



Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
63rd Boule
Centennial Chronicles

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Centennial Highlights



L-R: Maya Garrett and Monica Roache of Xi Zeta Omega Chapter serve as hostesses at the Leadership Gala

Celebrating Decades of Leadership

By Kimberly S. Varner

Alpha Kappa Alpha members in white, top hats, pink cummerbunds and green ties set the stage for the Centennial Leadership Gala. Held on Saturday, July 12th at the Capitol Hilton, Alpha Kappa Alpha corporate leaders from both past and present, as well as Centennial Boule chairs and sub-committee chairs attended the Leadership Gala titled, “100 Years of Supreme Leadership.”

Polly Sparks Turner, 20th South Central Regional Director and chairman of the Leadership Gala, presided over the gala, which highlighted contributions made by the sorority’s past international presidents and recognized their respective directorate members. Dr. Norma Solomon White, 25th International President gave the occasion and said she was “excited, stimulated and pleased we are here to say Glory, Glory Halleluiah...”

Patricia Russell-McCloud, a member of the sorority and the 11th National President of the Links, Incorporated presented a powerful and thought

Russell-McCloud noted that a supreme leader demonstrates servant leadership and is “a dealer in hope.”

In addition to a video presentation featuring an overview of the past international presidents, there was an “Extraordinary Soror Tribute,” a glimpse of the organization’s leadership over the next 100 years, and the recognition of members who are or were leaders of other national organizations.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Celebrates in Style

By Selena N. Singleton

Sunday marked Celebration Day for Alpha Kappa Alpha’s National Convention or Boule. More than 20,000 attendees filed into Hall E of the Convention Center for the Public Meeting to commence the week’s festivities. The meeting was filled with enthusiasm! Members, families and friends from near and far gathered to honor Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated in her 100th year.



L-R: International First Vice President Carolyn House Stewart and International President Barbara A. McKinzie sing happy birthday to Alpha Kappa Alpha during the Public Meeting.

Guests included Adrian Fenty, Mayor of the District of Columbia; Dr. Dorothy Height, President Emeritus of the National Council of Negro Women; author Hill Harper, Prince George’s County Executive Jack Johnson and Alpha Kappa Alpha’s own Florida State Senator Frederica Wilson among

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many other distinguished individuals. Wilson, along with the likes of Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice and Senator Barack Obama, was honored at the meeting. Presidential nominee Obama sent his regards to the delight of the crowd.

We took a look back at the past 100 years with the presentation of the film “Alpha Kappa Alpha: Sisterhood and Service-The First Century.” Here members reflected upon the birth of this beloved sisterhood. The film also highlighted Alpha Kappa Alpha’s many accomplishments and programs such as the Educational Advancement Foundation, the Cleveland Job Corps and the Mississippi Health Project.

The Centennial Boule Choir graced attendees with a number of excellent selections to which guests danced and sang along. The energy that filled the room was exhilarating. The Public Meeting was a tremendous start to the most spectacular birthday celebration of the century.

Centennial Galas Set the Tone

By Selena N. Singleton



During the Grand Hyatt’s Centennial Gala, members had a grand time dancing the conga line around the room.

Following a very inspiring public meeting, Alpha Kappa Alpha members and their guests kicked things off in grand style with Regional Galas in eight different hotels. Guests danced and enjoyed great food, delectable desserts, cocktails and live music. The Renaissance Hotel was full of excitement. The atmosphere made everyone feel welcome as they mixed and mingled. Fifty and twenty-five year members celebrated with younger sisters, sharing their various experiences from past boules. Guests were thrilled as they spoke of the anticipation of an

amazing week of celebration and friendship.

Courtney Battle of Alpha Chapter was thrilled to share her expectations of her very first Boule. “I am so blessed to be able to celebrate 100 years. It is only the beginning of the week, and already I am so proud of my sisters,” said Battle. “It is my hope that we all take advantage of this time to think about what this amazing sisterhood really means to us.”

