

history of omega psi phi

****The Rich History of Omega Psi Phi: A Legacy of Brotherhood and Service****

history of omega psi phi is a fascinating journey that traces back to the early 20th century, marked by a commitment to academic excellence, community service, and brotherhood. This historically African American fraternity has woven itself into the fabric of American culture and civil rights, influencing countless lives along the way. Let's explore the origins, milestones, and enduring impact of Omega Psi Phi, shedding light on why it remains a pillar in the landscape of Black Greek letter organizations.

The Founding of Omega Psi Phi: A Vision Takes Shape

The story of Omega Psi Phi begins in 1911 at Howard University in Washington, D.C., a prestigious historically Black university known for nurturing African American intellectuals and leaders. The fraternity was founded on November 17, 1911, by three undergraduate students — Edgar Amos Love, Oscar James Cooper, and Frank Coleman — with the guidance and mentorship of their faculty advisor, Dr. Ernest Everett Just, a renowned biologist.

This founding group had a clear vision: to create an organization that would promote high standards of scholarship, foster brotherhood, and uplift the African American community through service and cultural enrichment. Omega Psi Phi was the first fraternity to be founded on a historically Black college campus, a milestone that holds significant historical importance in the context of early 20th-century America.

The Significance of the Founders and the Cardinal Principles

The founders, often referred to as the "Founding Fathers," are celebrated not only for establishing the fraternity but for embedding its cardinal principles — Manhood, Scholarship, Perseverance, and Uplift — into its very foundation. These principles continue to guide members, shaping their personal development and communal responsibilities.

- ****Manhood**** emphasizes personal integrity and courage.
- ****Scholarship**** prioritizes academic achievement.
- ****Perseverance**** encourages resilience against adversity.
- ****Uplift**** focuses on service and improving society.

Together, these ideals created a blueprint for leadership and excellence that resonated deeply within the African American community, especially during times of segregation and social inequality.

Early Growth and Expansion: Establishing a National

Presence

Following its founding, Omega Psi Phi quickly grew beyond Howard University, establishing chapters at other colleges and universities across the United States. This expansion was instrumental in creating a nationwide network of empowered African American men dedicated to the fraternity's mission.

Challenges and Triumphs During Segregation

The early 20th century was a period of intense racial discrimination and segregation in America. African American organizations faced numerous barriers, from limited access to resources to outright hostility. Despite these challenges, Omega Psi Phi thrived by providing a support system and platform for Black men to excel academically and socially.

The fraternity's commitment to community service became particularly impactful during this era. Members organized educational programs, health initiatives, and voter registration drives, playing a crucial role in the early civil rights movement. Their efforts exemplified the fraternity's principle of "Uplift," working tirelessly to improve conditions for African Americans.

Notable Early Chapters and Leaders

Some of the earliest chapters, known as "grad" chapters, were established in major cities like New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. These chapters allowed alumni to continue their involvement and extend the fraternity's influence into urban communities.

Prominent figures affiliated with Omega Psi Phi during this period included leaders in education, politics, and the arts, who helped raise the fraternity's profile nationally. The fraternity's commitment to leadership development cultivated many influential African American professionals who contributed significantly to society.

Contributions to Civil Rights and Social Justice

The history of Omega Psi Phi is deeply intertwined with the broader struggle for civil rights. Throughout the mid-20th century, members played active roles in advocating for racial equality and social justice.

Omega Psi Phi and the Civil Rights Movement

During the 1950s and 1960s, Omega men were at the forefront of numerous civil rights initiatives. The fraternity's emphasis on perseverance inspired members to challenge segregation laws and discriminatory practices despite the risks. Many members participated in protests, sit-ins, and voter registration campaigns.

The fraternity also provided a platform for dialogue and strategic planning among African American leaders. Its network helped coordinate efforts across states, ensuring that the fight for equality was organized and sustained.

Community Service and Educational Programs

Beyond activism, Omega Psi Phi has historically prioritized education and community empowerment. The fraternity has sponsored scholarship programs, mentoring initiatives, and youth leadership workshops designed to nurture the next generation of African American leaders.

One notable initiative, the "Talent Hunt Program," was created to identify and support young African American artists, musicians, and performers, fostering cultural pride and artistic development.

Symbols and Traditions That Define Omega Psi Phi

Understanding the history of Omega Psi Phi also involves appreciating the rich symbolism and traditions that have been cultivated over the years.

