

BEYOND THIS PLACE:

Documenting the Visual History of African American Fraternities and Sororities

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by

JARRAD HENDERSON

Rita Reed, Committee Chair

Dr. Keith Greenwood

Jackie Bell

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DEDICATION

To Harold & Brenda Henderson, my parents who I love dearly, thank you. Your lessons and examples have helped me see this through. To Bryan, Stephanie and my niece Jayla, thank you for making me feel like a super hero.

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To Rita Reed, thank you for providing an example and pushing me to completion.

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To the Black Greek community at the University of Missouri, thank you. Keep striving.

To the youths who struggle for progress, continue to march onward and upward.

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Jarrad Henderson

Rita Reed, Chair

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes portrayals of Black Greek Letter Organizations in both print and video and the effects these portrayals have on students' perception, knowledge and understanding of Black Greek Letter Organization (BGLO) culture. Utilizing visual elicitation methodology, this project reports responses from eight students; four Greek and four non-Greek. This project will explore the portrayal of BGLOs in mass media using Spike Lee's popular film *School Daze* as a cultural artifact of study. More specifically, it examines how the use of visual elicitation as a research methodology can lead to more insightful and accurate representation of the BGLO community while demonstrating the importance between defining, more clearly, representation and stereotypes in media. I found that it is nearly impossible to talk about representation without talking about stereotyping. Students responded by confirming their strongest senses of cultural understanding were based in stereotypes and in some cases even were informed by stereotypes. As a result, this research helps show the importance of informing visual work in areas where visual novelty exists.

Introduction

Around the time I was twelve years old, my father took my brother and I into the heart of downtown St. Louis for a Greek Show. He told me he wanted to share some of his college experience, citing some similar events that took place at his Alma Mater Ole Miss. His eyes lit up with enthusiasm as he described the scene.

At the time, I had no clue what a "Greek Show" was and I really had no intention of going, but his excitement immediately influenced my own as we pulled up to the concrete amphitheater. The sun was bright, but not quite as bright as the glistening gold boots I saw once I stepped out of the car. I thought I had stepped into some type of live amateur theater production.

I remember seeing Black people with huge smiles on their faces, their demeanor more appropriate than I had ever seen, wearing a sense of pride on their faces as the men with the sun boots took their places in front of the cold, stone stage. A husky man introduced the group wearing purple t-shirts and army fatigue pants as the brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. at which point some of the adults and young men sitting behind me started barking like dogs. My brother and I shared a laugh and looked at each other as if we knew we were in for a treat.

The men continued their greetings and then eventually started dancing while singing songs. "I've been working on Omega train....rolling, rolling, rolling for Q Psi Phi!" they chanted with animated beats made from their bodies. The experience was flooded with excitement. As if it were yesterday, I could remember as we left the event, I looked out the window to see the brothers who performed walking together, embracing each other and laughing while on their way to their next event.

I had been pleased with the thought of fraternities since my very first experience. It wouldn't be until I enrolled at Arizona State University as a sophomore that I would learn more first hand about these organizations.

It didn't really dawn on me about how important these Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) were until I was completely immersed in the college culture. The Fraternity and Sorority members who made up these BGLOs were upperclassmen, who willingly offered me assistance and a social platform to become more comfortable and aware of the 60,000+ student riddled campus. Through on-campus forums I learned that historically these organizations had a firm foundation in the progress of the Black America and more importantly America.

Some of the most important minds in Black history and American history were affiliated with these nine organizations. People like Martin Luther King, Jr., Jesse Jackson, Rosa Parks, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes all were a part of these BGLOs. Even some of my favorite athletes like Michael Jordan were Greek. I was fascinated with the common thread all these intelligent people shared. Yet, there was a shroud of mystery surrounding the 'Divine Nine' and I wanted to know why.

By the time I transferred to Arizona State University, I was doing more research on the organizations and their members. I met upperclassmen who were cool guys and members of the organizations. I had conversations with current members about my interest. I decided to join Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and was initiated during the Fall semester of 2005. It was the beginning of my lifelong journey as a Black Greek.

It was in those years as an undergraduate member that my solid foundation of service and love for the Fraternity were born. My second semester into the University

of Missouri Photojournalism program I concluded that I would pursue the image of BGLOs as the subject of my Master's Degree research. It was clear that the themes, energy and roots of these organizations would provide an interesting look into the culture, which had inspired many people over the period of 100 years.

This project, which ultimately will be presented in a long-term project format, is the backbone of the research presented. The idea is to use the themes and result that come from this process to build a more intimate look at the organizations, which are most often overshadowed by stiff stereotypical representations. The idea of elicitation to dispel or find solutions to combat stereotypes can be applied to any young culture. The way I have presented the information hopefully will help other photographers approach topics of rare opportunity in the future.

I know this project will seem 'completed' for the reason of presenting a finished research paper, but in reality, I hope to continue this research and project for another ten years. I am completely satisfied with my results and have enjoyed the experiences I have been fortunate to have with great people while completing this document. I only hope that this start lifts the project to unforeseen heights in the future.

Beyond This Place

The significance of BGLOs spans across cultural, socio-economic, and continental barriers and has been one of the leading institutions in Black history. Without the establishment of these organizations in the early 1900s, the history of Black people in America would find progressive politics, entertainment, athletics, health, and academia still moving at a Jim Crow's pace. In fact, it was these organizations and

its members, along with others, who progressed America up to and through the Jim Crow era. At the higher education level, these organizations continue to serve the purpose of providing brotherhood and sisterhood to college students facing increasingly poor recruitment, retention and graduation statistics.

Beyond This Place exists to document the important past and contemporary history of BGLOs. In its current form I have proposed and accomplished two things. 1) I would produce two stories in partial fulfillment for the requirement of the degree Master of Art in Journalism. The first would be an essay on Black Greek life comprised of images I selected and were used in an exhibition in March. The second would be a multimedia story about a particular member of one of the organizations. 2) I will provide an online presence for the project in the form of my own website.

BGLOs are paramount in the college student experience for the thousands of Black students at colleges and universities across the United States and abroad. This project will help many unfamiliar with the culture to see it from a different perspective. Additionally it will serve as a start for my long term Beyond This Place project.

Description of Activities

Over the course of two years, I have been privileged to work with many of the Black organizations here at the University Of Missouri. Originally my idea was to simply put together a few photographs from the year in a nice presentation for the project. The work ended up getting the attention of two Mizzou faculty: Dr. April Langley of the Black Studies Program at MU and VOX Editor Rhonda Prast, thus moving my simple idea into two separate professional components.

Dr. Langley and MU Graduate student Jennifer Wilmot encouraged me to produce an exhibition to publish the project. The result was a month long show at the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center on South Campus. The event featured a brief program facilitated by members of the Mizzou BGLO community, bringing my project life through songs, poems and stepping. I also offered a brief history of the organizations and spoke about my research and how it helped to inform my photographic work to go along with the pageantry.

Toward the end of this semester MU Faculty Rhonda Prast approached me about possibly running my project in VOX, the University of Missouri magazine. After some deliberation with my committee chair, I decided that I would proceed. VOX wanted to do a feature photo essay of the work I had collected of MU Black Greeks over the years.

Initially, the process was overwhelming and I thought it would take forever to coordinate everything. Because I took an extra semester to finish my Master's work, it actually worked toward my benefit. The Exhibition was completed in the Spring and the Article in the Winter.

The result of the two components shows my ability to successfully complete a professional project. I am proud of all I have accomplished in my pursuit of a Master's degree. I look forward to the continued progress of this project.

Evaluation

I know now why instructors tell you to save the project for the end of the Master's project. At times I found myself wanting more time to work on my webpage or my stories and not on my research. It can be distracting sometimes to work on my project piece. That being said, I know I spent way too much time on my project. Part of the reason is because I truly felt lost at some points of this process.

I feel like I completed three professional components. By the time I was ready to turn my research in I had no clue that my project would take so much time to put together. Out of the three components, I felt the Black History Exhibit was an essential piece to showing the impact of my research and my project. What made it even sweeter was the presence of my faculty, colleagues, and personal friends and family. It was one of my favorite moments while here at Mizzou. I have included some of the video footage on the media folder included (In the BHM_Exhibit folder). I felt that was important in addressing some challenges I have had in the pre-planning and going into my project.

I was often challenged by my colleagues and some faculty to 'step outside my box' during this process of creating and executing my idea for a professional project. At the time, my instincts were shell shocked that someone would question the fact I was lucky to have found a topic I loved and could gradually improve during my time in the Master's program. As I continued to work towards my goal of degree completion, I realized that I was challenging myself in a way that many people cannot.

