salem, North Carolina. She was extremely active in church and community activities and was awarded a life membership at the 1945 Boulé for her founding role in Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. She died on January 31, 1978, and was buried at York Memorial Cemetery in Charlotte, North Carolina. Hughey, *supra* note 11, at 109—10.

Viola Tyler Goings was born August 29, 1899 on her family's farm near Flushing, Ohio. Her father was born a slave, but through extraordinary circumstances, he was able to purchase the farm on which he and his wife had Viola and her eight siblings. Founder Tyler was educated in the Ohio public schools and graduated from Howard University with a major in mathematics. After graduation, she taught in Smithville, North Carolina, and later accepted the position of Assistant Principal at Cambridge High School in Cambridge, Maryland. She soon married Fred Goings and had two sons and two daughters. She later moved with her family to Springfield, Ohio, and pursued her career as a teacher. She passed away in March of 1983 in Springfield, Ohio. *Id.* at 110.

Myrtle Faithful and was born on November 7, 1901. She, along with her sister Viola Tyler, was born on the family farm near Flushing, Ohio. She was educated in the Ohio public schools, after which she attended Howard University. At Howard, she was Secretary of her class, Vice-President of the Western Reserve Club and the Assistant Editor of the yearbook. After graduating from Howard University, she taught high school mathematics in Annapolis, Maryland for five years. She then moved to Ohio where she became a teacher of Mathematics and English for some years, and took an active interest in community affairs. She gave up teaching when she married Ross Faithful and raised two daughters, both of whom became members of Zeta Phi Beta. Founder Tyler Faithful was the second Grand Basileus of Zeta Phi Beta and became a Life Member in 1945. She later moved to Towson, Maryland and in April of 1994 she passed away. She was buried in Baltimore, Maryland. *Id.* at 110—11.

Fannie Pettie was born in Perry, Georgia, to attorney Foster B. Pettie and Fannie Rollins Pettie. She was educated in the public schools of Savannah, Georgia, attended Georgia State College, and graduated from Howard University with a B.A. in Education. She pursued post-graduate studies in social work and in housing at New York University. She taught junior and senior high school in Savannah and worked as a social worker in Brooklyn, New York. Founder Pettie Watts was a Life Member and held membership with Delta Alpha Zeta Chapter in Brooklyn, New York. She is credited with organizing the Delta Alpha Zeta and Omicron Beta chapters in Brooklyn. She passed away on August 22, 1995 and was buried in Brooklyn. *Id.* at 111.

12. McKenzie, *supra* note 7.

13. *Id.* Mary Lou Allison Gardner Little was born in Kentucky on November 2, 1896. After losing both of her parents at age three, Mary and her siblings were separated and raised in different households. Mary remained in Indianapolis with family friend Katie Johnson, where she turned her attention to education. She graduated from Clemmon Vonnegut School No. 9 in 1911, then attended the Abram C. Shortridge High School and the John Herron Art Institute. Mary earned her teaching certificate at the Indianapolis Normal School and began teaching at Butler College in 1919. In 1928, she moved to Los Angeles and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Los Angeles. She taught in the Los Angeles school system for thirty-five years. Mary served as the sorority's first Grand Basileus (national president) from 1925 to 1926. She also authored the sorority pledge. Mary Lou Allison Gardner Little was married to Roy Little and died in

1992 at the age of 95. At each Boulé (international biennial meeting), Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., awards the Mary Lou Allison Little Loving Cup Award to the most exceptional chapter of the biennium period. Bernadette Pruitt et al., *Seven Schoolteachers Challenge the Klan: The Founders of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority*, in BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS 127 (Gregory S. Parks ed., 2008).

A native of Indianapolis, Nannie Mae Gahn graduated from Abram C. Shortridge High School and the Indianapolis Normal School. She later received both her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees from Butler College. In 1923, she began her successful teaching career with the Indianapolis Public School district and in the mid-1960s retired as an elementary school principal. Johnson was an active member of Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Indianapolis. As member of the Flanner House Board of Directors (an Indianapolis social service center), Johnson reached out to members of the Black working class in an effort to promote self-help, aesthetic awareness, socioeconomic autonomy, and racial responsibility in the Black community. Johnson remained active in the sorority and local community-building efforts. She co-designed the sorority's official pin. Nannie Mae Johnson died in 1986. *Id.* at 128.

Vivian Irene White Marbury was born in Oxford, Ohio on March 11, 1900, and was the last surviving founder of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. until her death on July 30, 2000. She graduated from Abram C. Shortridge High School, as well as the Indianapolis Normal School. She obtained a B.S. in Education from Butler College and a M.S. in Education from Columbia University's Teacher's College in New York City. Her professional career included: teaching at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia; serving as Director of Practice Training of education for several universities; teaching in the increasingly segregated Indianapolis school system for almost a decade; and organizing Indianapolis Public School No. 87. In 1928, she became principal of the school she helped establish, Public School No. 87, a position she held for thirty-nine years until her retirement in 1967. She was a recipient of the Gregg Scholarship, a prestigious award given to public schoolteachers by the Indianapolis Board of School Commissioners. The grateful organization dedicated its official magazine, *The Aurora*, Marbury, its longest surviving founder. White married in 1929 and had two children. *Id.* at 128—29.

Bessie M. Downey was born in Indianapolis on July 12, 1900. After completing grade school in Indianapolis, Downey then entered the Emmerich Manual Training High School. She later went on to City Teachers Normal or Indianapolis Normal School and Butler University, where she received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education in 1943. Downey went on to take a teaching position in the Indianapolis school district, a position she kept for twenty-five years. Although she never had children, Downey married twice and remained a keen supporter of her family. Bessie Rhoades Martin joined Omega Rho, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.'s, chapter for deceased sisters in late 1946 or 1947, almost twenty-five years after establishing her beloved organization. *Id.* at 129—30.

Least is known about founder Cubena McClure, who died prematurely of pneumonia in 1924, only two years after the organization's founding. Born in Indianapolis, in 1899 or 1900, McClure excelled academically. She graduated from Abram C. Shortridge High School during World War I, and later attended the Indiana City Normal School. In 1923, she began her coursework in education at Butler University. During the summer months, she attended Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve University) in Cleveland, Ohio. McClure taught at Indianapolis Schools Number 24 and 26 for three years, and shined in the classroom as a schoolteacher. Most notably, McClure helped design Sigma Gamma Rho's pin. Her artistic flair is especially reflected in the pin's true beauty and charm, the torch. McClure was awarded the prestigious Gregg Scholarship by the Indianapolis Board of School Commissioners to attend Columbia University.

a time when the Ku Klux Klan (“KKK”) included one-third of native-born white males in Indiana.¹⁴ In fact, the Grand Dragon of the Indiana KKK, D.C. Stephenson, later resided near Butler University.¹⁵

Economic conditions and social ostracism at predominantly white colleges and universities in the early part of the twentieth century resulted in close companionship among black students, who saw a need for black sororities and fraternities.¹⁶ Sociologist Marcia D. Hernandez concluded that most black women likely joined sororities and maintained their ties to the group because of the opportunities to engage in sisterhood, community service, philanthropy, and professional development.¹⁷ In fact, in many ways, black sorority women borrowed a set of ideals and continued a tradition established by Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women, which had adopted a progressive agenda that focused on child care, employment training, wage equity, and living the motto “Lifting as We Climb.”¹⁸

Unfortunately, illness prevented her from accepting the award. McClure passed away on August 24, 1924. *Id.* at 130—31.

Dorothy Hanley was born on March 29, 1905, in Paris, Tennessee and migrated to Indianapolis with her family in 1914. Hanley graduated from Abram C. Shortridge High School in 1922, then entered the Teacher’s College of Indianapolis (now Butler University College of Education) and obtained her teaching certificate. In 1942, she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Butler University. Whiteside taught students in Indianapolis for 25 years, and retired from the Indianapolis Public Schools in 1951. Her husband’s good fortune in business inspired Hanley to open a millinery shop in the 1950s. Some of her profits went toward the sorority and the organization’s many charitable programs that benefited education, civil rights, the poor, and public health. After her husband’s death, Whiteside continued to operate their businesses, but in 1959, the rising cost of living in the United States, along with growing financial obligations, prompted her to return to education. She continued teaching in Indianapolis until retiring in 1970. Whiteside served as a Saint Philip’s Episcopal Church vestryman on the Flanner House Board of Directors, as Flanner House Guild president, as an organist, and Sunday School teacher. She passed away on June 18, 1985, at the age of 80. *Id.* at 131—32.

Hattie Mae Annette Dulin was born in Greenville, Kentucky, on October 8, 1896. She graduated cum laude from South Bend Central High School, in Indianapolis, during World War I. She later earned a Bachelor of Science in Education degree from Indiana State Teachers College (now Indiana State University) and a Master of Science in Education degree from Butler College. Redford taught in Indiana and served students for nearly forty years. For most of her career, she taught at the Hazel Hart Hendricks School, Indianapolis Public School No. 37. As Grand Epistoleus (sorority historian), Grand Tamiochus (treasurer), and Financial Consultant, Redford for decades actively sought out new members; organized important sorority documents and papers, especially financial receipts; and encouraged the sorority to fervently commit itself to the new challenges facing African Americans in the latter 20th century. Redford passed away on July 9, 1990. Today Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., awards several plaques in her honor at each Boulé (international biennial meeting) for exceptional exhibits highlighting chapter achievements. *Id.* at 132—33.

14. McKenzie, *supra* note 7.

15. *Id.*; Pruitt et al., *supra* note 13.

16. Ruby G. Watts, *Highways of Sigma*, 17 THE AURORA, no. 1, 1947, at 3.

17. Hernandez, *supra* note 4, at 268.

18. Clarenda M. Phillips, *Sisterly Bonds: African American Sororities Rising to Overcome Obstacles*, in AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE

In this article, the authors analyze the racial uplift engagement that two black sororities, Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho, undertook between 1920 and about 2000. In analyzing this history, the authors make several points: First, black sorority racial uplift engagement was different from that of black fraternities in one particular sense. There was far less civil rights litigation and public policy work on the part of black sororities, at least when compared to black fraternities. While this article does not allow for a full analysis of this comparison, other work highlights this finding. Second, as a result, black sororities—like Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho in particular—largely engaged in social justice activism via efforts to shape public policy. However, much of their racial uplift work generally was demonstrated through community service and non-social justice philanthropy. Third, over time, Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho's racial uplift efforts and strategies shifted largely away from social justice work to even more community service and philanthropic work. In essence, the height of the sororities' social justice activism mirrored the ebb and flow of the Civil Rights Movement, largely dying out in the 1960s. In an effort to clarify these points, the authors rely heavily on Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho's primary documents—their history books and national magazines.

Section I, detailing the 1920s through 1940s, largely paints a picture of two organizations focused on building community service and philanthropy. It wasn't until the late 1940s when these groups began to get involved in efforts to shape U.S. Civil Rights policy, as explored in Section II. Section II also highlights, however, that although these organizations were engaged to some extent in broader Civil Rights work between the late 1940s through 1960s, they were still mostly community service and philanthropy-based organizations in their outward engagement. Section III, focused on the 1970s and beyond, finds that these sororities made a dramatic return to their community service and philanthropic work, almost entirely abandoning the broader social justice initiatives in which they were engaged.

I. 1920s-1940s: BUILDING A LEGACY OF UPLIFT

The privileged position of their members was shown throughout each sorority's national magazine, Zeta Phi Beta's *The Archon* and Sigma Gamma Rho's *The Aurora*.¹⁹ Members had the money and time to travel,

VISION 139 (Tamara L. Brown et al. eds., 2005).

