



Justification for financially supporting Divine Nine Organizations on the Eastern Washington University Campus

Senator Kamala Harris (Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate) acknowledged the power of the Divine Nine Organizations when she opened her August 20, 2020, convention speech by stating, *“Family is my beloved Alpha Kappa Alpha, the Divine Nine and my HBCU brothers and sisters.”*

Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLO) have a long and storied history on college campuses. The first BGLO, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., was founded in 1906 at Cornell University. The Fraternity initially served as a study and support group for minority students who faced severe racial prejudice, both educationally and socially. The early leaders of the Fraternity succeeded in laying a firm foundation that continues more than a century later on the principles of scholarship, fellowship, good character, and the uplifting of humanity.

During the early 19th century, Black Greek Letter organizations continued to form on college campuses to support Black students who faced isolation, unparalleled racism, unending discrimination, and exclusionary practices. Black students were prohibited from joining majority Greek Letter organizations based on their status as Negroes. Today, each of the Divine Nine organizations boast over a century of service with expansive membership growth. Presently, there are over 4 million members of the Divine Nine. The prominence of these organizations in society, the focus on Black and other underrepresented communities, serve as a powerful force of excellence and achievement on the national and global stages.

Divine Nine members have excelled in every facet of society including but not limited to history, politics, education, law, arts, mathematics, and science.

Select Prominent Members of the Divine Nine:

- U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris
- Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall
- News Anchors Robin Roberts, Joy Reid, and Sunny Hostin
- Sports greats Michael Jordan, Lisa Leslie, Arthur Ashe and Olympians Wilma Rudolph and Jesse Owens
- Civil Rights Leaders, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks,
- Representative Hakeem Jeffries, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, and Congressman John Lewis
- Scientist and Mathematicians Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Dorothy Vaughn (all) portrayed in the film Hidden Figures
- Artist, poets, playwrights and actors, Phylicia Rashad, Beverly Jenkins, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Wanda Sykes, Steve Harvey, Cedrick the Entertainer, Zora Neale Hurston, Hattie McDaniel, Langston Hughes, and Carter G. Woodson,
- Attorney’s Loretta Lynch, Ben Crump, Star Jones and Johnnie Cochran

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African American students and members of the existing Greek-letter organizations on campus have approached the Office for Diversity Equity & Inclusion asking consistently “When will EWU have Black Greeks on campus?” “Members of predominantly white fraternities inquired as to “What can we do to have the Divine Nine here?” Over 100 students signed petitions for the establishment of these organizations for two consecutive years.

In response to the student demands, the Office for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in partnership with the Division of Student Affairs, and Africana Studies, hosted forums with members of the area graduate/alumni chapters in attendance. In an effort to support the initial steps of providing visibility of Black Greek Letter organizations at EWU, the Divine Nine Initiative has been launched as a precursor to the future establishment of Black Greek Letter organizations on campus. The Office for Diversity Equity and Inclusion requested and received funding from US Bank to provide programming support, increase presence, knowledge and awareness and to collaborate with Divine Nine organizations in the Eastern Washington region.

The Divine Nine Organizations

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., 1906, Cornell University
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., 1908, Howard University
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., 1911, Indiana University Bloomington
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., 1911, Howard University
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., 1913 Howard University
Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., 1914, Howard University
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., 1920, Howard University
Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., 1922, Butler University
Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., 1963, Morgan State University

The Legacy of the Divine Nine

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Prominent+Black+Greek+Letter+educators&docid=608055507194047073&mid=52D6BA712235DEA1E97152D6BA712235DEA1E971&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

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Positives of Divine Nine Sorority, Fraternity Membership:

- Research indicates African American Greek Letter Organizations members benefit from racial identity development, cognitive development & practical competence development
- Black Greeks engage fully in the college experience upholding and frequently surpassing the required the grade point averages to remain active in their respective organizations
- Black Greeks are visible on campus and provide leadership in campus life
- Black Greek Letter Organizations are positive vehicles for the recruitment and retention of Black Students
- Black Students' Involvement in College Activities and their Development of Leadership Skills are enhanced as members of Black Greek Letter Organizations
- Sorority, Fraternity Membership allows for a level of personal growth that is essential for the success of Black Students
- Seeing Black excellence with women or men having PhD's, J.D.'s and other high-level degrees provides confidence and positive influence for Black Students
- Black Greek letter organization membership encourages socialization and provides the opportunity to form meaningful, lifelong friendships
- Black Greek Letter Organizations are an essential part of the Black community; they provide the opportunity to give back and to unite in shared cultural bonds

For information on the Divine Nine Initiative please contact:
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For information on Sorority and Fraternity Life please contact:
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Resources

Michael Cuyjet's "*African American Men in College*"

Divine Nine members reflect, impact campus life
by Annie Albin | University Communication and Marketing

Sorority and Fraternity Members Form Lifelong Bonds
<https://today.ucsd.edu/story/sorority-and-fraternity-members-form-lifelong-bonds>

Erika Johnson
October 21, 2021

9 Benefits of Joining Clubs in College

Abdul Awalby Abdul Awal
August 25, 2020

What is the Divine Nine?
Published By Sgilman On February 28, 2021
Greek Xperience



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