The fact that I am within the culture that I am documenting raised questions for others. To me it raised opportunity. I feel like in my case, access triumphs some discussion about objectivity. I likened the fact to how Frederick Douglass was able to write about slavery having once been enslaved himself. It didn't necessarily skew his perception of the institution, but he wrote from a place of reality. It is the same mission I intended to pursue. While I understand the conversations trying to push me further as a photographer, I felt the discussion was rooted in something other than documenting visual stories. I pushed myself to document this topic as I would any other. I pushed to make the best images I could. I have by no means perfected this topic. I will continue making great images for this project and am thankful for the process of growth that comes from these types of opportunities.

With that said, Rita Reed, my committee chair, discussed ways that I could go with the project. Originally, I wanted to produce two multimedia stories, one about a college aged Greek story and another about an alumni member. At the time, my idea was to photograph the first Black tenure track professor at Mizzou, Dr. Arvarh E. Strickland, telling the story of Alumni membership and the lifelong commitment that members of BGLOs have. Dr. Strickland was extremely ill during the time I wanted to do a story. At the time he had just come off surgery and was confined to his bed for months. I tried to contact him several times with no progress. In the end, it didn't work out for me. If I were to this project all over again, I would have pushed a little harder to do the story on him. The prevalence of alumni members is an important story to tell and will be something I will do in the future.

In terms of my storytelling ability, I looked forward to growing from my experiences at Mizzou as well as during the course of this process. I found much more success doing stories that incorporate video, stills, and historical references to traditions or past events. After making some mistakes, I really have learned how to tell a more focused narrative, something I've had trouble with in some instances these past couple of years.

Otherwise, I cannot point to many things that I would do differently with the photo essay. Moving forward, I hope to use the foundation I have built to stimulate some opportunities to move Beyond This Place into a self-sustaining long-term project. Many young photographers say they would like to do a long-term project, but my goal is to fund one. I think I will find support in individuals, organizations, and anthropologist who are interested in the historical piece of the project and can find financial support to continue my research.

I will submit my completed package to Johnson Publishing in Chicago, IL. It has always been a dream of mine to publish in EBONY magazine. Being published in EBONY magazine would also allow the project to expand to reach more people so I could tell more stories. Ideally, I would love to work on this project for the next 5-7 years with the end result being a short documentary film and/or coffee table book. The lessons I have learned while completing this project have given me a great point of reference of what it will take to do such a project.

Evidence

Black History Month Exhibit

During the Spring 2010 Semester, the Black Studies Department held a contest for a series of sponsored events. One of the people on the committee, Jenifer Wilmont, thought I should send in an application to exhibit my current work. The MU Black History Month Committee supported the idea so I wrote a proposal for them to host a month long exhibit of my work (see Appendix 1). I sent the information to Paula Roper and Leo Agnew who reviewed my application and put it through to the committee.

Weeks later I was selected to do the event. Unfortunately there was no time left to do the event during Black History Month so opted for a date in March. During that time, I was trying to figure out what images I would use for the show. I knew I had room for about 24 frames. While trying to figure out what to hang, I took my archive of hundreds of images and narrowed them down to about 77 selects. I printed those selects and laid them on a table in the lab where they stayed everyday so photojournalism students, staff and other people could vote for what they thought were the strongest visual images.

I asked mentors, colleges and other students while they passed by to rate the images by placing tally marks next to everything. It was extremely successful. Out of all the images I had out on the table, at least 40 had marks on them. While taking into consideration the ones that were rated, I had to choose images that showed a variety

of organizations from a variety of places. I ended up deciding on 13 images for the show.

The editing process was different for each the exhibition, the VOX, and the elicitation process. Because the content of each was different, the exhibition would be the most open, encompassing different regions, schools, and activities. When I edited for the exhibit, I took into consideration the votes of my colleagues, but ultimately I chose images that represented the culture of Black Greeks as well as images that showed relationships between members.

I stayed away from images that were posed. The result was a nice collection of images from tense, exciting, intimate essay of Black Greek Life. Overall, my images displayed images from three different regions including Houston, TX, Columbia, MO, and Washington, D.C.

During this process, MU Photojournalism Chair, David Rees took notice to the opportunity to showcase my unique subject. He graciously donated frames from the Angus and Betty McDougall Center for Photojournalism Studies that I used for the exhibition. In preparation for the event, the Black Studies program provided me with funds to print, hang, and order promotional materials. I had flyers printed and sent email invitations to my Mizzou academic and social family, including Chancellor Brady Deaton. I decided the most appropriate way to present the work was through a reception. The reception was held on Sunday, March 21, 2010 beginning at 3:00pm. During the course of the reception I decided to invite the Mizzou and surrounding community to an event that encompassed the spirit of the culture I was documenting. I asked some members to come and speak a little bit about their organization. In an effort to respond to my

research, instead of having people step, I simply asked them to share a piece of their culture with the community.

The results were fantastic. Every active Black Greek organization came by to support my project. Some organizations recited poems, some stepped and others sang songs. It was a fantastic display of community, showing the importance of my research and project itself. The community responded well filling the main lecture room of the culture center. Over 70 were in attendance. The impact on the community is recorded in my field notes and some video clips from the presentation are included in the Media folder under the Appendix 7 included with this project (Folder is named BHM_Exhibit).

Images lined the north side of the cultural center and were accompanied by large extended captions. The first half of the caption gave essential information about the images themselves. The second half of the caption gave a relevant fact about the organizations represented in the photograph. The pairing went well allowing the viewer to learn many things that they had not known before. I was extremely proud of the exhibit. While some of the images in the exhibit show up in both the VOX article and the elicitation, I felt it is important to present each package in its' complete form as it was presented. The images from the exhibition with captions are included in the media folder, followed by contact sheets with images that did not make it into the show (Files are named 1_BHM_exhibit_show_images.pdf and 2_BHM_exhibit_additional_images.pdf)

VOX Magazine Article

I decided that I would submit my work into the Documentary category for the 65th Annual College Photographer of the Year (CPOY) competition. After spending time working on toning and captioning images during the CPOY portfolio review night, I asked Rhonda Prast to review my portfolio for the competition. She asked about my photo essay on Black Greek life with enthusiasm, noting that VOX magazine was trying to include the addition of more photo essays in its layout. She told me to contact her later in the week about the idea of doing a project with VOX.

I loved the idea of publishing my work in VOX. Although, the article didn't fit in the original proposed elements I wanted to complete for my professional analysis, I found it to be extremely rewarding. Having a finished product in my hand on December 2 was a special treat which made my professional component that much more sweet.

I was asked to come to an initial meeting to discuss the idea and to pitch the Beyond This Place project. After meeting with the initial staff, I was introduced to Kyle Schettler who was assigned as my editor. Kyle's energy helped me focus on the story I wanted to tell and encouraged me right off the bat. From that point I went through a series of meetings about the written article, design and layout and also was asked to consider an online component.

Both the written and the photo editing part of this project were simple to put together. The edits I made for the Black History Exhibit provided me with a good start to the process. VOX, with their hyper-local focus, asked me to use images that were from the Black Greek community at Mizzou. At first I was hesitant to agree, but with

further thought it helped me frame the story and gave a clear relationship between the images. The layout process was interesting and rewarding for me.

My designer showed me a first draft of the layout, and after making a few image placements and formatting decisions we settled on an eight-page spread. Going through this editing and creation process was good for me as a photographer as well as a designer. It gave me ample opportunity to explain image placing and size questions as well as allowed me the creative vision to express the project through dominant images. I have to thank the entire VOX staff for making my experience a positive one.

While settling on the images and the content for the written article, I was asked if I would be interested in allowing a design class to work with my content which would be used for the VOX online component. I suggested that the online component focus around the story of Kappa Alpha Psi member Reginald Wilson, the subject of my "I Won't Complain" multimedia piece.

The class was given still images, the completed multimedia piece, as well as the text from my VOX article to create an interactive website that would be hosted as its own design for this special project. I truly felt honored during this process. On November 29, 2010, I was asked to come see the finished packages the students put together. There were two projects I admired a lot. The finished project spread is included in the media folder (File is named 3_VOX_article.pdf).

Overall I thought the finished layout, online component and process was the icing on the cake for my Master's project. I received a lot of positive feedback from my committee, MU staff and peers. Since the article ran another exhibition opportunity has arisen at the University of Missouri St. Louis campus.