19. Sigma Gamma Rho's most significant resource when shaping public policy may have been its beloved publication, *The Aurora*. *The Aurora* was generally used as a mechanism to spark sorority action throughout its existence. For instance, in Sigma Gamma Rho's second era member Ethel Smith authored an article, "Woman's Place in the Negro's Forward March," that urged members to take a part in the "revolutionary changes" of the

to contribute to scholarships, and to participate in fashion shows; the members were also quite aware of their privilege.²⁰ During the Great Depression, sorority women occupied a rare position. About half of blacks in the cities were unemployed—a rate double that of whites.²¹ In the agricultural South, where the vast majority of blacks lived, conditions were worse because the benefits of the New Deal often missed black workers due to racial discrimination. As Sigma Gamma Rho noted in a 1939 issue of *The Aurora*, the ratio of workers among black women was reported by the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Labor Department as being twice as high as that among white women.²² Nine-tenths of employed black women worked in farm, domestic, or personal service under substandard working conditions.²³ With the Depression lingering until World War II arrived in 1941, this number did not include the unemployed.

However, black sorority women had the skills and the means to engage in significant community racial uplift. Many of them joined sororities specifically because they also felt a responsibility to help the less privileged. Sigma Gamma Rho's emphasis on education extended beyond the sorority and to the community through its creation of various African American history projects. First, in 1932, Sigma Gamma Rho member Pearl Schwartz White of Zeta Sigma in St. Louis, Missouri, organized teas, lectures, book reviews, and exhibits for the St. Louis community to learn about "Negro History."²⁴ Further, at Sigma Gamma Rho's Ninth Boulé (national convention), Zeta Sigma chapter presented an exhibit in conjunction with Upsilon titled "Negro Achievements Exhibit."²⁵ In 1934, its Delta Sigma chapter created and shared an outline that studied African

times. PEARL SCHWARTZ WHITE, *BEHIND THESE DOORS—A LEGACY: THE HISTORY OF SIGMA GAMMA RHO SORORITY* 14 (Lillie Wilkes ed., 1974). Beginning in 1942, *The Aurora* began printing articles that would prove influential to the public at large. Two articles led the charge: "The Negro in the Defense Program," and "The Negro Women in Civilian Defense Work." Both of these articles were aimed at informing African Americans of community resources and protesting areas in which racial discrimination was found. *Id.* at 35. By the 1970's *The Aurora* had published a variety of articles addressing human needs, such as, "Don't Pigeon Hole People," "New Dimensions for Black Greek Organizations," and "The Key to Relevance." *Id.* at 126. *The Aurora* reflected "sisterhood, human concern, and youth dedication." *Id.* at 140.

20. See Michael H. Washington & Cheryl L. Nuñez, *Education, Racial Uplift, and the Rise of the Greek-Letter Tradition: The African American Quest for Status in the Early Twentieth Century*, in *AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: THE LEGACY AND THE VISION* 141 (Tamara L. Brown et al. eds., 2005).

21. JAMES L. ROARK ET AL., *THE AMERICAN PROMISE: A HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES, VOLUME C 809* (5th ed. 2012).

22. William A. Sundstrom, *Last Hired, First Fired?: Unemployment and Urban Black Workers During the Great Depression*, 52 *J. OF ECON. HISTORY*, no. 2, 1992, at 415.

23. *Reports on Negro Women: Labor Department Says Ratio of Workers in Twice That of White*, 33 *THE AURORA*, no. 4, 1964, at 2.

24. WHITE, *supra* note 19, at 11.

25. *Id.* at 16.

Americans as individuals, citizens, and contributors to American life.²⁶ Sigma Gamma Rho member Monet Harrison Fowler, of New York City, creatively spread African American history by establishing a school of Creative Negro Art and a chorus that sang songs in African languages.²⁷

Raising funds and awarding scholarships to deserving youths was a priority for Sigma Gamma Rho throughout its history. By 1941, national, regional, and even local scholarships were routinely awarded to promote high ethical standards and scholastic achievement.²⁸ In 1944, Sigma Gamma Rho donated \$500 to the NAACP and the Negro College Fund, each.²⁹ Further, in 1945, Gamma Sigma donated \$25 to the local F.E.P.C. Drive in Houston, \$20 to the United College Fund Drive, and contributed \$25 to the Scholarship given to Jewel Anderson at Wiley College.³⁰ Other Sigma scholarships include the "Gregg Scholarship," which was awarded to teachers who displayed "growth and professional interest" throughout the year, and a \$15 scholarship created by the Omicron Chapter for the Nursery School at Dillard University.³¹ Sigma Gamma Rho also donated \$500 to the United College Fund at the Boulé in this year.³²

At the Thirty-Third Boulé, over \$25,000 worth of scholarship awards were awarded to deserving young people from across the country.³³ Significant is the fact that by 1957, Sigma Gamma Rho scholarships presented to high school students and nonmembers totaled about \$25,000 each year, while scholarships presented to members totaled about \$3,000 each year.³⁴

At Zeta Phi Beta's 1935 Boulé, during the Violette N. Anderson administration (International Grand Basileus from 1933 to 1937), it was suggested that the sorority sponsor a recreation project.³⁵ Initially, Zeta Phi Beta member Anita Turpeau Anderson presented a recreation plan for a rural Southern district. However, after conferences with Dr. Ambrose Caliver of the Department of the Interior, it was decided that Coatesville, Pennsylvania, would be the project's location. "The Coatesville Project"³⁶ began on July 28, 1935, to focus on the creative aspects of leisure time, and Chairman Gertrude Hamm encouraged participants (women, girls, and

26. WHITE, *supra* note 19, at 15.

27. *Id.* at 21.

28. *Id.* at 32.

29. *Boule Digest*, Boulé Issue of THE AURORA, 1944, at 10.

30. *Gamma Sigma Chapter, Houston, Texas*, 15 THE AURORA no. 1, 1945, at 15.

31. *Sigmas in Local and National Activities*, 16 THE AURORA no. 1, 1941, at 10; WHITE, *supra* note 19, at 21.

32. *Sigmas in Local and National Activities*, *supra* note 30 at 11.

33. WHITE, *supra* note 19, at 118.

34. *Id.*

35. LULLELIA W. HARRISON, TORCHBEARERS OF A LEGACY: A HISTORY OF ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC. 1920-1997, 159 (1998).

36. *Id.* at 159-160.

small boys) to realize the value of such time and how to use it.³⁷

In 1935, Sigma Gamma Rho's Tenth Boulé foreshadowed the sorority's later community service and philanthropy. Under the direction of Bertha Black Rhoda (International Grand Basileus from 1934 to 1944), the sorority unveiled its "Vocational Guidance" program.³⁸ This program took members on tours of industrial plants and compiled a list of appropriate books for youths so that the members could better guide young adults.³⁹ Sigma Gamma Rho also honored the NAACP for its service toward African Americans living in the southern United States.⁴⁰ Additionally, funds were raised to assist Sigma Gamma Rho members who volunteered services for court cases designed to eradicate inequality and injustice.⁴¹ This funding program was overseen by the Education Commission, comprised of members Edith Malone Ward, Ida Laws, and Ethel Garner.⁴²

Also at the Tenth Boulé, Congressman Arthur Mitchell, the only African American legislator in the United States Congress at the time, issued a challenge to Sigma Gamma Rho.⁴³ Congressman Mitchell encouraged the sorority to continue breaking down barriers of racial equality through understanding and education.⁴⁴ Sigma Gamma Rho answered by addressing the needs of the times. First, the sorority finalized a research project that culminated in the creation of a "Literary Contest."⁴⁵ The initial contest was "designed to answer the need of literature suitable for Negro children of the intermediate grades."⁴⁶ Sigma Gamma Rho member Edith Malone Ward was granted an extension to continue the project for "as long as it [was] effective."⁴⁷ The contest would eventually prove to be not only effective, but also versatile, as the theme would change annually to address the pressing issues of that year. Next, Sigma Gamma Rho members at the Tenth Boulé decided to continue the "Vocational Guidance Program."⁴⁸ The program was a counseling service geared toward skilled labor and one of Sigma Gamma Rho's earliest such programs/projects. Finally, the Tenth Boulé officially supported the "Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynch Bill," by encouraging each member to write

37. HARRISON, *supra* note 35, at 31—32, 159 (1998).

38. *Id.* at 18.

39. *Id.*

40. *Id.*

41. WHITE, *supra* note 19, at 18.

42. *Id.*

43. *Id.* at 17.

44. *Id.*

45. *Id.* at 18.

46. *Id.*

47. *Id.* at 18.

48. *Id.*

a letter to her representative asking him or her to support the bill.⁴⁹

The Literary Contest was held again in 1936 at the Eleventh Boulé. That year, the contest was comprised of short story entries on the subject of African American life.⁵⁰ The winner was a short story titled "Let Them Speak for Themselves," written by Sigma Gamma Rho member Annie Weston of New York City.⁵¹ The Literary Contest would become a staple of Sigma Gamma Rho's efforts to advance education. The contest furthered multiple sorority ideals by encouraging the creation of literature on African American history, and by fostering scholarship and achievement amongst sorority members.⁵² Personal achievement would prove to be a lasting goal of Sigma Gamma Rho. The Eleventh Boulé decided to have each campus chapter present a personal award to one woman from its university who displayed "outstanding scholarship" throughout the year. Sigma Gamma Rho's efforts to nurture its members' ambitions proved worthwhile, as Sigma Gamma Rho member Hattie McDaniel became the first African American to receive an "Oscar" for her role as Mammie in "Gone with the Wind."⁵³

During World War II, Zeta Phi Beta members helped the federal government through the Housing Project, created by the efforts of Zeta Phi Beta member Georgia Johnson.⁵⁴ Zeta Phi Beta members conducted surveys to locate housing vacancies for war workers and registered the facilities with the National Housing Association of the United States.⁵⁵ In 1938, as the Depression lingered during the Nellie B. Rogers administration (International Grand Basileus from 1937 to 1939), the St. Louis chapter of Zeta Phi Beta joined an inter-racial effort to help needy children.⁵⁶ Similarly, in 1939, the Edith Lyons administration (International Grand Basileus from 1939 to 1940) and the Nu Alpha Chapter sponsored several scholarships, donated toiletries to the Delinquent

49. WHITE, *supra* note 19, at 18.

50. *Id.* at 19.

51. *Id.*

52. *Id.* at 25.

53. *Id.* at 18.

54. HARRISON, *supra* note 35, at 46.

55. *Id.* at 46—47.

56. *Id.* at 47. Nellie B. Rogers was the ninth Grand Basileus of Zeta Phi Beta, from 1937-1939. She was born and lived in Indianapolis, Indiana. She taught in the Indianapolis public school system, and was known for being an active civic leader and singer. She held a Bachelor of Arts degree, and participated in graduate studies with the Musical College of Indianapolis. She is known to have led Zeta with a gentle and compromising manner. In 1939, she became Chairman of the Executive Board of the sorority, and served in the position for many years. Fran Becque, *Zeta Phi Beta's 95th Birthday, Its 1923 Expansion to Texas, and Violette Anderson*, FRATERNITYHISTORY.COM (Jan. 16, 2015), <http://www.franbecque.com/2015/01/16/zeta-phi-betas-95th-birthday-1923-expansion-texas-violette-anderson>; HARRISON, *supra* note 35, at 39—40, 203.

Youth Council, and sponsored the Trojan Club.⁵⁷ An article in *The Archon* reports that they purchased a building for a youth center, financed a summer school, and monetarily supported efforts to provide art and music education to children from 4 to 14 years of age.⁵⁸ Educators and church members—both black and white—volunteered as staff.⁵⁹ It was only because of the financially privileged position of the women that they were able to engage in this service. Most blacks were hit too hard by the Great Depression to afford to help.