At the Grand Hyatt Hotel, attendees were enchanted by the excellent *Bruthers Plus One Band and Show*. Their musical selections, especially their rendition of “Proud Mary,” had everyone on their feet. The conga line made it quite evident that guests enjoyed themselves. “Members from all over the world celebrated the Centennial at eight hotels in DC and Virginia,” said Gala Chair, Sabrina Williams. “During that time, [many of us] renewed friendships, made new ones and had a great time.”

The energy, enthusiasm and momentum that Boule attendees have already displayed are definitely precursors to the week’s full array of wonderful programming. This gathering of women is sure to be the most amazing phenomena that Alpha Kappa Alpha and Washington, D.C. have ever witnessed.



Centennial Boule Chairman Cheryl Parker (L) speaks with members of the Directorate and other VIPs prior to leaving Washington, D.C.’s Union Station on a pilgrimage to the Philadelphia gravesite of AKA founder, Ethel Hedgeman Lyle.

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First Plenary Session Centennial Celebration Begins With a Bang

By Courtney A. Hudson

International President Barbara A. McKinzie and members on the dais were ready for a true birthday party when they began the first plenary session of the conference dancing the Electric Slide. Members were thrilled and joined in the fun!

Afterwards, they assumed their positions as leaders of one of America's largest female organization's and the first sorority for African-American women.

"Service is our birthright, but sisterhood is our legacy." These are just a few of the inspirational words spoken by the Centennial International President of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Barbara A. McKinzie, at the First Plenary Session and Official Opening of the Centennial Boule on Monday, July 14, 2008. McKinzie added to her opening statements by presenting some statistics of the impact that this 63rd Boule of Alpha Kappa Alpha will have on the city of Washington, DC. It is expected that the money that will circulate within the city during the weeklong celebration will equal over \$100 million.

The Centennial Charge to the sorority given by the 18th International President of the Sorority, Mattelia B. Grays, was another of the highlights of the opening session. The charge ended with a final challenge that consisted of a renewed focus on caring, respect, responsibility, and unity. Members of the sorority were even overheard speaking of how the speech made them "feel like they were in church." It seemed to be unanimously enjoyed by all who were in attendance.

The membership was welcomed to the nation's capital by Cheryl Parker, Boule Chairman and the 2008 Hostess members and chapters, including Xi Omega, Theta Omega Omega, Nu Zeta Omega, Xi Zeta Omega, Xi Sigma Omega, Omicron Gamma Omega, Omicron Chi Omega, Xi Upsilon Omega, Psi Epsilon Omega, Alpha, Beta Lambda, Lambda Zeta, and Omicron Pi.

The hostesses presented a welcome to the sorority like none other. Based on the theme of the AKA "Dreamgirls," complete with choreography, reenactments, and songs that brought the membership to their feet. Wearing black dresses and long, sleek gloves, the host chapter members sang happy birthday and members joined the hostess Dream Girls when they did the party walk to "Bustin Loose."

Time for Lunch Sorors!



In between the first and second plenary sessions, members went to area eateries to grab a bite. Many went to the local Subway restaurant on 7th Street, with lines wrapping around the corner

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Other sorors visited the United House of Prayer's Paradise Cafeteria, as well as the deli that is attached to the Convention Center. (Below)



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Second Plenary Session Young Leaders of Tomorrow

By Soror Mia Kai Simonne Moody

With AKA members attired in salmon pink and apple green, the second plenary session proved to be both informative and productive as delegates elected officers and addressed the sorority's other political affairs.

The forum began with a lively meditation from member Janice Hale Baker, daughter of Larzette Hale-Wilson, 17th International President. Current International President Barbara A. McKinzie took the stage and issued a call for members to return to the basics by reviewing the sorority's governing documents and general parliamentary procedure on a consistent basis. The membership was urged to take advantage of accessible resources that seek to educate constituents.