The Fraternity's Emblems and Colors

Omega Psi Phi's official colors are royal purple and old gold, representing nobility and high achievement. The fraternity's shield incorporates symbols that reflect its values and history, including the lamp of knowledge, an anchor for stability, and crossed swords symbolizing manhood and courage.

The Greek letters $\Omega\Psi\Phi$ themselves carry weight and significance, representing the fraternity's commitment to scholarship and uplift.

Annual Events and Rituals

Omega Psi Phi is known for its vibrant rituals and ceremonies that foster a strong sense of brotherhood. One of the most widely recognized traditions is the "Omega Stroll," a synchronized stepping dance that showcases unity and pride.

The fraternity also holds annual conventions and leadership conferences, bringing together members from across the country to celebrate achievements, plan community initiatives, and strengthen fraternal bonds.

Modern Impact and Continuing Legacy

Today, Omega Psi Phi boasts thousands of members worldwide and remains a vital presence in

colleges, universities, and communities. Its history of perseverance and service continues to inspire new generations.

Expanding Global Influence

While rooted in American history, Omega Psi Phi has extended its reach internationally through chapters in countries such as the Bahamas, Germany, and South Korea. This global presence reflects the fraternity's ongoing commitment to leadership development and cultural exchange.

Prominent Omega Men and Their Contributions

Many distinguished individuals have been members of Omega Psi Phi, including civil rights leaders, artists, athletes, and public officials. Figures like Langston Hughes, Michael Jordan, and Jesse Jackson exemplify the fraternity's wide-ranging influence.

Their achievements highlight how the fraternity's emphasis on manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift continues to shape leaders who impact society in meaningful ways.

Tips for Prospective Members and Supporters

For those interested in learning from or joining Omega Psi Phi, understanding its history is crucial. Prospective members should embrace the fraternity's values and be prepared to commit to community service and personal development.

Supporting Omega Psi Phi's programs — from scholarship funds to community health initiatives — is another way to honor its legacy and contribute to ongoing positive change.

The history of Omega Psi Phi is a testament to the power of brotherhood, resilience, and dedication to a higher purpose. Its story is not just about an organization, but about a movement that has uplifted countless individuals and communities through nearly a century and a half of unwavering commitment.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Omega Psi Phi?

Omega Psi Phi is a historically African American fraternity founded on November 17, 1911, at Howard University.

Who were the founders of Omega Psi Phi?

The fraternity was founded by three Howard University students, Edgar Amos Love, Oscar James Cooper, and Frank Coleman, with the guidance of their faculty advisor, Dr. Ernest Everett Just.

Why was Omega Psi Phi founded?

Omega Psi Phi was founded to promote scholarship, friendship, perseverance, and uplift among African American men during a time of racial segregation and limited opportunities.

What is the significance of Omega Psi Phi's cardinal principles?

The cardinal principles—manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift—serve as the foundation for the fraternity's activities and guide the personal and professional development of its members.

When and where was Omega Psi Phi founded?

Omega Psi Phi was founded on November 17, 1911, at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

How did Omega Psi Phi contribute to African American history?

Omega Psi Phi has played a significant role in civil rights, education, and community service, fostering leadership and social activism among African American men.

What is the significance of Omega Psi Phi's motto?

The fraternity's motto, "Friendship is Essential to the Soul," emphasizes the importance of brotherhood and mutual support among its members.

How has Omega Psi Phi expanded since its founding?

From its single chapter at Howard University, Omega Psi Phi has grown to have over 750 chapters worldwide, including undergraduate and alumni chapters.

What notable figures have been members of Omega Psi Phi?

Notable members include Langston Hughes, Michael Jordan, Bill Cosby, and Shaquille O'Neal, among others, who have made significant contributions in various fields.

What role does Omega Psi Phi play today?

Today, Omega Psi Phi continues to focus on community service, educational programs, leadership development, and promoting cultural awareness among African American men.

Additional Resources

The History of Omega Psi Phi: A Legacy of Brotherhood and Service

history of omega psi phi traces back to the early 20th century, marking the rise of one of the most influential historically African American fraternities in the United States. Founded on principles of

scholarship, perseverance, and uplift, Omega Psi Phi has evolved into a pivotal organization that continues to impact communities through leadership, cultural enrichment, and social activism. This article delves into the fraternity's origins, its foundational values, and its enduring significance, offering an analytical perspective on its role in African American history and collegiate culture.