Sigma Gamma Rho's Thirteenth Boulé theme, "How Does Your Sorority Meet the Needs of Your Community," showed that personal achievement was not the only concern of Sigma Gamma Rho in its early years. At that Boulé, Sigma Gamma Rho member Francis Moss Mann created the "Employment Aid Bureau." The Bureau was not a traditional employment aid bureau, but instead took into account the individual experience and background of each member and placed that member in a position where she could help her community and also personally thrive.⁶⁰ The Bureau was created to aid Sigma Gamma Rho members only; however, its structure reflected the sorority's community service efforts of later years. The Fourteenth National Boulé continued Sigma Gamma Rho's trend toward multi-benefit project programs. In 1939, that Boulé created the "African Book Shower" and the "Circulating Library on Wheels."⁶¹ The former project sent books to Wilberforce Institute in Capetown, South Africa, while the latter provided Florida youths with a traveling library.⁶² Both programs extended Sigma Gamma Rho's ideals of education and youth service.

In 1941, the United States formally entered World War II. The administrative work done by Sigma Gamma Rho in the previous two decades proved worthwhile during wartime, as the national Boulés, which had become the birthplace of Sigma Gamma Rho service projects, were put on hold.⁶³ Sigma Gamma Rho canceled their National Boulés in 1942 and 1943, and instead urged members to dedicate themselves entirely to aiding in the war effort.⁶⁴ Notably, members provided volunteer services for the Red Cross and the United Service Organizations, and donated money to groups such as the Federated Women's Club of Newport News, Virginia.⁶⁵ An example of the type of service that the members provided during the

57. *Nu Alpha Chapter*, 8 *THE ARCHON* no. 2, 1939, at 20.

58. *Id.*

59. *Dickson Recreational and Religious Education Project*, 10 *THE ARCHON*, no. 3, 1942, at 7.

60. WHITE, WHITE, *supra* note 19, at 25.

61. *Id.* at 26.

62. *Id.*

63. *Id.* at 30.

64. *Id.* at 35.

65. *Sigmas Make Contribution to Federated Club*, 16 *THE AURORA* no.1, 1941, at 24.

war effort was the "Southwest Region Victory Drive." Mary S. Carter, of the Southwest Region Syntaktes led the drive, which encouraged Sigma Gamma Rho members to buy stamps and bonds, provided volunteer workers to the Red Cross and USO, and emphasized the rationing and sharing of automobiles and food supplies.⁶⁶ Community service projects such as the Victory Drive reflect the emphasis that Sigma Gamma Rho members placed on providing leadership and service to local communities. Sigma Gamma Rho adjusted to the conditions of the times and continued its mission through the sorority's individual chapters. These chapters carried on the sorority's service programs and dedicated resources toward the war effort, but were only able to do so because of Sigma Gamma Rho's sound national structure.⁶⁷

Sigma Gamma Rho members also performed individual instances of community service while the National Boulés were on hold. Sigma Gamma Rho member Robbie Scott, of Delta Sigma chapter in Chicago, worked for the Army as the director of Scott Field Center in East St. Louis, Illinois.⁶⁸ Sallie Parham of the Zeta Sigma chapter in St. Louis, Missouri volunteered for the Y.W.C.A. to develop activities for both African American and Caucasian female youths.⁶⁹ C. M. Pitts of the Eta Sigma chapter in Atlanta, Georgia, ran a home for the youths of Atlanta. Pitts won an award from the National Association for the Advancement of Color People for outstanding woman of the year for her services.⁷⁰ Individual efforts such as these were typical of Sigma Gamma Rho service during World War I, because the direction previously provided by the National Boulé's transferred to regional Syntaktes (regional head) and the local chapters.

During the Blanche Jackson Thompson administration (International Grand Basileus from 1939 to 1943), much of the Zeta Phi Beta's philanthropy came in the form of financial assistance to local projects.⁷¹ In the 1940s, Zeta Phi Beta members paid for a telephone, mirrors, and coats for an orphanage.⁷² In 1942, the national organization sponsored Vacation School for girls aged 4 to 14 years old, and raised over \$1,700 for a

66. WHITE, *supra* note 60, at 35.

67. *Id.* at 36.

68. *Id.* at 39.

69. *Id.*

70. *Id.*

71. Blanche Jackson Thompson became the eleventh Grand Basileus of Zeta Phi Beta after the resignation of Edith Lyons, and served in the position from 1940-1943. She lived in Chicago, Illinois. Blanche was a musician by training, and was considered one of the leading religious musicians of her time. The sorority continued to thrive under her leadership, and she is known to have lead Zeta with a gentle but passionate spirit. HARRISON, *supra* note 35, at 41—42, 210.

72. *Twenty-Second Annual Boule Held In Jacksonville, Florida*, 10 THE ARCHON no. 3, 1942.

community center.⁷³ The Jacksonville, Florida chapter purchased an artificial limb for a tenth grade girl with a peg leg.⁷⁴ Other chapters engaged in more common charity, such as distributing Christmas baskets to needy families.⁷⁵ In 1942, the Iota Zeta Chapter raised \$90 for a scholarship, and the Iota Alpha donated \$100 to the Amanda Garrett Artificial Leg Fund.⁷⁶ Two years later, the Psi Chapter raised over \$700 for Blue Revue, a program that gave needy kids glasses, and the Eta Zeta chapter established a scholarship fund for the Louisville community.⁷⁷

Sigma Gamma Rho pushed its members to provide volunteer services for the Red Cross and the United States Organizations, and to buy war bonds during World War II.⁷⁸ The Kansas City chapter, Psi Sigma, focused on winning the war by investing ten percent of member earnings in bonds. Psi Sigma also operated War Bond Sales booths in drug stores, collected fat for use in explosives manufacturing, collected paper, and attempted to clarify rationing points to those in need of assistance.⁷⁹ Both national sororities sent money to the Negro College Fund.⁸⁰

Under the Lullelia W. Harrison administration (International Grand Basileus from 1943 to 1948), a project was developed called “The Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency.”⁸¹ Lillian Fitzhugh, of the Beta Zeta Chapter in Washington, D.C., and Phyllis O’Kelly were appointed to direct the project.⁸² Based on the recommendations of attorney Tom Clark’s “National Conference on Youth” in November 1946, the project included foster home care, youth conferences, vocational guidance clinics, Tinker Shops (workshops offering crafts to keep children occupied in wholesome activities), and youth groups.⁸³ After World War II, as concerns about juvenile delinquency rose, the Dallas Zeta Phi Beta chapter helped fund a study on this behavior.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the Winston-Salem, North Carolina chapter helped with the Zeta Phi Beta’s national

73. *Dickson Recreational and Religious Education Project*, 10 THE ARCHON no. 3, 1942, at 7, 8.

74. *Rho Zeta Chapter and Iota Alpha*, 10 THE ARCHON, no. 3, 1942, at 18.

75. *Twenty-Second Annual Boule Held In Jacksonville, Florida*, 10 THE ARCHON no. 3, 1942.

76. *Iota Alpha Chapter*, 10 THE ARCHON no. 3, 1942, at 19; *Iota Zeta Chapter*, 10 THE ARCHON no. 3, 1942, at 18.

77. *Eta Zeta Establishes Memorial Scholarship Fund*, 11 THE ARCHON no. 1, 1944, at 20; *Psi Chapter Presents Annual Zeta Blue Revue*, 11 THE ARCHON no. 1, 1944, at 16.

78. PEARL SCHWARTZ WHITE, *BEHIND THESE DOORS—A LEGACY: THE HISTORY OF SIGMA GAMMA RHO SORORITY* 35 (Lillie Wilkes ed., 1974).

79. *Psi Sigma: Kansas City, Mo, Chapter Activities for Year 1944*, THE AURORA, Nov. 1944, at 21.

80. WHITE, *supra* note 78, at 36.

81. HARRISON, *supra* note 35, at 161.

82. *Id.*

83. *Id.*

84. *Kappa Zeta Strong in Dallas*, 24 THE ARCHON, no. 2, 1959.

project, *The Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency*, by sponsoring a shoe bank that gave pairs of shoes to needy elementary school children.⁸⁵

Sigma Gamma Rho decided, in 1944, that its national project would establish centers for the prevention of juvenile delinquency. Nationwide, the project included foster home care, craft workshops for children, youth groups and conferences, and vocational guidance clinics.⁸⁶ Under the direction of Ethel Ross Smith (International Grand Basileus from 1944 to 1948), the national project known as "Teen Towns" served as a mechanism through which Sigma Gamma Rho could effectively combat juvenile delinquency following the World War II era. Grand Basileus Ethel Ross Smith of Delta Sigma chapter in Chicago created the program in 1944.⁸⁷ Sigma Gamma Rho's National Project Committee managed the program. The national program had a flexible structure, allowing individual chapters to form their own version of the program to best suit their local community. Teen Towns aimed to provide a safe and constructive place for African American youths to congregate, and also sought to lead youths away from a path of juvenile delinquency.⁸⁸ Examples of individual chapters' Teen Towns can be seen in Birmingham, Alabama, and Memphis, Tennessee.⁸⁹ In Birmingham, the Chi Sigma Chapter opened a Teen Town that included a lounge, game room, art room, and a snack bar for the youths of the community.⁹⁰ In Memphis, the Omicron Sigma Chapter adjusted the national project to serve crippled youths by purchasing beds, crutches, and transportation for children receiving treatment at the local Collins Chapel Hospital.⁹¹ Over twenty communities had a Teen Town of their own by 1947.⁹² In 1945, the Sigma's in Chicago raised \$4,000 for the South Side Community Committee on Juvenile Delinquency.⁹³ In 1946, Kappa Sigma

85. *Shoe Bank Is Sponsored by Rho Zeta Chapter*, 22 THE ARCHON, no. 1, 1957, at 23.

86. HARRISON, *supra* note 84, at 161.

87. WHITE, *supra* note 78, at 49. Ethel Ross Smith was born on July 23, 1893, in New Orleans, Louisiana. She attended New Orleans University and then taught at Straight College. Smith believed in teaching children to prepare them for their futures. After some time, she moved to Chicago and enrolled in Kent Law School, however she returned to teaching in 1923. Smith was a member Delta Sigma chapter of the Sigma Gamma Rho sorority and served as the sorority's sixth Grand Basileus from 1944 until 1948. As Grand Basileus, she dedicated her efforts towards awareness of juvenile delinquency and advancement of both women's and African American's rights. She also helped strengthen the sorority's publication, *The Aurora*. She married Edward Smith while teaching at Straight College and together they had one daughter. She passed away in 1971. SIGMA GAMMA RHO SORORITY, INC., <http://www.sgrho1922.org/past-grand-basilei> (last visited Oct. 25, 2015).

88. WHITE, *supra* note 78, at 49.

89. *Id.*

90. *Id.*

91. *Id.*

92. *Id.*

93. *Sigmas in Chicago Help Combat Juvenile Delinquency*, 24 THE AURORA no. 3, 1945, at 7.

assisted with a fundraiser that raised \$1,800 for the Board of Directors of the Stuyvesant Community Center.⁹⁴ That same year, Sigma Gamma Rho made “Juvenile Delinquency” the theme of its annual Literary Contest, which encouraged educational writing to inform the public of subjects pertinent to the times.⁹⁵ The centers varied from hosting a once-a-week event to a nightly activity.⁹⁶

Sigma Gamma Rho’s National Boulé resumed in 1946, and national projects like the Literary Contest returned in full force.⁹⁷ Naomi G. Coulter became the Chairman of the annual Literary Contest.⁹⁸ The contest was originally a mechanism through which Sigma Gamma Rho encouraged its members to engage in educational writing on subjects pertinent to the times. For example, the theme in 1946 was “Juvenile Delinquency,” and contestants wrote on subjects such as “Delinquency: Its Treatment and Prevention,” “Delinquency Threatens Victory,” and “Here’s How Youth can Curb Delinquency.”⁹⁹ The Literary Contest also proved versatile; the following year contestants could submit an original play based on African American life instead of a formal essay.¹⁰⁰ The contest expanded in 1947 by dividing the contest into two categories: a high school division and a college division.¹⁰¹ Lydia Robinson and Vivian Hedgewood became the chairpersons of each division, respectively.¹⁰² This new format allowed members of the community that were not members of Sigma Gamma Rho to partake in the benefits of the contest.