The online component of the VOX essay was the perfect carrier for the first part of my professional project that was to create a story using my research as a guide. The result was a multimedia piece on a young man and his journey to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

“I Won’t Complain” Story

With my research completed, I wondered about how I would use the information gathered in a way to guide my story topic. Initially, I wanted to do a story on the probate show itself, but the interest expressed through the research to talk about how great an individual initiate thinks his/her organization is, gave me an idea to seek out someone with an interesting background. It was something my committee chair and I discussed often: who are the people who make up these organizations?

While I understood that each story and background is different, I found an opportunity for a great story, which could serve as a good foundation for the Beyond This Place project. The idea was to tell the story of a new initiate about why they decided to join their organization.

After creating the story, I wanted to find a way to host and display the project. An online presence is almost required in this digital age and I wanted to provide a long term set up for the project to continue after the completion of my Master’s requirements. One of the things that I wanted to do is build a website for the project. After spending months working on an HTML site, I finally decided to switch gears and produce a webpage based using pre-existing blog systems. The results can be found at

Beyondthisplace.com. Through this story, I hope that the project can expand its range of topics and its range of access allowing for the continued growth of the storytelling presented.

Building The First Chapter

While I was brainstorming topics to document for my project, I heard about the possibility of new initiations taking place in Columbia, MO. I approached some of the prophytes (older members) of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Delta Omega chapter shortly after I realized they had an upcoming neophyte presentation/probate show on December 12, 2009.

The chapter President at the time, Derrick Christian, and I had a pretty good relationship since I arrived at Mizzou in 2008. I explained to Derrick that I wanted to do a project on the neophytes but that I wanted to focus on one particular person out of the group. The Fall 2009 'ΔΩ' initiation class featured six new initiates, one of which was my mentee Justin McCain. Before I even picked up my camera, I knew my choice of character would be easy.

I met up with the new Kappa initiates December 9, 2010, with the permission of the chapter. At this point, only the chapter brothers knew the identity of their new initiates until they were unveiled to the community during the probate show. Through my interactions with individuals and the Mizzou community, I had earned enough respect to gain access to a normally restricted level of the brotherhood. It is always interesting to see the relationship between new members and older ones. Of course my access also is a by-product of my own experiences as a member of Alpha Phi

Alpha Fraternity, Inc. This allows me to go into places that many photographers who are not an insider of the culture simply may not be exposed to.

After being introduced to the former pledges by their membership intake coordinator, I openly explained my intentions. Photography is so funny. People may 'act' in front of the lens for a while, but sooner than later, they forget about themselves, and 'give' their real selves to the camera. I knew I was going to photograph my friend Justin, but after talking to all of them, I wasn't sure if he was my subject.

One initiate, Greg Green, came from a historically rough part of St. Louis, yet another, Charles Ukatu, Jr.'s ongoing struggle with sickle-cell anemia was encouraging, Justin was Legacy member. There was just too much content to consider. I went home after shooting the probate practice, downloaded my images and started looking at them on the screen.

Often times your strongest images fly by on the screen without thought. Sometimes amongst the clutter your answer is revealed right in front of you. In this case, it wasn't Justin or Charles that I saw in my frames. It was Reggie. The soft-spoken giant of a young adult, armed with a beautiful singing voice and a story that made his decision to join relatable. I spoke with Reggie the next day.

My journey with him led me from his youth to his father's untimely death to his decision to come to college. It would be accurate to say I was and am still impressed by Reggie after our first conversation. I spent the next few days with the group as they prepared for the big day. After photographing several probate practices and the days leading up to the big event, I took time out to figure out how I would present the story.

Any story where major plot points happen in the past is tough. It's almost impossible to 'show' the past. I decided to take a trip to Reggie's house in Belleville, IL to photograph him at home in his natural element, but also to show his relationship to his father.

Reggie's Mother, Regina, pulled out a box of old family photos. As son and wife looked at image after image, the mood in the room began to flood with remnants of good times, tough challenges, and the struggle of a single mother and her young kids forced to become men at a young age. The images I captured here helped the story out by volumes.

By the time I finished shooting the editing process didn't take long. Overall, I had narrowed my images down to about 120 selects that I really liked for the multimedia piece. I decided that I would host all video for the project on Vimeo.com, which allowed me to follow analytics for the video. After the editing process, only 65 stills made it into the final story.

Reggie told such an emotional narrative. I decided I wanted a video element in the story so I shot an interview with Reggie at the beginning of this Fall 2010 semester. The result provided me with a face that I thought people could relate to. Editing the story together took me a long while but in the end, it was worth it. Using a logging method, I was able to shorten my time putting the story audio together. The final result is also included in the media folder in Appendix 7 (The folder name is I_Wont_Complain).

The resulting project was used for the VOX online component. Out of the multiple submissions for the project, the last few were judged by select criteria chosen by me. I wanted something that was clean in presentation, with large use of the images. Some of the projects did not include a clear description of the project itself. I

felt the winning interface was clean and in the style of my own work. With as little information the students had about my personal motivations for the project, it was clear that this project was well crafted with the same attention to detail as my own site. The VOX online component, designed by the class winner Theresa Berens, is included in the media folder (File is named 4_VOX_Website.pdf).

Publishing Online/Website Development

The next piece of my project was to develop a website that could host my video projects and my images. Instead of making a one-time webpage that only holds limited content, I became extremely ambitious and tried to create an entire functional webpage that could grow with the project over time.

My first attempt was a terrible idea. I decided I would build my site from a template I began in Electronic Photojournalism class. The site was built entirely in Dreamweaver and Flash. I found this method of making a site time consuming. Adding flash and other video components became frustrating quickly so I began to look into other options of web page creation.

The first obstacle that made me give up on manually coding was my video. Every time I posted a video I thought exported decently, it would always decrease in quality when I viewed the .flv file online. While I'm sure I may have overlooked one export option, I began to get tired of many failed attempts to manually override the web browser and HTML coding.

When searching for a solution for my video I ran across Vimeo video. I fell in love with the quality in which files exported. The added benefit of subscribing to the

PRO version became enticing when I figured I could embed anywhere on the web, including on my own webpage. I bought the subscription and began uploading my “I Won’t Complain” piece that then looked excellent online. The interface on Vimeo videos is incorporated seamlessly and gives the user customizable options of what to show and what not to show on the video interface. From that point on I was hooked. Next, I turned to another option for the development of the website.

By the time I had a wake up call about the lack of functionality of my current webpage, I had grown tired of coding anything. I knew of companies like Photoshelter and Graph Paper Press, so I started looking into what web hosting would cost for a year. Neither had viable options for students wanting professional options with amateur subscription fees. Both had subscription fees of around \$200 a year. For the average student, these rates can get costly. I needed another alternative.

I did a little bit more digging and discovered the idea of themes for Wordpress pages. Wordpress, a free blog service, was exactly the type of framework I needed to create a webpage. The best thing about using Wordpress for the webpage is that updating content as well as having a site along with a blog embedded in the page made it extremely easy to update site content. I wouldn’t have to code another index file again!

I decided to download Wordpress.org to my server and began searching for page themes. After trying to find a decent free template for Wordpress, I stumbled across Themeforrest.net. While the themes advertised on the page were not free, they were much cheaper than the professional services that didn’t even include the web hosting. I found a theme I loved and bought it for \$40. The themes in Wordpress are

customizable for someone who can read code, so I decided to make my own adjustments to the site, like changing the color scheme, to personalize my page. The results were fantastic. Coupled with my Godaddy.com hosting service the cost to operate a webpage was under \$130 a year.

Screen shots of the web development theme process can be found in my Appendix 6. By the time the VOX article hit the magazine racks on December 2, 2010, I had already had a story, blog post, and a self-contained website to publish my work. It is a service I would recommend to any student photographer trying to increase their web presence. In addition to easy to understand menus and tutorials included with the theme for users new to the Wordpress.org community, it also was a great central hub for the social media identities that many have now.

With many of the successful projects a strong web presence is important. For example, sites that win in the annual CPOY awards usually have a nice design in conjunction with powerful content. Through social media, one broadens the scope and demographic that would see their project. For the Beyond This Place project, I have established three big social networking identities: Facebook, Twitter, and Search Engine Optimized content. Through the use of all three my chances that someone looking for my work finds it increases exponentially.

I broke the site up into five sections: a home, about the project, stories, blog and contact page. Each section is its own mini site taking viewers through an incredibly organized project. Each page allows for conversation to occur directly on the post allowing users to strike up dialogue and, hopefully, increase flow of viewers. Additionally, Google Analytics and easy 1-button share options track and allow for

increased web traffic. Of my three components I know this website will be the most important as I continue moving forward with my project.

