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FOR RELEASE –

ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA HAILS BARACK OBAMA'S HISTORY-MAKING VICTORY

(Chicago, Illinois) – November 4, 2008 – "Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority says change has arrived."

With that declaration, Alpha Kappa Alpha's international president, Barbara A. McKinzie, congratulated President-elect Barack Obama on his election as President of the United States of America. Addressing thousands at a prayer rally held at Atlanta's historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, and convened by its pastor the Rev. Dr. Raphael Warnock and the Rev. Al Sharpton, McKinzie characterized Mr. Obama's triumph as a "seminal moment in history."

Speaking on behalf of the organization's 225,000 members in 975 chapters worldwide, McKinzie noted that the Sorority has a special connection with Sen. Obama. She said that the Sorority had honored him with its prestigious Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Medallion of Honor during its Centennial Celebration held in July. Named in honor of the former first lady and honorary member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, the award is presented to a global leader for recognized humanitarian work. She said his achievements make him worthy of such a coveted accolade.

McKinzie said that Obama's historic ascension to the presidency as the first African American to hold the office is dramatic testimony to how far America has come in advancing race relations. She said it is a testimony to the vision laid by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Noting that the "Watch Night Service" is being held at the historic site where Dr. King and his father once pastored, McKinzie invoked King's name and cited the following passage from King's speech in her message. "I am an optimist. While it is a bitter fact that I am denied equality solely because I am black, yet I am not a chattel slave. Millions of people have fought thousands of battles to enlarge my freedom; restricted as it still is, progress has been made. This is why I remain an optimist, though I am also a realist, about the barriers before us."

In memory of Dr. King, McKinzie exhorted the crowd "to be or become optimists and realists as we continue the struggle with our leader of change."

"We congratulate President-elect Obama, First Lady, Michelle and First Children Malia and Sasha. We praise them for their sacrifices, commitment and exhibiting grace under fire during the past 22 months.

Your optimism has been our Balm in Gilead. Your capacity to appear normal when all around was chaos demonstrated a divinity that calmed an unlikely team across lines of age, gender and race. As the world watched, you always displayed an ability to first understand, then sought to be understood.

"May this remain your daily garment of choice. This is your gift to the world and may it be the cornerstone of your legacy."

McKinzie said the family's poise during the campaign speaks volumes about their strength of character, confidence in the mission and love for humanity. Expressing condolences to the family on the loss of Sen. Obama's grandmother, Madelyn Dunham, she said that the family's courage and composure during this period of sadness only deepened the world's admiration for the First Family to Be.

McKinzie proclaimed that January 20th is only the beginning and put in historic context the bigger significance of the genesis of this blessed journey.

"We are instinctively cohesive from centuries of oppression and struggle, which is a core that binds us one to the other. This core has been tested over generations and centuries, and we welcome the present challenge."

Reflecting on the long road to victory, McKinzie said, "Nearly 150 years after slavery, an African American has ascended to the most powerful position in the world. Against this historic backdrop, January 20, 2009 will be forever etched in the history books as one of the world's watershed moments."

She cited President-elect Obama's focus on fixing the economy, getting people back to work and restoring America to its global standing as reasons his message captivated the electorate and transcended humanity. She said his vow to bring change to a nation beleaguered and demoralized added to his emphatic victory. She said that the ultimate message from the election results signals a readiness for progressive change.

McKinzie said that following the official swearing in, the Sorority will arrange a meeting with the new administration to advance its ESP program. Introduced in July 2006, when she became president, the program focuses on economics, entrepreneurship, leadership development and improving the financial well being of the traditionally disadvantaged. She said the Sorority programs were necessary due to failed leadership policies of the past 30 years that have crippled the middle class.

"Alpha Kappa Alpha programs serve its communities by providing the tools and resources to empower survival. We are achieving success in spite of failed leadership policies, which did not support the aspirations of the powerless."

McKinzie said the Sorority is elated that the incoming administration programs bolster the middle class and mirror the programmatic focus of AKA. Borrowing from her ESP theme, McKinzie said the prospect of having an administration that understands the plight of the powerless and supports the mission of the Sorority makes her Ecstatic, Satisfied and Pleased beyond measure.

McKinzie said the new president will face mounting challenges that cannot be reversed quickly. Against these realities, she cautioned those who supported him to exercise patience and not to pin unrealistic expectations on him.

"Each supporter," she admonished, "should be ready to act responsibly and to do all they can to help his progressive change movement."

"It has taken over three decades for America to decline to the depths that it currently finds itself. It will take years to balance the policies that led to the financial malaise, the deterioration of America's respect worldwide, and the erosion of an economic position based on the foundation of the middle class."

While the AKA president vowed to support the new president, she said that the AKA membership will monitor his agenda and respond to any results that reflect significant barriers to achieving the progressive change program.

"This is a moment of historic proportion," she marveled. "But we must not lose sight of the work that has to be done to restore America to its rightful leadership position and set it back on a course of greatness. Ultimately, that is the 'change we can believe in.'"

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