At Sigma Gamma Rho’s Golden Anniversary, the Literary Contest transformed again into the “Golden Anniversary Literary Competition.”¹⁰³ *The Aurora*’s Editor-in-Chief, Lillie Wilkes, and Associate Editor, Marjorie Brown Wright, created this special Literary Competition.¹⁰⁴ The competition was open to college and high school students and provided educational awards totaling \$500.¹⁰⁵ The theme of the contest was “The Issues—Service and Progress,” and entries were to focus on “Black Community Development.”¹⁰⁶ The benefits of a versatile Literary Competition were multifaceted: Sigma Gamma Rho could spark the creation of educational literature that informed the public on hot-button

94. *Kappa Sigmas Make Plans*, 15 THE AURORA no 2, 1946, at 10.

95. WHITE, *supra* note 19 at 42.

96. Ethel Ross Smith, *A Message from the Grand Basileus*, 27 THE AURORA, no. 2, 1948.

97. WHITE, *supra* note 88, at 42.

98. *Id.*

99. *Id.* at 42.

100. *Id.*

101. *Id.* at 46.

102. *Id.*

103. *Id.* at 138.

104. *Id.*

105. *Id.*

106. WHITE, *supra* note 88, at 42.

issues, while also advancing scholarship amongst participants.

Some of Sigma Gamma Rho's programs in its first few decades of existence contained echoes of racial uplift. Racial uplift began as a philosophy among aspirational middle-class African Americans, dating back to the late 19th century, that had been popularized by Booker T. Washington. It asserted that whites judged blacks according to the lowest elements of the race. For blacks to acquire rights, the race needed to be uplifted. Therefore, elite blacks such as the sorority members, offered instruction to working class blacks, in order to uplift the race as a whole. However these working class blacks did not always cheerfully accept the notion that they needed instruction, or uplift. For example, in 1947, the Jackson, Mississippi chapter of Sigma held a Charm School for teenagers.¹⁰⁷ The children were taught eating for charm, good grooming, use of cosmetics, hair styling, care of hands and nails, skincare, dining at home, and dining away from home.¹⁰⁸ The offspring of the sorority women presumably already knew how to groom, keep clean, and dine at home, so there was a clear element of elitism in this program.

The activism of the Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho women extended to civil rights, to no great surprise, as the twentieth century dwelled on the problem of the color line.

In 1946, under the direction of Grand Basileus Ethel Ross Smith, Sigma Gamma Rho made a \$150 donation to the "Permanent Fair Employment" movement.¹⁰⁹ The donation followed President Franklin Roosevelt's creation of Executive Order 8802 in 1941, which sought to eliminate employment discrimination based on race.¹¹⁰ Also in 1946, the sorority pledged a commitment to the preservation of a permanent "Fair Employment Practice Commission."¹¹¹ The donation and pledge reflected Sigma Gamma Rho's effort to advance civil rights by encouraging Congress to act on President Roosevelt's initiative. Almita S. Robinson, a Sigma Gamma Rho member, wrote in 1948:

I can remember how something akin to asphyxiation gripped me from within when I read of the brutal lynching's and uncalled-for mistreatment of Negroes . . . that I was a member of this kicked-around and downtrodden group made me apprehensive of the future.¹¹²

As educated women, the sorority members believed that they held a

107. *Tau Sigma Chapter Sponsors Charm School for Teen-Age Group*, 17 THE AURORA, no. 2, 1948, at 10.

108. *Id.*

109. WHITE, *supra* note 88, at 43.

110. *Id.*

111. *Id.* at 44.

112. Almita S. Robinson, *The Negro Press and Our Children*, 17 THE AURORA, no. 2, 1948, at 7.

particular responsibility. Robinson wrote about the upcoming national elections, that:

Our children and thousands of unlearned Negroes are expecting us to point the way to freedom and opportunity. This message is trying to warn against lethargy in the use of the ballot . . . we should serve in our communities as blockades to any encroachments on civil liberties of any and all groups by giving our financial and moral support toward efforts that seek to weed out the germ of hatred and misunderstanding¹¹³

Over the years, individual sorority members sacrificed their jobs and put themselves at great personal risk by pushing for equal pay with whites, equal job opportunities, and other equivalent treatment. Zeta Phi Beta members pushed for equal recreational opportunities for black soldiers during World War II, among other acts.¹¹⁴ Both sororities held membership in the National Council of Negro Women and the NAACP.¹¹⁵

II. LATE 1940s-1960s: THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OTHER INITIATIVES

In the Jim Crow era, black professional women engaged in socially responsible individualism that balanced private and public sphere responsibilities. Historian Stephanie Shaw examined these women “who stood for something” in her book, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do*.¹¹⁶ Although some, if not many, of Shaw’s subjects probably belonged to sororities, she did not examine these organizations. Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho members, however, clearly saw themselves as part of this cohort of women. As educated women, they bore a special obligation to change the world for the better. Privilege brought responsibility. While Shaw’s study stops with the 1950s, Sigma Gamma Rho and Zeta Phi Beta members saw the responsibility as being timeless.¹¹⁷

In 1950, Sigma Gamma Rho member Kate J. Hicks founded a Vocational Guidance Program in New York City.¹¹⁸ This program specialized in the area of vocational guidance and aimed at meeting the needs of the community.¹¹⁹ The most significant engagement for both

113. Almita S. Robinson, *Sigma Gamma Rho Members and National Affairs*, 17 THE AURORA, no. 3, 1948, at 9.

114. *A Fearless Spirit*, 10 THE ARCHON, no. 3, 1942, at 3; Lullelia W. Harrison, *Echoes from the Southern Region*, 10 THE ARCHON, no. 3, 1942, at 4.

115. Rubye G. Watts, *Highways of Sigma*, 17 THE AURORA, no. 1, 1947, at 4.

116. STEPHANIE SHAW, *WHAT A WOMAN OUGHT TO BE AND TO DO: BLACK PROFESSIONAL WOMEN WORKERS DURING THE JIM CROW ERA* (1996).

117. Mary Breaux Wright, *Finer Womanhood: It Never Goes Out of Style*, ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, <http://www.zphib1920.org/2015-finer-womanhood> (last visited Oct. 25, 2015).

118. WHITE, *supra* note 109, at 68.

119. *Id.*

sororities, however, came in the late 1940s with their membership in the American Council on Human Rights (“A.C.H.R.”).¹²⁰ Its objective was to secure the basic human rights for all citizens, national and international, regardless of race, color, or creed; to urge passage of legislation for the good of mankind; and to oppose legislation detrimental to mankind.¹²¹ This collaborative was undertaken by the Grand Basilies Lullelia W. Harrison and Ethel Ross Smith from Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho, respectively. However, it was the Zeta Phi Beta’s Nancy B. Woolridge McGhee and Deborah Cannon P. Wolfe administrations (International Grand Basilies from 1948 to 1953 and 1953 to 1965, respectively),¹²² as well as Sigma Gamma Rho’s Sallie Edwards Johnson, Edna Douglas,

120. *Id.* at 63; HARRISON, *supra* note 35, at 54. The American Council on Human Rights consisted of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. For a more detailed history of the organization, see Gregory S. Parks et al., *Complex Civil Rights Organizations: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, An Exemplar*, ALABAMA C.R.-C.L. L. REV. (forthcoming 2015).

121. HARRISON, *supra* note 35, at 163.

122. Nancy Bullock Woolridge McGhee served as the thirteenth Grand Basilius from 1948 to 1953. During her tenure, she chartered the Delta Iota Zeta chapter in Africa. Nancy was born and raised in High Point, North Carolina. She earned an English degree from Shaw University, a master’s degree from Columbia University, and ultimately earned her doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1942. Shaw University awarded her a second, honorary doctorate in 1973. Nancy began work as a professor at Hampton Institute in 1945, and went on to become the chair of the English Department. She eventually earned the title of professor emeritus. She was widely involved in a variety of organizations, including the Virginia Humanities Conference, American Council of Human Rights, and the National Council of Negro Women. Dr. McGhee passed away in 1995. *Dr. McGhee Zeta Speaker*, THE AFRO AMERICAN, Mar. 19, 1966, at 7; HARRISON, *supra* note 120, at 51 WHITE, *supra* note 88, at 42–54 (1998); Quiana J. Robinson, *Dr. Nancy Bullock McGhee*, DAILY PRESS (Feb. 12, 1995), http://articles.dailypress.com/1995-02-12/news/9502120015_1_hampton-institute-humanities-institute-shaw-university; Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., *Zeta Trivia Pursuit*, ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC. (2015), <http://www.zphib1920.org/national-membership-month/zeta-trivia/> (last visited Oct. 25, 2015).

Deborah Cannon P. Wolfe served as the fourteenth Grand Basilius of Zeta Phi Beta from 1953 to 1965. Deborah was born in 1916 in Cranford, New Jersey. She completed her undergraduate studies at Jersey City State College in 1937, where she majored in social studies education. Deborah then completed both a master’s degree and a doctorate in Education at Columbia University. She spent her career at the Tuskegee Institute to better develop school curriculums and increase teacher competence in rural areas in Alabama. In addition to her incredible contributions to education, Deborah also served as the liaison between the U.S. House of Representatives and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. She later became an ordained minister in 1960, and served as an Associate Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Cranford, New Jersey. Dr. Wolfe passed away in 2004. HARRISON, *supra* note 120, at 55–64; Stephanie Van Hover, *Deborah P. Wolfe*, KAPPA DELTA PI INTERNATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY IN EDUCATION (1988), <http://www.kdp.org/aboutkdp/laureates/wolfedeborah.php> (last visited Oct. 25, 2015); *Weekly Bulletin*, JOURNAL OF BLACKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION (May 3, 2007), http://www.jbhe.com/latest/index050307_p.html; Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., *Dr. Deborah Cannon Partridge Wolfe Scholarship*, ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC. (2015), <http://zphib1920cez.org/Document%20Library/Deborah%20Cannon%20Partridge%20Wolfe%20Scholarship.pdf>.

Lorraine A. Williams, and Cleo Surry Higgins (Grand Basilies from 1948 to 1954, 1954 to 1959, 1959 to 1962, and 1962 to 1963, respectively), that carried the initiative forward.¹²³

123. Sallie Edwards Johnson was born in Ohio and attended Ohio State University where she received a bachelor's degree in education. After graduation, she briefly taught at Stowe Teachers College for a year before moving to teach high school education in Martin, Tennessee. In addition to her work in education, she attended St. Louis University and the University of Southern California where she studied social work and was a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers. Johnson was a member of the Zeta Sigma chapter of the Sigma Gamma Rho sorority and served as the sorority's seventh Grand Basileus from 1948 until 1954. While working with the sorority, she encouraged community service work, especially with the YMCA. She was a critical part of helping integration in the YMCA and developed programs for black and white girls. She lived in Hampton, Virginia with her husband until her death. PEARL SCHWARTZ WHITE, *BEHIND THESE DOORS—A LEGACY* (Lillie Wilkes eds., 1994); Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., <http://www.sgrho1922.org/past-grand-basilei>; THE PITTSBURGH COURIER, Dec. 30, 1950, <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/40810679/>.