Origins and Founding of Omega Psi Phi

Omega Psi Phi was founded on November 17, 1911, at Howard University in Washington, D.C., a historically Black university known for nurturing African American intellectualism and leadership. The fraternity was the first international fraternal organization to be founded on the campus of a historically Black college. The visionaries behind Omega Psi Phi were three Howard University students—Edgar Amos Love, Oscar James Cooper, and Frank Coleman—and their faculty adviser, Dr. Ernest Everett Just. Their collaboration birthed a fraternity grounded in the cardinal principles of manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift.

The history of omega psi phi is deeply intertwined with the socio-political atmosphere of early 20th-century America. During this period, African Americans faced severe racial discrimination, segregation, and limited access to higher education and professional advancement. The founders established Omega Psi Phi as a response to these challenges, aiming to create a brotherhood that would foster academic excellence and community service while promoting the dignity and progress of Black Americans.

The Significance of Howard University in Omega Psi Phi's Development

Howard University's role was instrumental in shaping Omega Psi Phi's identity. As a hub for African American intellectuals and activists, the university provided fertile ground for the fraternity's ideals. The founders, committed to academic achievement and social responsibility, leveraged Howard's environment to cultivate an organization that transcended collegiate life. This foundation enabled Omega Psi Phi to expand beyond campus boundaries and into national and international spheres.

Core Principles and Symbolism

The cardinal principles of Omega Psi Phi—manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift—are more than mere slogans; they represent a blueprint for personal development and societal contribution. These values have shaped the fraternity's programs and initiatives over the decades.

- **Manhood:** Emphasizes integrity, responsibility, and moral character.
- **Scholarship:** Encourages academic excellence and lifelong learning.
- **Perseverance:** Advocates resilience in the face of adversity.

- **Uplift:** Focuses on community service and improving the lives of others.

The fraternity's symbols, including the Greek letters Omega (Ω), Psi (Ψ), and Phi (Φ), and its emblematic colors—royal purple and old gold—reflect its noble aspirations. These elements serve as constant reminders to members of their commitment to uphold the fraternity's legacy.

Why the Name Omega Psi Phi?

The choice of the Greek letters was deliberate and symbolic. Omega (Ω) represents the end or the ultimate, Psi (Ψ) is associated with the soul or spirit, and Phi (Φ) symbolizes philosophy or love of wisdom. Together, these letters signify a commitment to the highest ideals of mind and spirit, aligning with the fraternity's mission to foster both intellectual growth and ethical conduct.

Expansion and Influence

Following its founding, Omega Psi Phi rapidly expanded its presence across numerous historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and later into predominantly white institutions. This growth was fueled by the fraternity's reputation for fostering leadership and social engagement among African American men.

By the mid-20th century, Omega Psi Phi had established itself as a major force in civil rights and community development. Members actively participated in movements advocating for racial equality, educational access, and economic empowerment. The fraternity's alumni include prominent figures in politics, arts, sciences, and sports, illustrating its wide-reaching impact.

Notable Members and Their Contributions

The fraternity boasts a roster of influential members who have left indelible marks on American society. Among them are:

1. **Langston Hughes:** Renowned poet and social activist whose works highlighted African American struggles and aspirations.
2. **Michael Jordan:** Basketball legend who exemplified excellence and perseverance.
3. **Jesse Jackson:** Civil rights leader and political figure advocating for social justice.
4. **Shaquille O'Neal:** NBA superstar and philanthropist contributing to community uplift.

These individuals exemplify the fraternity's ethos and demonstrate the diverse arenas where Omega Psi Phi members have excelled.

Programs and Community Engagement

One of the defining features of Omega Psi Phi's history is its unwavering commitment to community service. The fraternity has launched numerous programs designed to address educational disparities, health issues, and social injustices within African American communities.

Key Initiatives

- **Achievement Week:** An annual event celebrating the accomplishments of African Americans in various fields, fostering pride and motivation.
- **Talent Hunt Program:** A platform that nurtures young artists and performers, encouraging cultural expression and creativity.
- **Social Action Programs:** Efforts aimed at voter registration, advocacy for civil rights, and economic empowerment.
- **Scholarship Funds:** Financial assistance to support educational attainment among deserving students.

These programs illustrate how Omega Psi Phi continues to translate its founding principles into tangible community benefits, reinforcing its role as a catalyst for positive change.

Challenges and Controversies

Like many longstanding organizations, Omega Psi Phi's history includes periods of internal and external challenges. Issues such as membership exclusivity, allegations of hazing, and debates over organizational governance have occasionally surfaced, prompting the fraternity to undertake reforms and reaffirm its commitments to ethical conduct.

