young, black and greek

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introduction

By JARRAD HENDERSON

It's just about stepping, right?

Around the time I was 12 years old, my father took my brother and me into the heart of downtown St. Louis for a Greek show. He told me he wanted to share some of his college experience and cited some similar events that took place at his alma mater, Ole Miss.

At the time, I had no clue what a Greek show was, and I had no intention of going. But my father's excitement immediately influenced my own as we pulled up to the concrete amphitheater. The sun was bright, but not as bright as the glinting gold boots I saw once I stepped out of the car. I thought I had walked into some type of live amateur theater production.

A husky, dark-skinned man introduced the group wearing the “sun” boots and purple T-shirts of the brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Then adults and young men sitting behind me started barking at performers' bodies making music and acting as instruments. My brother and I laughed, looked at each other and knew we were in for a treat. I've never forgotten that day.

Black Greek Letter Organizations such as Omega Psi Phi are one of black culture’s most iconic institutions. The first black intercollegiate...
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GRIT: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. member Montel Evans puts on his "grit" during MU's 2008 Fall Fest. Fall Fest introduces new students to academic and cultural resources and black student organizations. Although the concept of the grit cannot be traced back to specific origins, it is rumored to have started in the South. The practice is now common among all Black Greek Letter Organizations as an act of masculinity. Sororities have also begun to adopt the practice.
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about the greek system

By ALI STRAKA

The oddly shaped letters proudly worn around campus might perplex those outside the Greek community, but to say, “It’s all Greek to me” would mean ignoring the distinctive identities of MU’s Greek chapters. Greeks share the common values of friendship, academic achievement and philanthropy, but key differences set apart the all-male social fraternities, the multicultural Greeks, the all-female social sororities and the historically black fraternities and sororities.

The basics of Greek life
MU’s Office of Greek Life oversees 51 Greek-letter groups that are often local chapters of national organizations. These chapters are divided into four councils, which are the governing bodies of the chapters:

- The Interfraternity Council governs 27 all-male social fraternities.
- The Panhellenic Association includes 14 all-female social sororities.
- The Multicultural Greek Council has two groups that promote cultural awareness.
- The National Pan-Hellenic Council governs the eight historically black fraternities and sororities. Nationally, this council has nine organizations. They’re unofficially called the Divine Nine. All nine groups have charters at MU, which means they all received a charter at some point.

the "divine nine"
All of the “Divine Nine” have charters at MU, but currently only eight of the nine are active. MU is home to the following NPHC organizations:

Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority
- Founded nationally: 1908
- Famous alumnas: Phylicia Rashad of The

Jake Mitchell prepares for his probate, a celebration, in May 2010 at MU. Although most see the probate as hazing, others view the practice as traditional and essential to the right of passage of black Greek initiation.
Reginald Wilson faced tough challenges when his father died from cancer in 2004. "My father was everything to me," Wilson says. "I went through some things." He found some peace in the brotherhood of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Wilson's experiences challenged him to become a better person and man. "I'll never say anything is impossible again," he says. [PLAY VIDEO]
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