Edna M. Douglas was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. She attended AM&N College, where she received her bachelor's degree, and then was awarded her master's degree from Atlanta University. She was an active member in the Little Rock community; she was the president of the YMCA board of directors, a member of the First Congressional Church of Little Rock, and won a teacher of the year award. She was also the first female member of the AM&N College Board of Trustees. Douglas was a member of Theta Sigma chapter of the Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority and served as the eighth Grand Basileus from 1954 to 1959. As Grand Basileus, she spearheaded efforts including registering Americans to vote, encouraging education in youth, and the establishment of programs for youth. She also served as president of the National Pan-Hellenic Council from 1960 to 1962. WHITE, *supra* note 123; Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., <http://www.sgrho1922.org/past-grand-basilei> (last visited Oct. 25, 2015);

Dr. Lorraine Anderson Williams served as the ninth and twelfth International Grand Basileus, from 1959 to 1962 and 1967 to 1971, respectively. Lorraine grew up in Washington, D.C. She earned a bachelor's degree from Howard University in 1944, and a master's degree in 1945 from the same institution. She also earned her Ph.D. from American University in 1955. Lorraine taught at Howard University for twenty-eight years, and earned the distinctions of full professor and chairman of the Department of History. During her career, Lorraine also served as Vice President of Academic Affairs, Chairman of the Department of Social Science, and Chairman of the Department of History. Lorraine was the editor of *The Journal of Negro History* from 1974 to 1976, and was appointed by President Carter to the United States Circuit Judge Nominating Panel for Washington, D.C. in 1978. She was also involved with organizations such as the American Association of University Women, the American Judicature Society, and the National Education Association. Dr. Williams passed away in 1996. *Dr. Lorraine A. Williams, 1923-1996*, 82 J. OF NEGRO HISTORY 180 (1997).

Dr. Cleo Surry Higgins was elected as the tenth Grand Basileus of Sigma Gamma Rho in 1962. Cleo was born in Memphis, Tennessee. She earned her bachelor's degree from LeMoyne College in 1944, her master's in public health from the University of Wisconsin in 1945, and her Ph.D. from the same institution in 1973. Dr. Higgins spent the majority of her career at Bethune-Cookman College. She began work as an instructor at the college in 1945, and was appointed the Dean of Faculty and Vice President of Academic Affairs in 1977. Dr. Higgins is now a professor emeritus at Bethune-Cookman. Her community involvement includes work with organizations such as the March of Dimes, the American Association of University Women, and the Women's Service League. Dr. Higgins has two children. LAWRENCE, ANNIE L, *WHO'S WHO AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS* 557 (2012); *Cleo Higgins New Faculty Dean at Bethune-Cookman*, DAYTON BEACH SUNDAY NEWS-JOURNAL,

In 1947, Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho accepted Alpha Kappa Alpha's offer to join their lobbying project, the ACHR.¹²⁴ In 1952, both sororities joined their partner organizations at the ACHR's Joint Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.¹²⁵ The conference produced a wide range of results including stimulating interest among membership of each Greek-letter society, demonstrating the willingness of Greek-letter organizations to join forces to fight for equality and justice, and fostering cooperation between the six organizations.¹²⁶ Both sororities were involved with ACHR and participated fully in all of its programs.¹²⁷ For example, Zeta Phi Beta was heavily involved with the ACHR and adopted it as one of their national projects.¹²⁸ In addition, Deborah Cannon Wolfe of Zeta Phi Beta was elected vice-president of the ACHR at a 1960 Board of Directors meeting.¹²⁹ Sigma Gamma Rho required its chapters to include ACHR's agenda into their activities.¹³⁰ In addition, members of Sigma Gamma Rho participated in ACHR's Workshop on Planning for Integration.¹³¹ Sigma Gamma Rho also participated in a 1958 ACHR Board Meeting, where member Emma Manning Carter was elected President of the ACHR.¹³² The respective national presidents went on record to support the 1960 student sit-ins.¹³³ They asked local chapters to immediately cancel plans for formal dances and hold a fundraiser instead to send proceeds to the ACHR's Student Emergency Fund.¹³⁴ The money would go toward paying fines, bails, and aid to students arrested for peaceful protest demonstrations.¹³⁵ Members were also asked to send the money that they would have spent on a spring hat to the fund. (Earlier generations of black women placed great importance on hats, so this was not a frivolous request by any means).¹³⁶ However, unlike civil rights activism, philanthropy came with fewer risks for sororities.

When the U.S. Supreme Court issued the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, which racially integrated public schools,

Oct. 19, 1977, at 1B.

124. LULLELIA W. HARRISON, *TORCHBEARERS OF A LEGACY: A HISTORY OF ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC. 1920-1997*, 163 (1998).

125. *Id.*; PEARL SCHWARTZ WHITE, *BEHIND THESE DOORS—A LEGACY: THE HISTORY OF SIGMA GAMMA RHO SORORITY* 68 (Lillie Wilkes ed., 1974).

126. HARRISON, *supra* note 124, at 204; WHITE, *supra* note 125, at 71.

127. WHITE, *supra* note 125, at 60.

128. HARRISON, *supra* note 124, at 163.

129. *Grand Elected to ACHR Post*, 25 *THE ARCHON* no. 1, 1960, at 53.

130. WHITE, *supra* note 125, at 56.

131. *Sigma Sorors at ACHR's Workshop on Planning for Integration*, 24 *THE AURORA* no. 2, 1955, at 6.

132. *Sigma Gamma Rho Leader Elected President*, 27 *THE AURORA* no. 2, 1958, at 13.

133. WHITE, *supra* note 125, at 82.

134. *Id.* at 83.

135. *Id.*

136. *A.C.H.R. Urges Protest Aid*, 25 *THE ARCHON*, no. 1, 1960, at 33.

Sigma Gamma Rho members published a statement by black Southern educators in support.¹³⁷ However, Sigma Gamma Rho members did not take this opportunity to publish a statement specifically from the sorority. Grand Basileus Edna Douglas (serving from 1954 to 1959) later noted that she discussed the ramifications of the Supreme Court decision with integrated workshops of churchwomen, possibly referring to Church Women United, but she did not clearly state her view.¹³⁸ Because many Sigma Gamma Rho members taught in public schools, the sorority may have been in a bind. To express support for integration might imply that black schoolteachers were not as good as white ones, and could also place members in difficult positions with respect to white-controlled, segregationist school boards in the South who firmly opposed *Brown*. Additionally, if all-black schools closed, black teachers were not likely to be hired by formerly all-white schools, thus eliminating the jobs of some Sigma Gamma Rho members. In 1955, in reaction to these educational challenges, the Zeta Sigma Chapter sent a financial contribution to the Committee for a Representative School Board, worked with the United Negro Organization and the Committee on Racial Equality, volunteered in the YMCA's Second Century Fund Campaign, and donated to the NAACP at its annual mammoth tea.¹³⁹ In addition, in 1957, Beta Zeta Sigma donated \$100 to the Rocky Mount Emergency Lunch Room Program.¹⁴⁰

The 1950s were marked by the challenges of desegregation and the Cold War. As governors blocked the doorways of schools to black students in the wake of the *Brown* decision, the Soviets took note and publicized American hypocrisy about freedom. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik into Earth's orbit in 1957 and succeeded in both being the first country to enter space and scaring the daylights out of complacent Americans. The U.S. continued to move slowly on integration, yet sped to enter the Space Race. In response, at Sigma Gamma Rho's Twenty-Second Boulé in 1952, the sorority accepted a resolution endorsing the proposed abolishment of segregation in public schools in Delaware, the District of Columbia, South Carolina, and Virginia.¹⁴¹

During the same period, Zeta Phi Beta was led primarily by teachers or social workers. Then Dr. Deborah Cannon (Partridge Wolf)—the first African American full-time professor at the City University of New York, visiting professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, and professor

137. *Public Affairs*, THE AURORA no. 1, 1954.

138. *To Secure These Rights: A Statement Adopted by a Group of Southern Negro Educators, Hot Springs, Arkansas*, 24 THE AURORA, no. 1, 1954, at 4–5; Edna Douglas, *An Open Letter from the Grand Basileus*, 24 THE AURORA, no. 2, 1955, at 2–37.

139. *Zeta Sigma, St. Louis, Mo.*, 24 THE AURORA no. 3, 1955, at 24.

140. *Beta Zeta Sigma Rocky Mount, North Carolina*, 26 THE AURORA no. 2, 1957, at 50.

141. PEARL SCHWARTZ WHITE, *BEHIND THESE DOORS—A LEGACY: THE HISTORY OF SIGMA GAMMA RHO SORORITY* 68 (Lillie Wilkes ed., 1974).

of education at Tuskegee Institute—took the helm.¹⁴² In 1962, she would go on to be appointed Education Chief for the House of Representatives Education Committee.¹⁴³ Through her position as education chief, Partridge Wolf was able to introduce Zeta Phi Beta to government participation on a higher level. She created an awareness of the influence of government and how to benefit from the political system.¹⁴⁴

In 1954, Sigma Gamma Rho expanded its 1940s successful Teen Towns project by adopting a new national project at the Twenty-Third Boulé. Honorary member Alma Illery was named supervisor of “Camp Achievement.”¹⁴⁵ Camp Achievement was a forty-eight acre campsite located outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, left to the National Achievement Clubs by a friend of Illery.¹⁴⁶ While Sigma Gamma Rho did not create the camp, the sorority pledged to provide financial support for Camp Achievement and to take an active role in volunteering at the camp.¹⁴⁷ Sigma Gamma Rho adopted the practice of providing \$1,000 annually to the camp by 1956.¹⁴⁸ The sorority's efforts at Camp Achievement advanced Sigma Gamma Rho's involvement in social development of youths. Sigma Gamma Rho also showed dedication to youth development in other ways. For example, in 1958, the Kappa Sigma chapter sponsored 150 children at their Christmas party and donated \$25 to the Red Shield club of the Salvation Army.¹⁴⁹

Under the administration of Edna Douglas, Sigma Gamma Rho also continued their scholarship awards for high-achieving women. In 1955, the Kappa Sigma Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho awarded Jacqueline Scott a scholarship so she could attend Howard University.¹⁵⁰ This same year, the Alpha Nu Sigma chapter awarded Mahalie Poteat a \$75 scholarship.¹⁵¹ Additionally, the Beta Sigma chapter awarded Stella Marie Baker a scholarship to attend Alabama State, the Rho Sigma chapter gave Constance Halliburton and Charlesetta Andrews scholarships, the Eta Chapter awarded Sigma Gamma Rho member Gloria Wells a scholarship, and the Alpha Nu Sigma chapter awarded Minnie Dixon a scholarship.¹⁵²

142. LULLELIA W. HARRISON, *TORCHBEARERS OF A LEGACY: A HISTORY OF ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC. 1920-1997*, 55—57 (1998).

143. *Id.* at 55—56.

144. *Id.* at 64.

145. *Id.* at 73.

146. *Id.*

147. HARRISON, *supra* note 142, at 73.

148. *A Scene at Camp Achievement*, 24 *THE AURORA* no. 4, 1955, at 7; *Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Gives Second \$1,000 Check to Camp Achievement*, 26 *THE AURORA* no. 1, 1956, at 5; WHITE, *supra* note 141 at 76.

149. *Kappa Sigma New York City*, 27 *THE AURORA* no 2, 1958, at 21.

150. *Scholarships: Our Challenge...Our Responsibility*, 35 *THE AURORA* no. 1, 1955, at 3.

151. *Id.*

152. *Scholarships: Our Challenge...Our Responsibility*, 35 *THE AURORA* no. 1, 1955, at 5, 8.