Such challenges are not unique to Omega Psi Phi and reflect broader tensions faced by fraternal organizations, especially those navigating the complexities of tradition and contemporary social expectations. The fraternity's responses have often underscored a dedication to evolving while preserving core values.

Comparative Perspective: Omega Psi Phi vs. Other Divine Nine Fraternities

Omega Psi Phi is part of the National Pan-Hellenic Council's Divine Nine, a group of historically African American fraternities and sororities. Compared to its counterparts, Omega Psi Phi is distinguished by its emphasis on service and community uplift, alongside a strong tradition of scholarship and

perseverance.

While fraternities like Alpha Phi Alpha and Kappa Alpha Psi also have rich histories and similar commitments, Omega Psi Phi's unique founding at Howard University and its distinct set of cardinal principles contribute to its specific identity within this esteemed group.

Continuing Legacy and Modern Relevance

The history of omega psi phi is a testament to resilience, leadership, and community empowerment. Today, the fraternity remains a vital institution, adapting to contemporary challenges while honoring its heritage. Its chapters across the globe engage in activities that promote education, social justice, and cultural pride, ensuring that the fraternity's impact endures.

In an era where conversations about racial equity and social responsibility are more prominent than ever, Omega Psi Phi's foundational values provide a framework for meaningful engagement. Its ongoing commitment to nurturing leaders and serving communities positions it as a significant actor in both collegiate life and broader societal progress.

The fraternity's evolution from a small group of visionary students to an international organization encapsulates a broader narrative of African American perseverance and achievement. As Omega Psi Phi continues to inspire new generations, its history serves not only as a record of past accomplishments but as a blueprint for future impact.

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history of omega psi phi: The History of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. (an Update for the Period 1960-2008) Vernon Steve Weakley, 2009-05-01 This literary work is an update of the History of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. for the period 1960 to 2008. This book humbly takes up where Omega men Herman Dreer, Robert L. Gill and their outstanding committees stopped. This new update was officially sanctioned and commissioned by Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. via the 38th Grand Basileus, the honorable Warren G. Lee, and the elected Supreme Council for the 74th Grand Conclave. This Omega History Book project will provide a clear and accurate history of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and its impact on America and African Americans in particular for the period 1960 to 2008. This new History update will serve to clearly demonstrate how Omega Psi Phi fraternity Inc. has, not only made a significant positive difference in the lives of Black people, but the entire world. It is this committee's fervent hope that this update will not only enlighten, be a beacon and shed light on our illustrious history but will also be an inspiration to young people, the general public at large and all Omega Men, past, present and future. This new update involved the comprehensive gathering of historical data on Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. from all across America

and internationally for the period 1960 to the 2008. It endeavored to encompass all significant contributions, all noteworthy efforts and the resulting factual recordation of Omega Psi Phi fraternity and all Omega men who have had pertinent impact on America and Omega Dear during this period. This project was massive and took over two years to complete. The resulting final product will be a self perpetuating income generating source for Omega Psi Phi fraternity for many years to come. Please be clearly advised readers that this is an update of the previous history books written by the honorable Herman Dreer, Robert L. Gill and their committees. This book, with the exception of containing some basic historical information to enlighten a person who has no knowledge of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, will not routinely cover past historical information shown in the great works of Dreer and Gill occurring prior to this update period. The history rich period for this update has provided many interesting challenges for Omega and its members. The Founders of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity did not shrink from the task, nor did they pity themselves for being given the tremendous burden to uplift the African American race. W.E.B. DuBois' talented tenth assertion must be our rallying cry in that it crystallizes the fact that Omega men must be in the forefront in lifting the Black community to higher heights. Omega men are indeed the cream of the crop endowed with the divine gift of greatness. And, our great history and our individual and unified deeds bare witness to this fact and with that our readiness to step to the fore. Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. is filled with many great Omega men who have had significant positive impact on America during this update period. There are undeniable facts, inspiring legends, and exceptional Omega men who have accomplished great things in their districts and at the international level, as well as in their personal lives and in their gallant exploits across the nation. It is time that the world knows of our extraordinary contributions to the greatest country on earth and our proud race. We pray that this HISTORY OF OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY INC. for the period 1960 to 2008 accomplishes this goal and be a guiding light to live by and be a positive uplifting force for all that reads it.