Professional Analysis

Introduction

"If a race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated. "

*-Carter G. Woodson
Author, Scholar, Member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.*

When a group of men attending Cornell University in 1905 decided to form an academic study group to foster closer relationships and defend themselves against poor retention realities, they had little knowledge of the lasting impact it would have. Almost 104 years later, the establishment of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated would stand as one of the premier catalysts to the development of Black culture. Alpha Phi Alpha has the distinction of including some of America's leading Black scholars among its ranks. People like Charles Hamilton Houston, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall and Andrew Young are all members. By 1922, seven other organizations with similar origins were established across the country. These organizations and their members would produce some of America's most dynamic and largest social movements including the Black Arts, Black Power and Civil Rights movements.

Today these organizations, now called the Divine Nine, are located all across the nation and most have International chapters. The importance of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) has been well documented (Parks, 2008; Kimbrough, 2003).

What have not been documented are the visual history and the visual culture of BGLOs that set it apart from any other group of college students or alumni. These stories, until now, traditionally have only been told on the big screen.

As a culture becomes more expressed in popular media, an important transition must occur in other editorial based media. A decision is made by the journalist to consider novel aspects of a culture while in the important creation process of an image. It is here that the opportunity for stereotypes exists. Whether the intent is conscious or unconscious the creator, in an attempt to represent a culture, could stereotype it poorly creating a perception of mostly negative attributes for the culture. It is my intent to identify some of these stereotypes and representations as defined by students mostly familiar with BGLO culture to see which stereotypes exist in media and to find out what affects they have on members.

My research and conversation with both Greek and non-Greek students culminates with an overall essay of BGLO culture and a multimedia story of an individual, Reginald Wilson, and his reasoning for joining Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated. Both illustrate a unique and diverse view of BGLO culture while coming to some conclusions on what drives stereotypes of these groups and how personal experiences outweigh or re-enforce these stereotypes.

What I Plan To Do

This project will explore the portrayal of BGLOs in mass media. More specifically, it examines how the use of visual elicitation as a research methodology can lead to more insightful and accurate representation of the BGLO community while

demonstrating the importance between defining, more clearly, representation and stereotypes in media. Additionally, this project explains why limited visual representations can allow perceived norms to develop via cultivation among viewers using Spike Lee's popular film *School Daze* as a cultural artifact of study.

Theory

The relationship between cultivation theory and perceived norms seem to naturally go hand in hand. The developing attitudes that long-term media exposure creates have been very well documented in media studies. Morgan and Shanahan (1999) describe the George Gerbner cultivation theory well by stating, "watching a great deal of television will be associated with a tendency to hold specific and distinct conceptions of reality (p. 3)." This concept of cultivation is echoed by Klosterman (2009) in "Eating the Dinosaur" where the concepts from Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* are explored. Mander wrote about the concept in the pre-Google society of 1978, stating that TV takes away people's freedom to have whatever thoughts they want. Even more relevant to this article was Mander's belief that images influence our thoughts.

According to Mander, "these images inside your head were either out of your own imagination or else they were from the media." Cultivation theory suggests that exposure to television over time subtly "cultivates" viewers' perceptions of reality. This cultivation can have an impact even on light viewers of TV, which is similar to Mander's ideas of internal images. This exposure to media images isn't specific to just television, as the rise of technology has provided these same stimuli via the Internet, on-demand

programming and even mobile video entertainment. This idea of pre-meditated imagination is eerily similar to a journalistic concept that photographers confront every day: stereotyping.

Particularly Matabane (1988) says when media deals with Black culture; some of the same attitudes that are reflected in media representations and stereotyping are inherently carried over into the cultivation model that shape social perceptions (p. 64). What this means for a culture that is as young and unfamiliar as BGLOs is that repeated exposure to limited content begins to become accepted as unquestioned reality. This theoretical frame of cultivation is slightly adjusted to recognize the importance of television and novelty of images versus the abundance of images presented.

Real & Rimal (2005) describe this perceived norm as being a combination of descriptive norms- an individual's belief in the prevalence of a behavior, and injunctive norms- the belief that sanctions will follow if certain behavior is not followed (p. 390). From the non-BGLO member perspective the descriptive norm can only be formed through an exterior source. General knowledge that would influence a belief in the prevalence of a specific behavior (e.g. hazing) would have to come from another source, other than the BGLOs themselves, to rationalize the speculation.

Since some non-members would not be privileged to the details of the BGLO initiation, the general information bank predominately comes from media in forms of movies and news reports. It is important to acknowledge that even through the media exposure some will still have personal experiences that shape their own belief system. These media and personal experiences are what I hope to organize through my

research. Undoubtedly, the only facts about the initiation process that are shown on television news programs are about the tragedies and court cases from hazing incidents.

It seems no writing on BGLOs can be fully comprehensive without mention of pledging and hazing. Out of all the current scholarly and non-scholarly material about BGLOs, very few overlook this primary source of controversy. Some authors have dedicated whole books on the topic (Jones, 2004). Although hazing is not specific to BGLOs the weight pledging and hazing hold in the image of BGLOs is unparalleled by any other cultural artifact; it is to a point where entire groups of fraternity and sorority members are perceived as being likened to a gang member mentality (Hughey, 2008; Jones, 2004; Studentlife.ou.edu; Eisenberg, 2009).

While it is hard to disagree that most of the negative media attention is warranted, scholars like Jones (2004) understand the key role media plays. He contends that important media coverage is often misused; identifying symptoms but never is it exploited as a tool to mend the true problem, thus missing the mark in generating true change in the behavior (p. 17). This can best be seen in generalizations about Greek life in its entirety.

A majority of people's perception is that being Greek involved being hazed. The difference is that it is almost commonly understood that traditionally non-Black fraternities haze with alcohol and Black fraternities haze through physical violence (Kimbrough, 1995). Therefore, the perceived norm of seeing pledging and hazing as a fundamental right of passage (often times gone wrong) becomes a reality generated through cultivation for BGLO perception across the board. Meaning regardless of

which organization is guilty of hazing, all nine organizations take a little bit of the heat and are impacted by the events that single out the culture. This can be seen most recently in early October, when the Houston Chronicle reported that 20 year-old Donnie Wade II, of historically Black Prairie View A&M University in Texas, died while pledging Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. (Horswell, 2009). Wade's death has re-fueled the fire on the topic of hazing, culminating in his family suit of both the university and Phi Beta Sigma in the total sum of \$97 million dollars.

The correlation between cultivation and perceived norms seems to be an endless sequence of the continuation of stereotypes. Hutchinson (1997) offers a proactive look into the normalized subject cycle that Schirato and Webb refer to that can be implemented by all people wanting to combat perceived norms cultivated through media. The solution offered to Black men includes being conscious of what one says and does, actively becoming an anti-stereotype and role model, and also to get involved with organizations, such as church and BGLOs, to set a positive example of achievement (p. 169). Hutchinson's theory, although simple, could be extremely effective if a portion of Jones' suggested dialogue took place to actively identify the steps that could be taken to solidify Hutchinson's hypothesis. However, the majority of mass audiences do not have the visibility of easily accessible figures of which Hutchinson speaks. If they do, often their accomplishments are overshadowed by the multitude of media messages.

Only after understanding the role perceived norms play in cultivating a stereotypes, can one then ask questions about the effects cultivation has on the audience and how it affects issues concerning future representations of BGLOs.

Methodology

This study utilizes a combination of both photo and video elicitation. For the purposes of this study, the method will be referred to as visual elicitation. The method, although not thoroughly studied pulls from two examples of successful elicitation methods using both still and moving images. It is my hope to further develop this method for future use in my project.

Harper (2002) cites that photo elicitation first grew out of practicality when John Collier decided to use photographs in his interviewing (p.14). The success of the method was so great that Collier decided to continue using the method in his own visual anthropology studies. Collier noted, "The pictures elicited longer and more comprehensive interviews but at the same time helped subjects overcome the fatigue and repetition of conventional interviews." (1957:858, in Harper) This qualitative method was instrumental in helping develop studies in psychology, education, and other field research.

Harper suggests that photo elicitation pulls from a deep sense of the human consciousness. Similarly, Swartz (1989) suggests that previous documentation of the subject allows "personal narratives which illuminate viewers' lives and experiences...Instead of responding to an encoded message, most viewer's responses reflect their own social realities." It is in this way, that my research will help show the respondent's reality versus a general media constructed view of BGLO culture and how the two interact. Swartz started by taking photographs of the community herself, conducting formal interviews along the way, and then taking time to show different

families the images she had made from the previous year. Her structure for photo interviews consisted of asking questions about the importance of the photographs shown.