In 1957, Sigma Gamma Rho awarded Joarvonnia Weston and Mattie L. Hough \$100 scholarships each.¹⁵³ Sigma Gamma Rho also donated \$50 to be used for a scholarship fund at the Miss Rhomania contest.¹⁵⁴ This same year, individual chapters Alpha Eta Sigma and Beta Delta donated to the NAACP and the sorority scholarship fund.¹⁵⁵ In 1958, Sigma Gamma Rho sponsored a scholarship dinner at the Trott Inn.¹⁵⁶

In a 1955 directive from Partridge Wolf, Zeta Phi Beta's International Grand Basileus at the time, she urged chapters to racially integrate membership to demonstrate Zeta Phi Beta's belief in integration in all areas of life.¹⁵⁷ In 1956, Wolf said, "This goal of integration should permeate not only our school life and activities but our sorority life as well. We must accept responsibilities that accompany this achievement, realizing always that integration, like democracy, is a great social achievement, not a legacy; therefore, it may not simply be inherited."¹⁵⁸ Article after article in *The Archon* highlighted Zeta Phi Beta members for being the first to present before specific integrated groups or for serving in completely integrated offices. For example, Zeta Phi Beta member Tommie Morton-Allen became the first black to graduate from George Peabody College in Nashville by earning her master's degree in 1955.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, a Sigma Gamma Rho member "ha[d] the honor of being the only Negro member" of a particular board.¹⁶⁰

In the late 1950s, Zeta Phi Beta continued to push its community service and philanthropy efforts. In 1957, the Rho Zeta chapter sponsored a shoe bank for delinquent and underprivileged children.¹⁶¹ The same year, the Tau Zeta chapter awarded \$50 scholarships to three high school graduates.¹⁶² Alpha Phi Zeta awarded several hundred dollars in scholarships, while Shreveport's Zetas awarded three \$100 scholarships to local high school graduates.¹⁶³ In addition, Alpha Eta Zeta awarded \$1,700 worth of scholarships, and Alpha Chi Zeta awarded a \$200 scholarship to Sybil Buckley.¹⁶⁴ The Midwestern Regional organization also gave

153. *Scholarship Winner*, 26 THE AURORA no 1, 1957, at 9.

154. *Gamma Delta Sigma Miami, Florida*, 26 THE AURORA no 1, 1957, at 10.

155. *Alpha Eta Sigma and Beta Delta Donate to the NAACP*, 26 THE AURORA no. 4, 1957, at 30.

156. *Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Sponsors Scholarship Dinner at the Trott Inn*, 27 THE AURORA no. 4, 1958, at 25.

157. HARRISON, *supra* note 142, at 58.

158. HARRISON, *supra* note 142, at 55—58.

159. *A First From George Peabody College in Nashville*, 21 THE ARCHON, no. 2, 1956, at 27.

160. *Id.*; *Delta Upsilon Zeta Chapter Observes Finer Womanhood*, 22 THE ARCHON, no. 1, 1957, at 19; Cleora W. Frazier, *Gamma Alpha Sigma Gamma Rho Member: Bakersfield, California*, 33 THE AURORA, no. 3, 1964, at 67.

161. *Shoe Bank Is Sponsored By Rho Zeta Chapter*, 22 THE ARCHON no. 1, 1957, at 23.

162. *Tau Zeta, Only Greek Body In County, Reveals Calendar*, 22 THE ARCHON no. 2, 1957, at 33.

163. *Alpha Phi Zeta Awards Two Scholarships to Students*, 22 THE ARCHON no. 2, 1957, at 40; *Awards \$300 scholarships*, 22 THE ARCHON no. 2, 1957, at 41.

164. *Alpha Chi Zeta Awards \$200 Scholarship To Miss Buckley*, 22 THE ARCHON no. 2,

Lesceilla Marie Webb and Phoebe Eloise Hall \$100 scholarships.¹⁶⁵

In 1959, Zeta Phi Beta joined the new Committee to Salvage Talent in response to an invitation by a biracial group of prominent Americans, including singer and Alpha Kappa Alpha member Marian Anderson, baseball executive Branch Rickey, and Senator John F. Kennedy.¹⁶⁶ In the midst of the Cold War, loss of talent had national security implications. The committee, focused on New York City, Washington, D.C, and Philadelphia, aimed to encourage black youth to enter higher education by providing guidance and financial aid.¹⁶⁷ Citing an educated population as “our most valuable resource for assuring national growth and survival,” the committee observed that the “largest known loss occurs among racial minorities whose economic and cultural handicaps - compounded by poor schools - lessens ambition.” While forming ten percent of the U.S. population, blacks were only one percent of the students in interracial colleges.¹⁶⁸ Zeta Phi Beta members, already experienced in locating young women of promise, now also searched for bright young men to push toward college.¹⁶⁹

Employment and housing changes in the post-World War II era brought new demands for women. In the new bedroom communities outside of the city, black men often spent most of their waking hours away from their homes and communities. As Sigma Gwen Cherry stated,

If the community is to have good schools, responsible local government, the cultural advantages of public recreation areas and local libraries, and information on aspects of the world beyond the local community, women through their organized activities will have to work for these ends and bear the brunt of the load.¹⁷⁰

Women now had citizenship responsibilities, but the definition of community shifted beyond their localities.

In 1960, Sigma Gamma Rho Grand Basileus Lorraine A. Williams (serving from 1959 to 1962 and then 1967 to 1971) and member Annie Lee Whitehead Neville (Grand Basileus from 1963 to 1967) attended the White House Conference on Children and Youth.¹⁷¹ The goal of the program was

1957, at 42; *Alpha Eta Zeta Lists 1956-'58 Scholarship Total-\$1700*, 22 THE ARCHON no. 2 1957, at 41.

165. *Midwestern Regional Scholarships to Misses Webb and Hall*, 22 THE ARCHON no. 2, 1957, at 40.

166. *Salvage Committee Aids Negro Students*, 24 THE ARCHON, no. 2, 1959.

167. *Id.*

168. *Id.*

169. *Id.*

170. *Id.*

171. PEARL SCHWARTZ WHITE, *BEHIND THESE DOORS—A LEGACY: THE HISTORY OF SIGMA GAMMA RHO SORORITY* 82 (Lillie Wilkes ed., 1974). Annie Lee Whitehead was born in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and attended Booker T. Washington High School. After graduating in 1928, she attended Brick Junior College and then Shaw University. She

to “promote opportunities for children and youth to reach their full potential for a creative life in freedom and dignity.”¹⁷² Williams and Neville reflected Sigma Gamma Rho’s emphasis on youth service and education by representing the sorority at the conference. In the 1960s, Pan-Africanism also gained strength, and both Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho increased their ties to Africa. Zeta Phi Beta was the first BGLO to establish chapters in Africa, with its initial chapter in Liberia.¹⁷³ In 1960, an officer modestly stated, “You will find that most women of importance in Africa are Zetas.”¹⁷⁴ That same year, Zeta Phi Beta chapters were asked to obtain toys, books, and games to send to Africa to better the understanding between Africans and Americans. Zeta Phi Beta members wanted to further their African program to strengthen the bonds of friendship and to encourage black Africans as they fought for freedom and self-government. Sigma Gamma Rho chapters shipped educational and medical journals to African students in dire need of research materials.¹⁷⁵ The Eta Sigma chapter donated 400 pounds of linen to “Linen for Africa.”¹⁷⁶ However, as usual, the older sorority stayed less expressly political than Zeta Phi Beta. Philanthropy without clear political ties proved simpler.

The 1960s also saw continued funding of scholarships from Sigma Gamma Rho. In 1961, the Beta Gamma Sigma chapter sponsored local scholarships and pledged gifts and support to the YMCA and local affiliated programs.¹⁷⁷ In total, Sigma Gamma Rho awarded over \$10,000 throughout the year.¹⁷⁸ In 1964, Sigma Gamma Rho contributed \$500 to the UNCF Scholarship fund.¹⁷⁹ That same year, the Houston, Texas, chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho gave over \$2,000 in local scholarships.¹⁸⁰ In 1965, Eta Sigma chapter gave \$2,500 in scholarships throughout the year.¹⁸¹ This era also saw Sigma Gamma Rho’s first foray into support for

received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Shaw and then attended Columbia University for her master’s degree in teaching. She taught at elementary schools in Rocky Mount and served in many capacities; teacher, supervisor, principle, and speech therapist. Whitehead was a member of the Phi Sigma chapter of the Sigma Gamma Rho sorority and served as the eleventh Grand Basileus of the sorority from 1963 to 1967. As Grand Basileus, she helped charter seven new chapters and re-chartered three more. She also helped to establish additional awards to recognize individual chapters in the sorority and represented the sorority at the White House conference on Children and Youth. She married Andrew A. Neville and together they had one daughter. She passed away on December 12, 1969. *Id.*

172. *Id.*

173. LULLELIA W. HARRISON, *TORCHBEARERS OF A LEGACY: A HISTORY OF ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC. 1920-1997*, 58 (1998).

174. Louise Batson, *Director Seeks New Support*, 25 *THE ARCHON*, no. 1, 1960, at 10.

175. *Gamma Xi Sigma’s 1963 Calendar Girls*, 32 *THE AURORA*, no. 4.

176. *Eta Sigma Atlanta, Georgia*, 35 *THE AURORA* no. 1, 1965, at 46, 49.

177. *Beta Gamma Sigma Tyler, Texas*, 30 *THE AURORA* no. 2, 1961, at 15.

178. *Scholarships*, 31 *THE AURORA* no. 2, 1961, at 23.

179. *Sigma Gamma rho Sorority contributes to UNCF scholarship fund*, 34 *THE AURORA* no. 2, 1964, at 7.

180. *Houston Hosts Sigmas*, 34 *THE AURORA* no. 2, 1964, at 55.

181. *Eta Sigma Atlanta, Georgia*, 35 *THE AURORA* no. 1, 1965, at 46, 49.

mental health initiatives. In 1964, Gamma Alpha Sigma chapter donated \$565 to the Kent County Mental Health Association and more than \$1,600 in total to mental health causes throughout the year.¹⁸² The next year, the same chapter raised \$12,000 more than the previous year for a variety of causes: \$2,100 for a mental health initiative, \$9,000 for neighborhood initiatives, and \$550 for scholarships.¹⁸³

In 1963, Zeta Phi Beta adopted "Project Challenging Times."¹⁸⁴ This six-point African project was conducted jointly by chapters in America and Africa; under the program, the Domestic Science Center opened in Monrovia, Liberia in October 1965.¹⁸⁵ Working with CARE, a humanitarian organization that serves the poorest communities in the world, Zeta Phi Beta members ran the community development program out of a house provided by William Tubman, who was president of Liberia and a Phi Beta Sigma brother.¹⁸⁶

Problems at home drew the bulk of sorority attention, however. In 1964, Ruth W. Whaley, a member of a New York City's Sigma Gamma Rho chapter, argued that "Greek" organizations should take the lead in the campaign to register and vote, in order to remain relevant to youth.¹⁸⁷ She stated,

As we cry for freedom and equality, let us be sure that we exercise our right to the ballot and offer interpretation to those who need guidance Rededicate ourselves to the vision that as Greeks, we should set forth a vision of service within the group and within the community.¹⁸⁸

Housing discrimination, a side effect of lack of political clout, badly hurt black communities, and it is in this area that many Greeks focused their service. Therefore, in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, a national advocacy housing project attracted the attention of many Zeta Phi Beta chapters.¹⁸⁹ The project consisted of soliciting the cooperation of legislators on legislation to affect housing for low-income citizens and urged an end to segregated public housing.¹⁹⁰ As an advocate of open housing, Zeta Phi Beta surveyed groups and presented resolutions calling for adequate housing for everyone in the underprivileged community.¹⁹¹

182. *Gamma Alpha Sigma Bakersfield, California*, 33 THE AURORA no. 4, 1964, at 67.

183. *Gamma Alpha Sigma Bakersfield, California*, 35 THE AURORA no. 1, 1965, at 26.

184. HARRISON, *supra* note 173, at 164.

185. *Id.*

186. *Id.* CARE was founded in 1945 by 22 American organizations that came together to send lifesaving, care packages to World War II survivors. See HISTORY OF CARE, CARE (Oct. 15, 2013), <http://www.care.org/impact/our-stories/care-history>.

187. Reba Brailsford, *Alpha Alpha Sigma Gamma Rho Member: Baltimore, Maryland*, 33 THE AURORA, no. 3, 1964, at 12.

188. *Id.*

189. HARRISON, *supra* note 184, at 165.

190. *Id.*

191. PEARL SCHWARTZ WHITE, BEHIND THESE DOORS—A LEGACY: THE HISTORY OF SIGMA GAMMA RHO SORORITY 165 (Lillie Wilkes ed., 1974).

Both sororities clearly saw an obligation for educated women to act as community leaders.