history of omega psi phi: Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, 1995*

history of omega psi phi: With Faith in God and Heart and Mind Maurice J. Hobson, Eddie R. Cole, Jim C. Harper, Derrick P. Alridge, 2025-05 When Edgar A. Love, Oscar J. Cooper, Frank Coleman, and Ernest Everett Just founded the historically Black fraternity Omega Psi Phi on November 17, 1911, at Howard University, they could not have known how great of an impact their organization would have on American life. Over the 110 years that followed, its members led colleges and universities; served in prominent military roles; made innumerable contributions to education, civic society, science, and medicine; and at least one campaigned for the US presidency. This book offers a comprehensive, authoritative history of the fraternity, emphasizing its vital role through multiple eras of the Black freedom struggle. The authors address both the individual work of its membership, which has included such figures as Carter G. Woodson, Bayard Rustin, Roy Wilkins, James L. Farmer Jr., Benjamin Elijah Mays, James Clyburn, Jesse Jackson, and Benjamin Crump, and the collective efforts of the fraternity's leadership to encourage its general membership to contribute to the struggle in concrete ways over the years. The result is a book that uniquely connects the 1910s with the present, showing the ongoing power of a Black fraternal organization to channel its members toward social reform.

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history of omega psi phi: *Black Greek-letter Organizations in the Twenty-First Century* Gregory S. Parks, 2008-06-13 During the twentieth century, black Greek-Letter organizations (BGLOs) united college students dedicated to excellence, fostered kinship, and uplifted African Americans. Members of these organizations include remarkable and influential individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr., Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, novelist Toni Morrison, and Wall Street pioneer Reginald F. Lewis. Despite the profound influence of these groups, many now question the continuing relevance of BGLOs, arguing that their golden age has passed. Partly because of their perceived link to hip-hop culture, black fraternities and sororities have been unfairly reduced to a media stereotype—a world of hazing without any real substance. The general public knows very little about BGLOs, and surprisingly the members themselves often do not have a thorough understanding of their history and culture or of the issues currently facing their organizations. To foster a greater engagement with the history and contributions of BGLOs, *Black Greek-Letter Organizations in the Twenty-first Century: Our Fight Has Just Begun* brings together an impressive group of authors to explore the contributions and continuing possibilities of BGLOs and their members. Editor Gregory S. Parks and the contributing authors provide historical context for the development of BGLOs, exploring their service activities as well as their relationships with other prominent African American institutions. The book examines BGLOs' responses to a number of contemporary issues, including non-black membership, homosexuality within BGLOs, and the perception of BGLOs as educated gangs. As illustrated by the organized response of BGLO members to the racial injustice they observed in Jena, Louisiana, these organizations still have a vital mission. Both internally and externally, BGLOs struggle to forge a relevant identity for the new century. Internally, these groups wrestle with many issues, including hazing, homophobia, petty intergroup competition, and the difficulty of bridging the divide between college and alumni members. Externally, BGLOs face the challenge of rededicating themselves to their communities and leading an aggressive campaign against modern forms of racism, sexism, and other types of fear-driven behavior. By embracing the history of these organizations and exploring their continuing viability and relevance, *Black Greek-Letter Organizations in the Twenty-first Century* demonstrates that BGLOs can create a positive and enduring future and that their most important work lies ahead.

history of omega psi phi: *The Founders* Gerald Curry, 2025-07-04 Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. was founded on Friday evening, November 17, 1911, in the office of biology Professor Ernest Everett Just in the Science Hall (now Thirkield Hall) at Howard University in Washington, D.C. The vision for this pioneering organization emerged from the collective ambition of three undergraduate students - Edgar Amos Love, Oscar James Cooper, and Frank Coleman - who sought to create a new kind of fraternity, one rooted in more than just social fellowship. They envisioned a brotherhood dedicated to serious intellectual pursuits, personal excellence, and tangible contributions to their communities.

history of omega psi phi: *African American Fraternities and Sororities* Tamara L. Brown, Gregory S. Parks, Clarendia M. Phillips, 2012-02-29 The rich history and social significance of the "Divine Nine" African American Greek-letter organizations is explored in this comprehensive anthology. In the long tradition of African American benevolent and secret societies, intercollegiate African American fraternities and sororities have strong traditions of fostering brotherhood and sisterhood among their members, exerting considerable influence in the African American

community and being in the forefront of civic action, community service, and philanthropy. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Toni Morrison, Arthur Ashe, and Sarah Vaughn are just a few of the trailblazing members of these organizations. African American Fraternities and Sororities places the history of these organizations in context, linking them to other movements and organizations that predated them and tying their history to the Civil Rights movement. It explores various cultural aspects of the organizations, such as auxiliary groups, branding, calls, and stepping, and highlights the unique role of African American sororities.

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