Using visual elicitation in this study will help to show the issues within the BGLO experience from the perspective of both Greek and non-Greek research participants. It will provide a common ground in which all participants can pull from. My respondents were selected using a convenience sample. I first attended various campus events to select my research participants by having students fill out a short questionnaire. Out of the 41 total students who took my questionnaire, I selected eight; four who were Greek, four who were non-Greek, both groups having both 2 male and 2 female participants. I selected people who are most influenced by the culture of study and also selected young Black college students between the ages of 17-22 because of their unique exposure to BGLOs. Respondents also had a rather intermediate exposure to the film *School Daze*, my cultural artifact for study. It was important to also question students who weren't directly involved with the culture to further test the link to cultivation theory. By asking these four students who are 'outside the circle' about stereotypes, I was better able to identify traits that were being identified as mediated through popular culture. Even though these respondents had a level of familiarity with BGLO culture they would not have had the same type of exposure to the culture. Additionally, for those students within the culture, I wanted to find out if stereotypes identified had as large an impact for students who were in the culture. The questionnaire and a sample of completed responses are included as Appendix 3.

The result yielded the following participants: Marcus Ferguson- Freshman, Non Greek, LySaundra Campbell- Junior, Non Greek, Tiio Watson- Sophomore, Non Greek, Bailey Anderson- Sophomore, Non Greek, Khadija Tejan- Senior, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Gerald McLemore- Junior, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Brittany Banks- Senior, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Justin McCain- Sophomore, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

I selected students whom I hoped would have a great deal of information to offer. Each of my participants had personal experiences with BGLOs and stories that helped to make the elicitation well worth the transcription of the interviews. Something I would like to recognize is that all of my participants have had some type of experience with BGLOs before actually coming to the University of Missouri. Therefore most of the respondents could be considered connected to the culture. Many had family members, friends, mentors, etc. who were members of these organization and while this serves as an introduction to the culture, a person would not have the same understanding of the without being initiated into an organization. Because these fraternal orders were indeed secret, a majority of the secret identifying practices were also undisclosed; they are known only to the initiated members of that particular order (Trotter, 2004). In fact having selected participants with knowledge of BGLOs allowed them to identify the mediated stereotypes they had experienced by watching films like *School Daze*. The contrast between their experiences and the media they had consumed brings interesting information to this research.

By using popular media and photographs the viewer can make judgments on what are accurate representations of the subject matter. It allows both Greek and

non-Greek participants to pull from their own personal experiences. It also gives them a chance to talk about what is not included in the current media representation. This method is extremely popular among photography students due to the method's unique opportunity to work with images and has even been the methodology often used in much research at the University of Missouri.

University Of Missouri Professor Emerita C. Zoe Smith cited many reasons to use photo elicitation. Smith and Whitney (2002) used images from Donna Feratto's *Living With The Enemy* photo project to document the photo elicitation method well while talking to domestic abuse victims (p.4). Smith's method of showing the images to women who had been domestically abused and asking them to talk about their experiences is the exact model this study emulates. Smith even required her students at the University of Missouri to explore the possibilities of the method (Smith & Woodward, 1999). Ultimately the method allowed the students to get further insight of the topic of interest and allowed better understanding of the experience.

In one example, Smith's student and co-author Anne-Marie Woodward, used the method to research drug addiction (32). Woodward used the images from Larry Clark's 'Tulsa' to interview three recovering drug addicts from Atlanta, Georgia. Similar to Woodward's study, my study would pull from previous depictions of BGLOs to gather information about the viewer's own personal experiences. Woodward's experience was highlighted by her subject's discussion of a book published about the same topic over a quarter of a century ago. These discussions gave Woodward a better understanding of what to look for in her own photography. "This experience has

absolutely made me a better photographer. I am more likely now to go back to subjects and show them the pictures and talk to them about it.” (p. 40).

Another University of Missouri student, Sally Morrow (2009), studied representations of Hispanic and immigrant communities by showing subjects photo stories, which dealt with the topic in order to inform her own shooting. Using the photo elicitation method, Morrow interviewed the Lopez family, a family of illegal immigrant workers from Mexico in Postville, Iowa and learned more about the realities of working as an illegal immigrant in the United States. This idea of research to inform shooting is what my project will benefit from during the elicitation sessions. Instead of interviewing to continue negative or pre-existing assumptions, I would use the method to frame my own professional component. By showing the images to people who can identify with them I hope to pull out a few concepts for possible project topics.

Video elicitation hasn't been well explored as a research method. There may be concerns incorporating moving pictures with photo elicitation but the benefits outweigh the possible negatives of the method by allowing for presentations of topics, which may not be accessible otherwise. Because my project is about BGLOs and their members, showing relationships was an essential part of my research. Using moving pictures with the inclusion of sound was one of the only ways to properly offer these relationships for study during interviews. The little bit of literature that exists on using video in research has helped me develop a method that will add validity to the project. By conducting visual elicitation sessions (both images and video), the data will reveal which visual concepts people perceive as being most applicable to the BGLO experience.

In the *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing* by Russell Belk, researcher Shay Sayre (2006), creator of video elicitation, explains the benefit of the method, saying “the postmodern notion of combining bits of tradition with eclectic modernism led to the formation of a technique combining historical foundation with practical application” (p. 235). This method was applied to Sayre’s research using actors in a ‘talk show’ like format to simulate difficult dialogues for disaster victims. Sayre found that the method allowed for greater involvement of the participant while allowing them to identify talking about similar experiences. Sayre hired actors to produce the video. The actors were made out to simulate similar attributes of the viewer, creating a connection with the viewer so the researcher could get participants to more easily talk about their own experiences (p. 235). Sayre’s goal was to get as close as possible to convincing the viewer that what they were seeing was an accurate portrayal. Interestingly enough, Sayre’s research opened up an entire new way of soliciting information. She concluded saying that the method was successful “because of viewer comfort with intimate topics in a mediated venue...Our technique would instigate response and generate intimate self-disclosure while establishing a reliable and consistent method of data gathering” (p. 236).

The videos used in Sayre’s study were concerned with safeguarding the participants. These factors included accurate portrayals, non-leading video script, pre-testing subject preparation, private viewing, and guaranteed anonymity. Two of these factors: accurate portrayals and a non-leading script were the perfect techniques to implement during the video portion of my study.

Accurate portrayals as defined by Sayre consisted of the characters, which were selected to reflect the physical appearance, age and economic status of the couple affected. A non-leading script was defined as vignette discussions that were peculiar to the victim's circumstances where respondents were asked about their own behaviors and experiences in comparison to the actors on screen. Both justify the use of video in my study. While *School Daze* may be a fictional film, it is no different than the actors Sayre hired for her study.

The use of video is rare in any research method. It is normally reserved for the research in film studies, but in this instance, it plays a major role in the development of BGLOs representations. The precursor to all the media attention can be accredited to a director who, in his second major film, made BGLOs the subject of a motion picture. Spike Lee's 1988 film *School Daze* set the standard for media representations/stereotypes of BGLOs and stood alone as the sole media content of the genre for decades. Although it would seem this film would be suitable enough to describe Black college life, another level of representation cultivated the opportunities for stereotypes.

The collegiate population has developed stereotypes that include both individual organization characteristics and entire BGLOs characteristics. The individual personalities of BGLOs are often not only perpetuated on college campuses but have recently been the subject of films such as *School Daze*. This can be seen through the "common knowledge" of the attitudes and behaviors of different fraternities and sororities. For example, in Lee's (1988) book, *Uplift the Race: the construction of*

School Daze, actress Tisha Campbell describes the stereotypical visual image of a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. as a young woman who has a dark complexion, natural hair and pronounced African features (p. 95). The holistic views of BGLOs yield more detrimental stereotypes. Therefore, the use of video can be useful in identifying some of these stereotypes in ways that I can't show with still images.

A study by G Broll, H Hussmann, E Rukzio, R Wimmer (2007) used video clips to elicit focus group discussions. The videos were created by students to represent core ideas of the project and were then used to introduce the project to focus groups. Their decisions to use video were based primarily on what they called *realistic representation*. They found it important to choose very concrete scenarios that mapped out their ideas. They self-produced these videos in order to bring up dialogue about what the focus group saw. These types of methods not only work well with including video stimulus, but they also confirm that proper use of video, no matter how journalistic or manufactured in nature, can allow the viewers to guide valuable dialogue. This production used to create the video the authors used for their study is no different than Lee's presentation of Black college life in *School Daze*. I can justify a use of visual elicitation in my organization of the project.