At its 1965 Boulé, Zeta Phi Beta adopted “Welfare, Education, and Health Services” as a national program.¹⁹² It aimed to provide volunteer services to individuals, agencies, and organizations in order to attack poverty and ignorance while raising scholarship and self-help.¹⁹³ Mildred Cater Boone (Bradham), International Grand Basileus from 1965 to 1970, made the suggestion that Zeta Phi Beta establish a separate foundation to provide scholarships.¹⁹⁴ Bradham had a strong interest in programming and initiated many community-based projects.¹⁹⁵ She introduced a ten-point program that focused in part on social service projects.¹⁹⁶ Such projects included “Operation Bootstrap,” which was designed to assist families; the creation of national welfare, education, and health projects that could be modified on a local level; cooperation with other organizations; and advocacy of open public housing for all ethnic groups.¹⁹⁷

At its Thirtieth Boulé in 1965, under Grand Basileus Neville’s administration, Sigma Gamma Rho went on record as supporting President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Anti-Poverty Program.¹⁹⁸ The sorority pledged that individual chapters would implement the program in their own communities wherever possible.¹⁹⁹ Sigma Gamma Rho member Kate J. Hick’s “Vocational Guidance Program” was selected as the pilot program to further Sigma Gamma Rho’s participation in the Anti-Poverty Program.²⁰⁰ Two years later, Sigma Gamma Rho aided Detroit following the 1967 riots that took over forty lives and destroyed the 12th Street community. The Thirty-First National Boulé was held in Detroit just weeks after the riots ended.²⁰¹ Sigma Gamma Rho gave an initial donation to Detroit to help the city deal with the resulting deprivation, and the sorority also adopted one of the families affected by the riot.²⁰² Grand Basileus Annie Lee Neville announced at the Boulé that the sorority would adopt the Willie Gibson family for the entire year and make an initial contribution of \$500 dollars to the family.²⁰³ The Boulé also gave Mayor Jerome P. Cavanagh a \$2,000 check for the Detroit Emergency Relief Fund.²⁰⁴ Individual chapters adopted needy families for designated periods

192. WHITE, *supra* note 191, at 164.

193. *Id.*

194. *Id.* at 66.

195. *Id.*

196. *Id.*

197. *Id.*

198. *Id.* at 100.

199. *Id.*

200. *Id.* at 324.

201. *Id.* at 102.

202. *Id.* at 104.

203. *Id.*

204. *Id.*

following the Boulé.²⁰⁵

The same year, at Sigma Gamma Rho's Thirty-Second Boulé in 1967, member Edna Forrest Browne of Phi Sigma chapter in Washington, D.C., created the "Sigma Drop-In" program.²⁰⁶ This program engaged in volunteer activities such as tutoring at local elementary schools.²⁰⁷ The program also raised funds for institutions such as the Merriwether Home for Children.²⁰⁸ This program reflects Sigma Gamma Rho's emphasis on helping others achieve scholastically and on providing service to the youths of the community. The Thirty-Second Boulé also saw several individual chapters take initiatives. First, the Alpha Xi Sigma chapter of Tulsa, Oklahoma, pledged jobs to youths for the 1969 summer.²⁰⁹ Next, the Gamma Sigma chapter of Houston, Texas, announced that its "Eye-Saver" community service project successfully supplied eyeglasses to students in three local elementary schools.²¹⁰ Further, the Gamma Beta chapter of East St. Louis, Illinois, supervised youths in handicrafts, skating, and sports every other Saturday and sponsored a breakfast program for disadvantaged youths.²¹¹ Finally, the Phi Sigma of Washington, D.C., provided funding for two children from a local elementary school to make an educational trip to Atlanta, Georgia, to study African American History and created a \$1,000 fund for the Foster Children's Project.²¹²

III. 1970s AND BEYOND: CONCEPTUALIZING BLACK SORORITIES UPLIFT IDENTITY, THE MODERN ERA

In 1970, during the Isabel M. Herson administration, Zeta Phi Beta's International Grand Basileus from 1970 to 1974, the National Education Foundation was established.²¹³ The National Education Foundation awards scholarships, provides funds for research, and conducts workshops and seminars on a variety of topics, such as personal finance.²¹⁴ Chapters were encouraged to channel their local scholarships through the Foundation.²¹⁵ Funds were solicited from the chapter, regional, and national taxes. Additionally, the Board has sponsored

205. WHITE, *supra* note 191, at 108.

206. *Id.* at 109.

207. *Id.*

208. *Id.*

209. *Id.* at 113.

210. *Id.*

211. *Id.*

212. *Id.* at 114.

213. LULLELIA W. HARRISON, TORCHBEARERS OF A LEGACY: A HISTORY OF ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC. 1920-1997, 66 (1998).

214. *Id.* at 157.

215. *Id.* at 158.

scholarship fundraising drives in regions.²¹⁶ The scholarships are awarded to college students without regard to race, color, or creed.²¹⁷

One of Zeta Phi Beta's largest national projects is the "Stork's Nest."²¹⁸ It began in the spring of 1971 with the Epsilon Zeta Phi Beta Chapter in Atlanta, Georgia, in response to the community's need for motivating women to seek early prenatal care.²¹⁹ The chapter provided layettes as incentives to women who regularly attended prenatal clinics during the last six months of pregnancy.²²⁰ The layettes usually consisted of basic baby essentials such as diapers and clothing.²²¹ Lullelia Harrison, then Zeta Phi Beta's National Director of Projects, was so impressed with the project that she recommended its nationwide adoption.²²² In 1972, it became a cooperative project with the March of Dimes.²²³ The Stork's Nest grew rapidly from 25 "nests" in 1974 to 80 in 1980.²²⁴

In 1974, during the administration of Grand Basileus Annie Lawrence-Brown (serving from 1971 to 1976), March of Dimes National Foundation accepted Sigma Gamma Rho's proposal for a cooperative national health education project.²²⁵ The draft envisioned the March of Dimes National Foundation and Sigma Gamma Rho working together to assist young mothers in planning for family living, to acquaint mothers with health resources, and to provide new mothers with guidance on becoming a parent.²²⁶ The project was to take place through Zeta Sigma and Alpha Delta chapters in St. Louis, Missouri.²²⁷ That same year, Sigma Gamma Rho joined the Leadership Conference on Human Rights. This organization was a coalition of 120 civil rights, religious, labor, and fraternal organizations.²²⁸ The goals of the organization were to "bring about federal legislative and executive action to assure full equality for all Americans."²²⁹ By uniting as a coalition, member organizations could organize and act more effectively than as independent bodies.

After Partridge Wolf's administration, Zeta Phi Beta's involvement with governmental affairs increased. Janice Gantt Kissner, Zeta Phi Beta's International Grand Basileus from 1974 to 1980, was asked to participate in the

216. HARRISON, *supra* note 213, at 165.

217. *Id.*

218. *Id.* at 169.

219. *Id.*

220. *Id.*

221. *Id.* at 170.

222. *Id.* at 170.

223. *Id.* at 171.

224. *Id.* at 79.

225. *Id.* at 150.

226. *Id.*

227. *Id.*

228. *Id.*

229. *Id.*

Congressional Black Caucus Brain Trust.²³⁰ Edith V. Francis, International Grand Basileus from 1980 to 1986, attended two White House summit meetings with President Ronald Reagan; a meeting with Vice President George Bush's wife, Barbara Bush; and other numerous governmental meetings.²³¹ Additionally, Zeta Phi Beta formed partnerships with the National Medical Association and Howard University Medical Center to educate communities on health prevention measures.²³² These partnerships were the beginning of a tradition of partnership with other organizations in programming outreach that continued years later.²³³

Under the Francis administration, Zeta Phi Beta responded to community needs through "Project Hunger" in 1983 and 1984 in Detroit and Ethiopia, and contributed to "Hands across America."²³⁴ Francis was invited by China to represent the United States at a 1985 Summit Meeting in China; the Summit focused on the role of women worldwide and achieving better relationships through promoting understanding and political awareness between the two countries.²³⁵ Under Francis administration, Zeta Phi Beta's national emphasis was the need of the community.²³⁶

In 1986, "Project ZIP" (Zeta Phi Betas Investing in People) was launched.²³⁷ It concentrated on four areas: economic development and empowerment; health and human services; political empowerment; and prevention of substance abuse.²³⁸ Zeta Phi Beta focused many of its efforts on the African American male through its African American Male Crisis program, which worked in various ways to finance and volunteer service.²³⁹ One program, known as "SOS" (Save Our Sons), encouraged young black men to refrain from drug use and assume family responsibilities.²⁴⁰ Eunice S. Thomas, the International Grand Basileus from 1986-1992,²⁴¹ stated,

[N]o other issue should be of more critical importance to each and every member of the African American community than the crisis affecting our African American males. We must move beyond the rhetoric and fully accept our responsibility to campaign expeditiously and relentlessly to promote worthwhile efforts and intervene on behalf of our African American males.²⁴²

230. HARRISON, *supra* note 213, at 79.

231. *Id.* at 83.

232. *Id.* at 79.

233. *Id.*

234. *Id.* at 82.

235. *Id.* at 83—84.

236. *Id.* at 83.

237. *Id.* at 166.

238. *Id.*

239. *Id.* at 91 (1998).

240. *Id.* at 92.

241. *Id.* at 87.

242. *Id.* at 92.

It was under the Francis administration that the Stork's Nest program expanded to include an educational component consisting of parenting workshops.²⁴³ It was also during her term that Zeta Phi Beta participated in the Assault on Illiteracy Program, which began when publishers affiliated with Black Media, Inc. saw statistics indicating that forty-four percent of black Americans could not read beyond a fourth grade level.²⁴⁴ The Zetas continued to emphasize voter education and registration in recognition that bettering black lives rested on acquiring political power.²⁴⁵

During the early 1980s, the national programs focused on concerns of the black family and minorities.²⁴⁶ Zeta Phi Beta's "Five Point" plan included services for Haitian refugees in a project directed by Laura Saunders; training minorities to qualify for public, private and political jobs; voter registration initiatives; social action dealing with the news media; and youth career education and development.²⁴⁷ Later programs from 1986-1992 addressed social problems including substance abuse prevention for youth ("Project Zeta Phi Beta"), tutorial programs for the illiterate, and efforts to increase voter registration.²⁴⁸ By 1990, Zeta Phi Beta increased its community outreach program to include awareness of spousal abuse, latchkey child programs, reading clinics, care for boarder babies (babies born to drug-addicted mothers), programs for the aged, cancer detection, joint venture enterprises, and sponsorship of political forums for political awareness.²⁴⁹

International Grand Basileus Thomas had served as acting secretary for the Family Support Administration of the United States Health and Human Services, director of the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization in the Department of Transportation, and special assistant to the United States Secretary of Labor.²⁵⁰ During her administration, Zeta Phi Beta was selected as one of the "Thousand Points of Light" by President George Bush.²⁵¹ In 1987, and again in 1991, Zeta Phi Beta co-sponsored the National Conference on Substance Abuse Prevention and HIV Infection in the Black Community with the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Office of Substance Abuse Prevention, and the

243. LULLELIA W. HARRISON, *TORCHBEARERS OF A LEGACY: A HISTORY OF ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC. 1920-1997*, 87 (1998).

244. ASSAULT ON ILLITERACY PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, ETA ZETA CHAPTER OF OMEGA PSI PSI, <http://www.olemiss.edu/orgs/ques/assault.htm> (last visited Oct. 17, 2015).

245. HARRISON, *supra* note 243, at 83.

246. *Id.* at 166.

247. *Id.*

248. *Id.* at 89.

249. *Id.* at 91.

250. *Id.* at 88.

251. *Id.* at 95.

