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## **ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA TO HOLD CENTENNIAL CONVENTION JULY 11-18** **Over 20,000 Members to Assemble at Nation's Capital for Historic Gathering**

Chicago, Illinois – April 28, 2008 - More than 20,000 members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority will converge upon Washington D.C. from July 11-18 for its Centennial international convention. International President, Barbara A. McKinzie will preside over the weeklong event, which is being billed as a celebration of 100 years of sisterhood and service.

In January 2007, the Sorority launched its two-year Centennial Celebration with a series of events at each of the ten regional conferences. This year's convention represents the high point of the festivities, which continue through December 31, 2008.

The biennial convention, which will be held at the Washington Convention Center, represents the culmination of a journey that began on January 15, 1908. It was on that date that nine visionary women at Howard University founded the organization—making it the first sorority of college-educated primarily African-American women. Driven by its commitment to service and sisterhood, Alpha Kappa Alpha has evolved into one of the world's leading service organizations with 200,000 members in 975 chapters worldwide.

The weeklong celebration will be driven by the theme: “Centennial Commitment to Leadership.” This is in recognition of the current administration's focus on leadership, which is embraced by the ESP theme—Economics, Service and Partnerships—the programmatic focus of McKinzie's administration. Cultivating leaders is the international president's major thrust, and many of the seminars and forums will center on giving those from within AKA's ranks the tools, knowledge and resources to guide the country and the world into the future.

Paralleling McKinzie's focus on economics, the Sorority will host town hall society forums on entrepreneurship, wealth building and homeownership. Alpha Kappa Alpha will also use the occasion of its business sessions to engage members in an international dialogue on issues that impact members and the communities they serve. Other topics that will dominate the sessions are voter registration and voter education, health, service, bridging the generational gap and the importance of emotional empowerment. The sessions will be moderated by an impressive array of nationally-known leaders.

Other highlights of the convention include:

- Ecumenical Service presided over by prominent religious leaders
- ESP Walk for Emotional, Spiritual and Physical Health – Members will walk 1908 steps to the Convention Center as a show of their commitment to raise awareness about the importance of staying fit for health's sake. This is a culminating event for the Synchronized ESP 1908 Global Centennial Walk that takes place on June 28 and where all AKA members in chapters worldwide will walk in sisterly unison.
- Induction of the following five outstanding women into the Sorority as Honorary members:

**Dr. Zoanne Clack** – MD, writer and medical consultant for the popular TV show, *Grey's Anatomy*

**Deborah S. Coleman** – Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the National Urban League

**Dr. Wangari Muta Maathai\*** – Environmental and political activist from Kenya and the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for "her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace"

**C. Vivian Stringer** – Rutgers University Women's Head Basketball Coach

**Carol H. Williams** – Founder, CEO, President and Chief Creative Officer of the Carol H. Williams Advertising Agency

\*Dr. Maathai is unable to attend the convention so a delegation of Alpha Kappa Alpha members will journey to Kenya to perform the induction ceremony.

- Public meeting where the community will become acquainted with Alpha Kappa Alpha, its mission and the reason members are in the District of Columbia
- Presentation of awards to local leaders
- Unveiling of the Mattel Alpha Kappa Alpha Barbie Doll
- Performance by Grammy Award winner Patti LaBelle

The high point of the convention will be a Unity March where 30,000 members from the nine predominantly Black Greek fraternities and sororities will link arms as a unified force and march to the Capitol to advance their united agenda. The marchers, all members of the Pan Hellenic Council, will send a "powerful message" to the outgoing administration and a declaration to the next U.S. president about important issues of their constituencies.

While the Sorority will engage in the business of charting its future, the Centennial Convention will primarily be dedicated to celebrating the Sorority's 100-year milestone through an educational documentary that will capture Alpha Kappa Alpha's rich history, tradition and legacy. Most of all, the sisterly bond that has made the Sorority endure for 100 years will be strengthened at this historic gathering.

McKinzie noted that the Convention is the second of two Centennial milestone events. The first was held in January 2008, when over 2,000 members returned to Howard University for the Founders' Day salute to Alpha Chapter, which was Alpha Kappa Alpha's first chapter. The solemn and celebratory event, held on January 15, 2008—on the exact 100-year-milestone day of the Sorority's founding—featured a pilgrimage across the campus to points of historic significance to Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

“Alpha Kappa Alpha is humbled and honored to be returning to Washington, D.C. to celebrate our 100 years of sisterhood and service,” said McKinzie. “We will use the occasion to celebrate our illustrious history, renew our commitment to our mission and chart the journey toward our second Centennial.”

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*Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is America's first Greek-letter organization founded in 1908 by, and for, African-American college women. Headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, it is one of the world's leading service organizations. The Sorority's members have made a commitment “to serve all mankind” through a nucleus of more than 200,000 women in over 975 chapters in the United States, the Caribbean, Canada, Germany, Korea, Japan and in the continent of Africa. Barbara A. McKinzie is the 27<sup>th</sup> International President. Because her term coincides with the 100-year anniversary, she is being hailed as the “Centennial National President.” McKinzie's administration is marked by the theme: ESP, which stands for Economics, Service and Partnership. For more information, log on to [www.aka1908.com](http://www.aka1908.com). For an archive of press releases, visit the online pressroom at <http://aka1908.com/site/pressroom/>*