The idea to use images from a specific topic while photographing that topic is something inspired by Smith and Whitney (2002). Through the elicitation this study hopes to find which visual elements of BGLOs representation are perceived as accurate in hopes to authenticate my professional projects. Some of the main concepts that will be introduced via still images will fall under two of my four concepts:

service and *performance*. The other two concepts: *hazing*, *elitism*, and a little of *performance* are all better represented through the video portion of the research. The hope is that the visual elicitation method allows people to talk about their experiences personally and otherwise to identify which concepts may have the most stereotypes associated with them. I acknowledge that using video holds a lot of information that Lee personally frames through his lens; there are certain aspects of BGLO culture that I cannot show images of without incriminating people. This is one of the main reasons using *School Daze* warrants serious consideration, as images of hazing are sensitive and now illegal.

The scenes I chose were based off the following criteria: a scene that describes an otherwise non-detectable sense of awareness, the video clip adds to the visual representation to give the viewer a feel of what is going on, and that the clip helps explain relationships between characters. All clips should not exceed 4 minutes in total length. In general, both images and video will have to be clear representations of my criteria and have to be reflective of activities the viewer will identify with (ie. Using a picture of someone getting a paddle swung on him as opposed to seeing someone who looks like they are pledging).

This method will help encourage discussion about the specifics of visual representation and authenticity of the images associated with BGLOs. To find a more accurate way to represent these groups is the goal of my research method, and through the participation of the community one would find more information about this rare area of research. It is the hope of this project to find the types of visual perceptions of BGLOs, to find limitations and also discover more questions to be

answered in future research. The interpretation of films like *School Daze* significantly alters audience perception.

Rocchio (2000) recognizes that the film's potential for misreading is important because without proper study, "the film itself can function to reinforce the very system of representation it is trying to dismantle" (p. 151). How the audience interprets these messages is important when looking at the potential effects. In essence, since cultivation suggests representations become perceived norms, the attitudes and behaviors towards these norms can be manifested in everything from participation to financial reinforcement.

A large portion of the response has to deal with the current media portrayal of these organizations and how people react based on those images. With this in mind, the reaction dictates the plausibility that more content will support the current discourse as long as it falls in line with current reinforced media portrayal. This alliance subjects itself to a dangerous legacy-ending theoretical question: does the current media portrayal of BGLOs become the exemplar for future content, thus leading to mis-interpretation of the basic BGLO purpose? This question will not be specifically addressed in the research but it is an important reminder of the effects of images on cultural realities. How the audience perceives these organizations dictates what affect the image of BGLOs relevancy will have to confront in coming years in order to answer the question: Are Black Greeks still relevant today?

Additionally, I did not spend much time dealing with questions of authenticity as I previously thought. The idea that cultivation can be more/less effective through

credential is an area of exploration that I think warrants serious consideration. It is something I would like to study in the future.

What I Did / Elicitation Materials

This research analyzes portrayals of BGLOs in both print and video and the effects these portrayals have on students' perception, knowledge and understanding of BGLO culture. Utilizing visual elicitation methodology, this project reports responses from eight students; four Greek and four non-Greek. These eight student's commented on how they believe BGLOs are portrayed in popular media and more specifically tried to identify stereotypes and their affect on the culture. In an effort to further develop theoretical framework on the correlation between perceived norms and cultivation and to discover where some gaps in research may exist, my research attempts to answer the following question:

How do media representations perpetuate stereotypes of BGLOs among college-aged students?

Some scholars would question using popular media in a journalistic qualitative study, mainly because of the use of fabricated content. Kimbrough points out that popular media have had the biggest influence on the visibility of BGLO culture (p.56). In 1988, Columbia Pictures released the first feature film about Black college life in Spike Lee's *School Daze*. The film follows a group of fraternity and sorority members who clash with other students at a fictional Mission College, a Historically Black College,

during homecoming weekend. Inspired by Lee's own college experience, the film uses musical influences to touch upon issues of race, skin tone bias and political activism. For almost 20 years, Lee's film served as the only movie where BGLO characters drove the main plot. Other television shows and films followed, but *School Daze* was the example that many looked to for representation of BGLOs, and therefore it has been considered a valuable cultural artifact for study (Jones, 2007). Using video in visual elicitation methodology isn't met without some criticisms, but it provides a more detailed and specific look at attitudes and behaviors that otherwise may not be photographed without contemporary restrictions.

Through my methodology, research and analysis, this project evaluates four important questions in an attempt to come to a solid conclusion of the research question above. These questions are:

- 1) How do college students learn about BGLOs?
- 2) What stereotypes do students identify in media portrayals of BGLOs?
- 3) Do stereotypes portrayed in the media have any influence on how people BGLOs act in reality?
- 4) What images that are important to the representation of BGLOs are missing?

Typical interviews include information about how the respondents feel about particular images/video clips, whether or not the media gives a greater understanding of BGLO culture and documents what the viewer identifies about what is happening in

the photographs and who is involved. Through their personal experiences, I hope to find some areas of improvement for journalist to understand how perceived norms dictate the development of stereotypes.

Ideally, this project seeks to be a model of how to document a young and challenging culture such as BGLOs, while also striving to develop a better understanding and appreciation for a sub-history that is essential to American history. I plan to pursue this visual project after graduation in hopes of publishing a book or long-term documentary film and coffee table book.

Most images used in the elicitation come directly from the Beyond This Place © Project, which show contemporary scenes of Black Greek life. These images were taken over a two-year period. Other images that were used include images from *The Bison* yearbook of Howard University (**Figures 2,14, 20.**), a flyer from a 1988 campus party (**Figure 6**) and an image from a pre-1989 that demonstrate taking 'wood' (**Figure 8**). Mostly, the idea behind using past images is to showcase some aspects of Greek life that cant be shown today.

Additionally, **Figure 21** through **Figure 25** all are stills that come from the movie *School Daze*. In the case of these images, they represent a single frame of what are no more than 4-minute clips. These clips are included in the media folder included (Folder name is Elicitation_Figure_21-24). The following outlines the structure of how I conducted the visual elicitation process:

- 1) I gathered a selection of 25-40 images from the professional component and narrowed the elicitation images to a group of 20. The reason I choose 20 images

was to leave more time to incorporate the video. In this effort, the goal was to spend 30 minutes on images and another 30 on video clips for an hour-long interview. Although most of the interviews ran over, a majority of people found the video portion of the visual elicitation extremely helpful to talk about current issues.

- 2) The eight volunteers viewed the 20 images (with no caption information) and 5 videos on a projector screen and were instructed to speak freely about what they saw in the images as well as speak about if the images brought any stories, memories, or thought to mind. I controlled the pace of the presentation, which wasn't restricted by time, in order to allow participants to speak freely and as long as they wanted about the media presented.
- 3) Respondents were then asked research questions in a very fluid way during the course of the conversation.
- 4) During the course of the interview I also asked several questions. These included:
 - a. In a few words could you explain or tell me what Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) are?
 - b. Give a brief description of your first experience with a BGLO or a member of one.
 - c. Are there any images that you feel are missing?
 - d. Are these pictures/video clips accurate of your own experience with Black Greeks?

This type of research is important to photographers because of the discourse surrounding the power in representing or stereotyping a particular culture. I wanted to make sure that I was not forgetting or worse omitting images that people thought were important to the culture. By mixing up the types of media, I found the diversity in topics and subject matter to be inclusive to the culture I was trying to document.

The images used in this elicitation study were collected from my own personal work, donated images from alumni members and also include historical images. I presented the images in a slide show view using Photo Mechanic on my computer; as a result, no caption information was given to participants. I believe this helped keep our dialogue more organic and free flowing. Images used for the elicitation are included in the media folder with captions and figure identification numbers (File is named 5_Elicitation_images.pdf).

Relevancy: Defining Representation & Stereotyping

Media spans broadly across television, computers, and even personal electronic devices and can be defined in many different ways. There is much power in this form of communication as it defines the terms of the reality of people, places, and experiences that will be consumed by a variety of viewers who may be unfamiliar with the content. The need to separately define both media representation and media stereotyping is important because both have a profound impact on our understanding of the world.

Although representation does draw off of stereotypes in order to project a recognizable image, it is not limited to stereotyping. The innate distinction between

media representation and media stereotyping is often lost through the homogenization of characteristics in both particular concepts. Campbell, Herskovits, Segall (1966) found in a study of social perspective that often times, the only groups who can decipher these analogous characteristics are the ones who share the habitus and cultural literacy of that particular group. This allows the representations and stereotypes to be decoded based on a person's cultural history and trajectories, which help shape one's orientation to the world. Essentially, this means the idea that cultural understanding combats some stereotypes validity.