United States Department of Health and Human Services.²⁵² Zeta Phi Beta also co-sponsored the Black Women's Political Action Forum with Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, and Sigma Gamma Rho in 1987 and 1989.²⁵³ Participants were addressed by key White House officials.²⁵⁴ Thomas then served as the conference coordinator in 1989.²⁵⁵ Thomas also helped to organize the Forum on Capitol Hill as part of the National Basilei Leadership Conference of Zeta Phi Beta—a program that provided insight into the current status of governmental issues—in 1989 and 1991.²⁵⁶

In the late 1980s, chapter programs began concentrating on increasing economic development through proposal writing on the chapter level, and chapters were encouraged to seek grants to fund local programs.²⁵⁷ In 1991, Zeta Phi Beta received its first federal grant from the United States Department of Education for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) for \$191,657.²⁵⁸ The project was a joint venture with Benedict College of Columbia, South Carolina, and a two-year drug prevention-training program headed by program manager Barbara Moore and project manager Betsy Simon.²⁵⁹

Under Zeta Phi Beta's Thomas administration, drug abuse was identified as the most powerful destructive force in the African American community.²⁶⁰ Chapter programs included working with schools, health agencies, and churches in coordinating alternative activities for youth.²⁶¹ Responding to a need to address the effects of crack cocaine, chapters became involved in rehabilitation programs.²⁶² One example is the Daytona Beach, Florida, which helps sponsor and coordinate "Hope House"—a rehabilitation center for crack mothers and their infants.²⁶³

Jylla Moore Foster was the International Grand Basileus of Zeta Phi Beta from 1992 to 1996.²⁶⁴ Foster travelled to the United Nation's Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing from September 4-5, 1995, and presented on "The Role of Young African American

252. HARRISON, *supra* note 243, at 95.

253. *Id.*

254. *Id.* at 96.

255. *Id.* at 95.

256. *Id.* at 96.

257. *Id.* at 90.

258. *Id.* at 92.

259. *Id.*

260. *Id.* at 90 (1998).

261. *Id.*

262. *Id.* at 92.

263. *Id.*

264. *Id.* at 97.

Women in the Global Economy.”²⁶⁵ The presentation focused on human rights, politics, health, economics, rights of girls, poverty, environment, education, and training.²⁶⁶ In 1996, under Foster’s administration, Zeta Phi Beta moved its conference from San Diego to Dallas as a message to California that its retreat from affirmative action policies would not go unanswered.²⁶⁷ It was during Foster’s term that Zeta Phi Beta contributed to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.²⁶⁸ In its broader philanthropy, Zeta Phi Beta was able to provide sustainable legacies with more than \$100,000 in charitable contributions to organizations like the NAACP, The College Fund/UNCF, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and other organizations.²⁶⁹ The signature project under her administration was “Challenger Kids”—a program that sent more than 50 youths to NASA’s U.S. Space Camp.²⁷⁰ Also, under her administration, the sorority established “Open Airways”—a program that educated on managing asthma episodes—in cooperation with the American Lung Association.²⁷¹ Also under the Foster administration, Zeta Phi Beta joined the American Lung Association’s similarly titled Open Airways Project, which discouraged smoking and took other measures to prevent lung disease.²⁷²

Barbara West Carpenter, Zeta Phi Beta’s International Grand Basileus from 1996 to 2002, established Zeta Phi Beta’s “Seven-Point Plan of Action.”²⁷³ This plan covered education, community volunteerism, drug and substance abuse prevention, and health and wellness awareness.²⁷⁴ The volunteerism portion advocated volunteer and mentoring programs and work with physically, mentally, and economically challenged citizens.²⁷⁵

IV. CONCLUSION

African American sororities and their members have a distinguished history of public service. They have marshaled a range of strategies to uplift the black community and better lives. Yet these sororities in the 21st century are still faced with some of the same issues that challenged their predecessors. While the era of lynching is over, police shootings of young blacks in the 2010s has led to the Black Lives Matter Movement. Sorority

265. HARRISON, *supra* note 243, at 105.

266. *Id.*

267. *Id.*

268. *Id.* at 102.

269. *Id.*

270. *Id.* at 101.

271. *Id.* at 102.

272. *Id.* at 167.

273. *Id.* at 111 (1998).

274. *Id.*

275. *Id.*

members are participating in marches, demonstrations, and rallies. However, as in the mid-20th century, the sororities themselves are divided between members who call for civil rights activism and those who shun civil disobedience. Sigma Gamma Rho initially forbade members from wearing official attire while protesting before reversing itself in the face of a member uprising.²⁷⁶ Sigma Gamma Rho leaders cited the need to protect the sorority's brand as the rationale for why members could not wear sorority letters while protesting.²⁷⁷ It is now the younger members who are pushing the more conservative, older women to take action in an echo of the past. The sustainability of the current movement to have the sororities be more deeply engaged in social justice initiatives is not clear.

Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho sororities were founded in 1920 and 1922, respectively. A confluence of factors—historical, institutional, and organizational—gave rise to them, shaping their structure and ideals. Among those ideals was, and is, racial uplift for African Americans. It is this quality and characteristic of the two organizations that has been nurtured and made manifest over time and place. However, upon close inspection, this history of racial uplift engagement is a complicated one.

Comparatively, Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho may seem limited in two respects with regard to their racial uplift work. First, it is less robust in the conventional sense than that of African American fraternities.²⁷⁸ Work by African American fraternities demonstrates a more aggressive role, for example, in the area of civil rights litigation.²⁷⁹ Given the intersection of racism and sexism, however, black women entered law schools and the legal profession much later and in smaller numbers than black men.²⁸⁰

276. Donna M. Owens, *Sister Soldiers: A Look at the Black Lives Matter Movement*, ESSENCE (June 8, 2015, 9:53 PM), <http://www.essence.com/2015/06/09/sister-soldier-look-black-sororities-black-lives-matter-movement>.

277. *Id.*

278. See generally, Wendy Marie Laybourn & Gregory S. Parks, *Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and the Fight for Civil Rights*, WAKE FOREST J. L. & POL'Y (forthcoming 2016) (highlighting the history of Omega Psi Phi members' involvement in civil rights efforts, including litigation).

279. See Wendy Marie Laybourn and Gregory S. Parks, *The Sons of Indiana: Kappa Alpha Psi and the Fight for Civil Rights*, INDIANA L.J. (forthcoming 2016); Wendy Marie Laybourn & Gregory S. Parks, *Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and the Fight for Civil Rights*, WAKE FOREST J. L. & POL'Y (forthcoming 2016).

280. With regard to women law students, see Audrey Latourette, *Sex Discrimination in the Legal Profession: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, 39 VAL. U. L. REV. 859, 880-884 (2005) (noting that “[s]ome schools, like Baylor, chose to close and others, like Harvard, fervently resisted the admittance of women with its president avowing in 1943 that it was not doing “as bad as we thought. We have [seventy-five] students, and we haven’t had to admit any women.”). With regard to black women lawyers, scholars have noted: “To Mack, black women lawyers, in their aspirations and struggles, ‘meshed uneasily with the American narrative of minority group representation’ that was determined by white male professional norms, courtroom performance, and admission into ‘local fraternit[ies] of white lawyers.’” *Id.* Although black women lawyers, such as Sadie Alexander in Philadelphia and Pauli Murray in New York, achieved national stature as civil rights leaders—that is, as

Consequently, but understandably, while a significant amount of civil rights litigation was conducted by black fraternity men, little of it was conducted by black women, whether in a sorority or not.

Second, Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho's social justice activism seems to be less robust in the conventional sense than that of the African American sororities that came before them.²⁸¹ In his book, *Our Kind of People*, Lawrence Otis Graham provides an expose of the black upper class.²⁸² In doing so, he indicates that among the organizations associated with this upper class are African American collegiate fraternities and sororities. Graham goes on to note that there is however a hierarchy to these groups, at least among the sororities, with Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho in the second tier.²⁸³ However, the distinctions between the sororities may have less to do with perceived status (or lack thereof) of any organization, but rather about their founding. In short, maybe once Alpha Kappa Alpha and Delta Sigma Theta sororities were founded, they sucked some of the proverbial air out of the room by establishing identities more deeply rooted in certain approaches to racial uplift, leaving those sororities that followed to carve out a niche for themselves that would be slightly different.

As a result of these two above points, it should be no surprise that Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho's approaches to racial uplift include a meaningful, but relatively *de minimus* engagement in racial justice work. Rather, their work largely focused on community service and non-social justice philanthropy. In time, the Civil Rights Movement—as it is formally understood—petered out with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,

“representative women of the race”—Mack describes their experience of discrimination and exclusion as “disorienting.” Murray drew upon that shared “sense of displacement” in her later efforts contributing to the “creation of sex discrimination as a category of modern American law.” See Anthony V. Alfieri & Angela Onwuachi-Willig, *Next Generation Civil Rights Lawyers: Race and Representation in the Age of Identity Performance*, 122 YALE L.J. 1484, 1500—1501 (2013). Other scholars noted: “Through 1940, the reported number of black female lawyers grew at a glacial pace to four in the 1920 census, seven in the 1930 census from New York and the District of Columbia, and thirty-nine in the 1940 census from fifteen states. With such small numbers, each pioneering black female lawyer’s experience was essentially idiosyncratic. Academic references to these pioneers have only recently become available, and the potential for more in-depth scholarship about their professional and personal lives remains enormous.” Marjorie L. Girth, *UB’s Women in the Law: Overcoming Barriers During their First Hundred Years*, 9 BUFF. WOMEN’S L.J. 51, 74—76 (2000-2001).

281. Gregory S. Parks et al., *Complex Civil Rights Organizations: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, An Exemplar*, ALABAMA C.R.-C.L. L. REV. (forthcoming 2015) (highlighting Alpha Kappa Alpha’s public policy initiatives between the 1940s and 1960s); Marcia Hernandez & Gregory S. Parks, *Fortitude in the Face of Adversity: Delta Sigma Theta’s History of Racial Uplift*, HASTINGS RACE & POVERTY L.J. (forthcoming 2016) (highlighting the role that numerous individual Delta Sigma Theta members played in African American’s quest for social justice).

282. LAWRENCE OTIS GRAHAM, *OUR KIND OF PEOPLE: INSIDE AMERICA’S BLACK UPPER CLASS* 89 (2000).

283. *Id.*

the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Along with the Movement went the social justice initiatives of such organizations like Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho. While consequential to African American's access to social equality, this is no surprise. Herbert Blumer, one of the earliest scholars to study group action—i.e., social movement processes—identified four stages of social movements' lifecycles: (1) Social Ferment, (2) Popular Excitement, (3) Formalization, and (4) Institutionalization.²⁸⁴ Today, scholars recast those stages as: (1) Emergence, (2) Coalescence, (3) Bureaucratization, and (4) Decline.²⁸⁵ With regard to decline, such may take place because the movement has been successful. As such, in the context of Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho, assuming that their membership and leadership believed that the goals of the Civil Rights Movement were achieved in the late 1960s, they believe overall success was achieved—at least with regard to the passage of some key Civil Rights legislation. Accordingly, it is no surprise that thereafter Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho largely disengaged from being directly active in social justice activism.

In sum, the lingering question—in part implied by Donna Owens' *Essence* article on black sororities and social justice—is: Where do we they go from here?²⁸⁶ Do these groups legitimately have a future with regard to racial uplift, particularly social justice? Only time will tell.

284. DONATELLA DELLA PORTA & MARIO DIANI, *SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: AN INTRODUCTION* 150 (2d ed. 2006).

285. Frederick D. Miller, *The End of SDS and the Emergence of Weatherman: Demise through Success* 303–24, in *WAVES OF PROTEST: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS SINCE THE SIXTIES* (Jo Freeman & Victoria Johnson, eds., 1999).

286. Donna M. Owens, *Sister Soldiers: A Look at Black Sororities in the Black Lives Matter Movement*, *ESSENCE* (June 8, 2015, 9:53 PM), <http://www.essence.com/2015/06/09/sister-soldier-look-black-sororities-black-lives-matter-movement>. See, e.g., MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., *WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE: CHAOS OR COMMUNITY?* (2010).