



## **Sorority Supports Move to Sever Relations with Cherokee Nation**

Alpha Kappa Alpha's international president Barbara A. McKinzie applauded Congresswoman and Sorority member Diane E. Watson for introducing House Resolution 2824, which calls for the U.S. to sever relations with the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. This legislation was triggered by the Cherokee Nation's decision to expel 2,800 members of the black Cherokees from its ranks.

McKinzie said that at the heart of this expulsion is racism. "This violates provisions of a treaty agreement between the United States and the Cherokee Nation and this cannot be tolerated."

She also joined the Congressional Black Caucus in demanding that the Bureau of Indian Affairs leverage its power to force the Nation to restore the black Cherokees (freedmen) to their former status without provisions or conditions. "Until these actions are implemented," declared McKinzie, "the government should withhold the approximate \$225 million it allocates to the Cherokee Nation."

In issuing her call to action, she denounced the government for failing to respond to address this matter. She said that failure "makes the government complicit and emboldens the Cherokee Nation to continue to discriminate."

McKinzie said that until this matter is resolved, she is asking members of Alpha Kappa Alpha in Oklahoma to "cease and desist" from supporting the Cherokee Nation's gaming operations, establishments or any other enterprises that they own. She also issued a call to the Sorority's 200,000 members to bombard the Department of Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs with letters and calls of protest.

The Alpha Kappa Alpha leader was particularly outraged because the Cherokee Nation was once disenfranchised and forced to flee its native land when Americans overtook it.

"For a group once victimized to, in turn, commit the same act against a minority within its own nation is an irony that is tragic." McKinzie added that the black Cherokees have contributed to the glorious history of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and should not be marginalized.

"The government should levy a stiff punishment on the Cherokee Nation and send a message to any other tribe considering such an action. Moreover, the next Attorney General should make righting this wrong a first priority," declared McKinzie.

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She added that the Secretary of Interior and the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Indian Affairs should move with haste to remedy this situation.

McKinzie also expressed support of Rep. Watson's call to require the Interior Department to issue a report to Congress on the status of freedmen's rights in all tribes.

McKinzie says she has a personal interest in this matter because she hails from Oklahoma.

"I am a descendant of the black Cherokees; so, I am personally invested in this matter," she confided. "I know the legacy of the black Cherokees and the contribution they've made to the Cherokee Nation and to the State of Oklahoma. Because of my black Cherokee roots, I am also a victim of this action."

While McKinzie noted that the issue is unique to Oklahoma, she said its implications elevate it to a worldwide level because it is symptomatic of a larger problem that must be addressed.

Against that reality, she urged all fair-minded people to demand justice by sending a strong message to the Nation, its leaders and to the government.

For a roster of the government officials to contact, and for the full text of the legislation, she encouraged members and right-thinking Americans to log on to Rep. Watson's official Website at <http://www.house.gov/watson>.

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