Visual culture researchers Schirato and Webb (2004) likened this distinction to what allows photographers to read more into an image versus the ordinary viewer who is used to 'seeing naively' (p. 18). In other words, Black people can watch a film with Black characters and decipher that a particular event or trait is not exclusive to the Black experience, but may be inclusive to the American, capitalistic, or socio-economic experience and so forth. Sometimes in mass media cultures get lost in the mix. A majority of the content generated by media is susceptible to be based in stereotypes as opposed to fact.

Further clarification of these terms may help future journalist's understand the repercussions to the reinforcement and creation of stereotypes. The opportunity to grow this definition in journalism can best be illustrated with another form of popular media. The origins of the challenge with mixing representation and stereotyping have existed since the beginning of film; the two have been imbedded within denoting Black culture visually. Through early and contemporary representations of film many

scholars such as Smith (1997) struggle to define Black culture without this blend of discourse that both represents and stereotypes its image (p. 111).

The first Black character in American film was introduced in 1903. Uncle Tom was not a role played by a Black man, but was instead acted out by a Caucasian man made up in dark makeup called blackface. Early film industry performances continued the trend, using the representations of dark skin to reinforce the stereotypical behavior of Black people. Bogle (1989) studied the character types resulting from the trendsetting film, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which resulted in a short range of personalities. These included the coon, the tragic mulatto, the mammy, and the brutal black buck, which still exist in guises that camouflage these familiar types today (p. 24). The powerful associations with these characters on film at the beginning of the commercial film era in the 1900s are an undeniable source for many of the stereotypes that exist in the Black community today. Bogle's definition of media representation is synonymous with the stereotyping of Black culture.

Wallace (2004), on the other hand, suggests that the use of stereotypes is a trend that is inherent in the structure of Hollywood efforts to represent Black culture (p. 131). Journalism also pulls from the same definitions, taking no time to justify the use of framing which elicits readers/viewer reactions. Photojournalists make these choices everyday. What lens type they use, the angle in which they take the photograph and even the exposure level they deem appropriate are all factors in how the potential audience will consume information about the subject. Therefore, it is important to define representation, as it is an essential piece of the editorial experience.

The majority of definitions of the term *representation* yield statements about presentation of a visual idea that encompasses truth. Definitions of the term *stereotypes* suggest they are a part of media representations, which depict an instant generalization about an entire group of people. It seems that stereotyping cannot exist without a portion of the characteristics having to deal with some type of truthful recognizable quality. This need to identify with said attributes is supported by researchers like Coleman (2002). In Say It Loud, Coleman clearly states that consumers of media turn to these representations in order to respond appropriately (p. 263). The idea of media consumer recognition drives the use of stereotypes in the image-based viewing Coleman explains through Lembo's philosophy.

Further study on the clarity of media representation and media stereotypes is needed to better understand and portray aspects of Black culture, but in the case of my research the definitions and model as described above work well. In other words, media representation is the umbrella under which media stereotypes are allowed to exist. These stereotypes and representations help consumers of media identify specific groups who otherwise might not be identifiable. Such is the case for members of Black Greek Letter Organizations. On the surface one could not discern who is a member of a BGLO and who is not. Therefore, the visual cues that exist rarely go beyond a set of behavioral representations (true to a certain degree) and stereotypes that generally falsify the organization's intended purpose. Journalism needs to be able to define media based on specific characteristics of a situation and not generalizations. An interesting showcase of lack of definition of these two concepts can be found in the "nappy headed hos" remark by media personality Don Imus (Faber, 2007).

On the April 4, 2007, edition of MSNBC's *Imus in the Morning*, host Don Imus referred to the Rutgers University women's basketball team as "nappy-headed hos" immediately after the show's executive producer, Bernard McGuirk, called the team "hard-core hos." Rutgers University, who was playing the University of Tennessee for the NCAA Women's Basketball Championship, had several Black players on their team who Imus and his radio co-host thought were 'rough' looking. Imus's remarks caused uproar in the Black community, which called for his temporary removal from the airwaves. Imus's construction of reality wasn't as unconceivable as one could argue.

During his commentary Imus expressed his own blending of representation/stereotyping lines when he called the women of the Rutgers basketball program "nappy headed hos". He then cited his understandings as coming from Spike Lee, who used the color debate within the Black community through satirical conflict between the jigaboos (dark completion with natural hair) versus the wannabees (light skinned with processed hair) in his film *School Daze*. Imus's example serves as a rallying point for all of journalism. The woman of Rutgers weren't 'like' the nappy head jigaboos from *School Daze*, they 'were' nappy head hos despite their own personal accomplishments simply because of how they looked. This relationship pulls back the idea of Mander's internal image concept. Imus later apologized for his comments and was eventually fired from CBS.

Many implications come from how media portrays a certain group of people. Unfortunately, the Black community has suffered at disproportionate amounts because of it. From the earliest representations of Black people in film, audiences were

cultivating attitudes and prejudices toward Black people in media. If journalism should be “tolerant but never careless, self-controlled, patient, always respectful of its readers but always unafraid, is quickly indignant at injustice;...” (Williams) then we must take the time to acknowledge the power of misrepresentation of other cultural groups and how it affects peoples’ perceptions. Newspaper photographers, who face increasingly shrinking print space and resources, have to communicate messages quickly. If they are faced with the decision to photograph a step show or a community service event, many factors including timing, access and context play a role. These decisions in the real world affect how people think internally about hundreds of years of historical achievement and significant contributions to the political, social and educational development of Black America. For me the challenge was to better represent the culture by bringing emphasis to these little explored concepts.

Results

Conducting visual elicitation was most helpful as I learned a lot about how the students saw the community from both new and informed eyes. Although I would be considered an insider to this culture, the idea of how these representations effect the BGLO is important to note because as I continue with my visual project the need to identify topics rarely seen in media (or issues I didn’t recognize as being of value) will help bring a holistic approach to the project.

The first question that yielded interesting results is the most basic. Asking how they were introduced to BGLOs or their members is important. Often as a journalist it is vital to have an idea of what one is documenting. The question of definition may be a

tough one to answer for a photographer who has an hour to tell a story, but it is something that most have to do. In this case, the question: In a few words could you explain or tell me what Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) are? was one of the most difficult for the respondents to answer. Out of 8 respondents, I received 8 different responses. Some included the words business, social network, brotherhood, sisterhood, service, etc. Kadijia Tejan gave the most direct response stating that, "BGLOs exist to foster community and brotherhood and sisterhood on college campuses. I believe that their purpose and function changed over time to include uplift, service as well as prosperity." Respondents did agree that one main purpose of BGLOs is to uplift the community and affect positive change.

Beginning the heart of elicitation dialogue was when students were asked about their first experiences with BGLOs or a member of one. **Figure 10** seemed to elicit the response leading the respondents into their first experience. Interestingly enough, 5 of the respondents have contact with a member of a BGLO before they got to college, with 4 of them having immediate family members (father, mother and aunt) which brought about interesting stories on their first encounters with the organizations. One respondent, Justin McCain could vividly recall his experiences:

My first experience was when I was about 3 or 4. I am something that is called a legacy. A legacy is someone who has a family member, brother sister, mother, father aunt, etc. and they're a member of an organization that you are aspiring to join. I was about 3 and I went to this picnic and I didn't know what was going on, I just remember a whole lot of guys in red and they were all really happy and cool with my dad. They would tell me 'this was going to be me' one

day and that's what I remember about it. I had no idea what was going on, I had no idea this was a fraternity, It was just these guys and they had canes.

McCain's experience is quite typical of the Black college student. Most students will know someone who is a member of an organization by the time they're a freshman in college if family or a friend hasn't already introduced them to the culture. With approximately 810,000 people initiated into a Divine Nine Sorority and 670,000 people initiated into fraternities, BGLO members make up less than 5% of the total Black population in the United States, not counting membership of varying ethnic heritages. In contrast, Tejan had no family members who were Greek, but a co-worker of her father introduced her to "Delta Academy" a summer program for young girls (11-14) that teach life skills, etiquette and professional skills.

For others like Brittany Banks, the road to interest of BGLOs can be a little disjointed and discouraging:

Growing up my Mom never talked about greekdom it just wasn't a conversation that really came up. My Dad called being Greek the 'Buy A Friend' program and so it was a joke. I don't think I really fed into it, but he would always call it the 'Buy A Friend' program. Everyone in his family is Greek. Most of the women on my Dad's side are Deltas, and his father and his brother are Alphas. His entire stepfathers family are Qs (Omegas) so everyone is Greek, but he never really saw the point of it. I guess if you really were to sit down and see what the organizations do, of course there would be benefit in it, but it was a joke he would always say it was a buy a friend program.