Poised to help usher the sorority into the next century, rising Howard University seniors Shayla Johnson and Melanie C. Jones were sworn in as the Undergraduate Member-At-Large and International Second International Vice President, respectively. Johnson and Jones are spring 2007 initiates of Alpha chapter. Both Johnson and Jones gave rousing campaign speeches that foreshadowed their commitment to move the sorority into the next century.

In addition to a report by the Constitution Committee, Norma S. White, 25th International President, gave an overview of the Centennial Commission's accomplishments over the last two years.

A Legacy Tradition in the Making

By Shanita Sanders

On Monday July 14, 2008, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc began a new legacy tradition. For the first time in her 100 year history, Alpha Kappa Alpha held a Legacy Dinner Celebration for mothers, daughters, and other related members. The attendance for this event was record-breaking. Over 3,000 guests were in attendance for the Centennial Legacy Dinner and Parade held at the Washington Hilton's Presidential Ballroom. Overwhelmed by the record number of participants, President of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc, Barbara McKenzie, addressed the crowd enthusiastically stating, "Dinner is in."

The event celebrated the rich traditions amongst

members of Alpha Kappa Alpha that began and continued a lineage through the sorority. Each participant at the Legacy Dinner was greeted with a smile and wonderful souvenir. During the dinner, the guests were treated to a PowerPoint Presentation that showcased pictures from different families and their Alpha Kappa Alpha lineage.

Many members felt the litany tribute to the mothers and daughters at the dinner was moving and helped to honor those who had come before them. Anita Mayo, a legacy member of the Delta Zeta Omega Chapter in San Francisco stated "I think it's a great opportunity to be able to attend the legacy dinner. This is such an historic moment in time and I think it is wonderful."

After the dinner, the families each got the opportunity to participate in a symbolic parade based on the initiation dates of the oldest member.



L-R: Amber Garnette and mother, Cheryl Petty Garnette, are a proud and happy duo during the Legacy Dinner.

Tuesday, July 15, 2008 Ceremonial Day

By Mercii T.S. Thomas

White suits and fabrics glowed against a multitude of complexions, as a sea of AKA members poured into the main hall. Tuesday morning's plenary session was marked with an air of solemnity during the Ivies Beyond the Wall Ceremony that acknowledges members who have passed away during the last two years.

Almost 2,000 names were called from each region by their respective regional director, as members from those regions stood to recognize and

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pay tribute to their memories. Some fought back tears; some let them fall; and more importantly, some comforted those in need.

Following the observance, Jo Ann Richardson Clark, Chairman of the Graduate Advisors Certification Committee from Langston, OK, officiated the ceremony that granted certification for those individuals who completed the necessary training in order to be able to advise undergraduate chapters. The newly-certified graduate advisors also received a special Centennial Pin to mark the occasion and their new status.

In addition, the organization and its members were pleased to induct four extraordinary ladies as Honorary Members, the highest honor that a non-member can receive. Inductees included a physician, Dr. Zoanne Clark, who works as a medical consultant for the ABC show *Grey's Anatomy*; Deborah S. Stewart-Parker, a pioneer of the automotive industry; C. Vivian Stringer the acclaimed Rutgers University women's basketball coach; and Carol H. Williams, a titan of the advertising industry. Following their initiation, the new members received a warm greeting as the audience flooded towards the stage, cameras in hand, to take pictures of their new sorority sisters.



Alpha Kappa Alpha's newest Honorary Members, pose with sorority leadership and others.

Reflections of the Undergraduate Luncheon

By Amanda E. Johnson

The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Undergraduate Luncheon was held on Tuesday, July 15, 2008. International Second Vice President Ranika Chaney presided in a ballroom of the Washington Convention Center. The luncheon was mainly comprised of and led by undergraduate members and

was attended by the leadership of the organization. The theme, "Undergraduates Deeply Rooted in the Community Expounding on Service of the Past," was introduced by undergraduate members performing African dance while the undergraduate leadership was adorned in African garb. The idea of reflecting on community issues across the African Diaspora and beyond was highlighted with the keynote speech by former astronaut Mae Jemison, an Honorary Member of AKA.



L-R: Undergraduate members Akilah Gantt, Michelle Arrington, and Nykia Lewis of Sigma Sigma Chapter attended the luncheon.

Dr. Jemison, best known for being the first African-American woman in space, gave an inspirational message regarding global issues. Beginning by highlighting her humble background and how it led to her successful career as physician, humanitarian, and astronaut, she spoke about the power of the imagination, destiny, and dreams. A particular focus was given to global issues such as corporate and individual responsibility, globalization, and environmental concerns. Her speech provided a new perspective on the responsibilities of young African-American women and a charge to use their gifts and talents to solve global issues.

In attendance were two undergraduate members and their graduate advisor from the Sigma Sigma Chapter of Clayton State University in Marrow, GA. Member Akilah Gantt, a senior nursing major, said, "It is a great feeling." Her chapter member, junior psychology major Nykia Lewis, believes the speech, "was inspiring and encouraged us to keep focused." Their graduate advisor, Michelle Arrington of Atlanta, GA, explains that "undergraduates will play a vital role in maintaining the original purpose of the

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sorority and that they will take Alpha Kappa Alpha to the next level.”

The undergraduate luncheon serves as one of the outlets for student expression and leadership throughout the national convention. There are almost 400 undergraduate chapters and the national leadership has three undergraduate member positions.

One-On-One

Interview with Former Astronaut and
Honorary Member, Dr. Mae Jemison

By Raimy N. Living



(L-R): Undergraduate Member-At-Large Shaylyn Cochran, International Second Vice President Ranika Chaney, Undergraduate Luncheon speaker Dr. Mae Jemison, Undergraduate Member-At-Large Adria Robinson, and International President Barbara A. McKinzie.

Undergraduates of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated welcomed the intelligence, elegance and motivational words of their honorary member and the first Black female astronaut to ever step foot into space – Dr. Mae Jemison.

It was a life changing experience for about 3,000 undergraduate members from across the nation for the Sorority’s 100th Anniversary Undergraduate Luncheon.

Jemison’s speech challenged undergraduates to capture their centennial experience.

As I sat before Jemison and listened to her, I found that she portrayed a view of a true scientist with style and an astronaut with attitude.

“It was a privilege to be a part of the Centennial Boule because it marks a moment of transition,” she said with an elevating smile.

This distinguished honorary member presented herself with true self-confidence and with a serious but comfortable demeanor.

Jemison passionately explained that her family was always supportive of her childhood dreams and allowed her to keep moving forward and accomplish her goals.

She also showed deep concern when she explained the overwhelming number of problems we have in our country.

“We are sharing ideas and facing challenges now that we need to address.”

Jemison said many problems that we are facing now in our world, young people as well as adults will have to face in the future.

“There is no more generational separation,” she said strongly explaining that the generational adversities are present and we must remain positive in order to overcome them.

As she reiterated the various social, economic and environmental challenges we face, she said that we must remember that “things have to happen (in life) for changes...but life is really about finding out a purpose and a vision.”

Additionally, she explained we often focus too much on differences, often leading us into negative behaviors such as jealousy and aggression.

“We always look at the disparities between those who have and don’t have, there is a lot of greed,” Jemison said. “We need to value the good and positive things in life.”

Jemison’s humility and sincerity as well as her ability to speak and not preach was a skill that highly impressed some graduate members.

“She placed her speech in a language young members could understand,” said Alice Grisby of the Mu Beta Omega Chapter in Inglewood, Calif.

Grisby also said she thoroughly enjoyed every moment of Jemison’s speech and hoped undergraduates learned something new by listening to her speak.

University of Texas at Austin undergrad Albany Willis of Delta Xi chapter said her inspiring words would never be forgotten. “Dr. Jemison was really motivating and inspirational,” said Willis. “She explained the importance of how it is not about where your start but where you finish, that was really inspiring.”

The undergrads agreed the experience of hearing Jemison’s speech will be embedded within their hearts, minds and spirits for years to come.