Eventually, Banks started doing her research on Sorority life. But instead of BGLOs she first researched Pan Hellenic organizations:

“I’m going to be quite honest and I don’t tell anybody this, but I, before coming to college and before coming to Mizzou I went to an all white high school. A majority of my friends were white. When I decided to come to Mizzou I was really thinking about joining a PHA (Pan-Hellenic Council). One of the girls who was interning at my moms hospital for the summer was in a PHA here and she really took the initiative to get my number, call me, ask me if I was interested in rushing, you know all that stuff before I even came to college. She tried to explain what it was about and told me if I had any questions she was there. I’m thinking that’s probably not something they do for African Americans, but I’m thinking because of where I went to high school and her knowing my mom and whatnot is why she took that initiative In thinking that there is a great possibility that I may be interested in a PHA. I remember sitting down with my dad at breakfast the summer before I came to school and telling him that I was thinking about joining a white sorority.

Banks interest with the PHA organizations was something she took to her father for consideration:

He told me to pump the brakes! His thing was he said that he didn’t have an issue joining a White sorority but he said that he wanted to make sure that I was making the right decision and he said while he was here (MIZZOU) at Law School the Black girl who tried to join a White sorority got denied because she

was Black and that she tried to join a Black sorority and they didn't take her because they were like "Were just a backup for you. Why would we take you?"

Coming back to Mizzou my freshman year is when I started seeing more of what the White organizations symbolized and seeing more of what the Black organizations symbolized. That's when I started thinking; maybe I should start looking to see if this is something that is really for me. So I did research on all the sororities of the Divine Nine and basically was trying to see if I could make a decision for me because I knew it was one of those things that I knew no one in my family was paying for this and it's a buttload of money and then also these would be letters that I would wear on my back for the rest of my life.

This is an organization I would be a member of for the rest of my life. This is an organization that I would be paying money to, a significant amount of money to, every year for the rest of my life, so since this was all stuff I was getting myself into, I wanted to make sure I was doing it for me and not for anyone else.

Banks experience symbolizes the majority of popular media representation of BGLO culture. There is a research period that most people go through to figure out if joining one of these organizations is for them. Most students are not introduced to Black Greek Letter Organizations through traditional University rush activities. In my case, most of the respondents were introduced to BGLOs through a personal experience.

Which is not cause for too much concern because the non-Greek people still are exposed to the same stimuli. Unlike the method of introduction through media, these intimate experiences seemed to make an everlasting impression as the students could recall details such as the organization, the colors, and the calls (sounds) from these experiences. So even if the respondent didn't get introduced to BGLOs directly, they still explored the possibility of membership with little knowledge of the organizations. Most respondents agreed that once they got to campus their exposure to BGLOs increased tremendously. The types of exposure most of these students encountered first on campus were at some type of social event programming.

Every year at the University of Missouri the Legion of Black Collegians (Black Student Government) along with the National Pan Hellenic Council (NPHC) host a welcome back barbecue for new and returning students in which many students are exposed to members of Black Greek life. Many times at this event, the members of the NPHC will step for students and introduce themselves as a resource for new students. For a student with no previous experience with the culture, stereotypes could potentially dominate their first interactions with the culture. At such step shows/events, pageantry and showmanship is a powerful tool that helps audience members identify the differences among the different Fraternity and Sorority organizations. Many of these stereotypes origins are rooted in the iconography of each group but for someone not familiar with the culture, people turn to physical characteristics that are associated with particular groups.

Figure 6 and Figure 8 inspired discussions of stereotypes. Most respondents began talking specifically about stereotypes regarding physical characteristics when

these two images came across the screen. Specifically, when **Figure 6** came across, people responded almost identically. LySaundra Campbell said:

The AKA cartoon girl is kind of interesting because she looks like she is the prettiest one of the all. Its one of the stereotypes of AKAs, is that all of them are pretty. Every BGLOs have a stereotype. The Alphas are the nerdy guys, the Kappas are the pretty boys, the Ques are the dirty dogs and they just like to party, the Sigmas are just the leftovers of other organizations. The AKAs are pretty, supposedly light skinned. I've heard of the brown paper bag test.

As respondents continued about stereotypes, I wondered about the common trend of the 'paper bag test'. The test kept coming up in the conversation about stereotypes that played off of two organizations in particular. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (AKA) and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. (DST). The paper bag test was explained through Bailey Anderson's identification of stereotypes:

I know that the women of Alpha Kappa Alpha are known to be boushee or siddity or light skinned. There is a 'theory' of the brown paper bag ideology where if you were darker than a brown paper bag you weren't going to be in the sorority. The other big stereotype is that they only accept beautiful women and perpetuate the stereotype of beauty instead of service or opposed to what they actually stand for. The Deltas, I suppose were known as the darker girls, the chill and down to earth girls. They are known for being more vocal and a little more hood women.

Bailey's response opened the wide door of self-fulfillment of BGLO stereotypes. The physical stereotypes associated with BGLOs seem to have a dominant effect on their membership. So much so that even members who don't themselves fit the stereotypical 'look' for certain organizations still question the 'typical' looking member. Banks, a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., gave an example while describing some physical stereotypes previously explored in Spike Lee's *School Daze*:

Zetas I feel have a negative stereotype. Stereotypically, I think people make correlations with them eating a lot, being larger, people will joke around. I'm guilty of it too, last night I was talking to my LS, and she was talking about this girl who grew up with her in Edwardsville, and this girl is absolutely gorgeous. And she's a Zeta and she just crossed this semester and we were both like why would you become a Zeta? Why? She didn't even look like a Zeta. But that brings forth the question, "What does a Zeta look like". But its more of saying that Zetas here are not pretty, but its more of saying, stereotypically because of all the different stereotypes that we put in our heads over the years you know someone who is model type, you know, why would she become a Zeta. Even with us being Greek and knowing the real reasons behind being Greek, and the fact that we cherish what our organizations do and the founding principles, its still in our minds. We spent 5 minutes talking about why this girl became a Zeta.

Even someone who is more aware and knowledgeable about what it takes for one to become a member of an organization is puzzled when stereotypes are met with reality. Banks, along with all members of the Black Greek community, know that one

does not join an organization just because of how they look. Just as Klosterman's 13-years of playing basketball didn't change the type of internal image he saw when asked about the sport. This state of confusion and expectation is the main subject of my self-analysis. Do people fall into the stereotypes because it's expected of them? And if so, when does the factor, like skin color, stop being a stereotype? The scene in **Figure 24** deals with this directly as a group of Gamma Rays (referred to as the Wannabees) and another group of students (referred to as the Jigaboos) go back and forth chanting insults at each other at a step show. The stereotypes reinforced in this scene and another musical scene in the movie come directly from Director Spike Lee's experiences at Morehouse College observing members of Alpha Kappa Alpha and Delta Sigma Theta. Ultimately, respondents cite this conflict of physical characteristics as one of the greatest contributors to visual Black Greek culture ever in film or otherwise. Anderson and Banks' description of the differences between the two groups skin tone moved the conversation into the video realm where respondents identified another huge stereotype of BGLOs: elitism.

In **Figure 21**, Dap, played by Laurence Fishburne confronts the Dean of Gamma Phi Gamma's pledge class, played by Giancarlo Esposito, to demand his cousin (Half Pint) is made a member immediately. What follows is a tough response from Dean Julian. In conjunction with **Figure 21**, **Figure 24** also paints a picture of that fact. Most respondents remember this scene from *School Daze*, and spoke about how the scene was extremely accurate in their experiences with members of BGLOs.

Marcus Ferguson believes the stereotype is so strong that it often influences the attitude of the members involved in the organization:

This is the stereotypical asshole Greek. The one that is like 'I'm Greek, I'm better than you because you're not.'" There are a few people that are like that. I've met some that are like that. I know some that were the most humble people but then they crossed and then the girls flock or the guys flock and then they get this whole persona of what their stereotype is and they become it and they live the stereotype because that's what they've been told they are. Not necessarily by the organization but by the students, the people. If people tell you enough, you can believe it so he becomes that!

Ferguson's response begins to address both the second and third research questions for the project. In one statement, Ferguson suggest the stereotypes of BGLOs give a sense of elitism to the group while making them 'change' to become more like the group identity associated with them. Most of the respondents agreed. Tiio Watson stated:

When you hear stuff like this, it turns you off to Greek life. Why would someone want to be a part of that? It just reinforces the stereotype that Greeks are a group of people who are more concerned about petty things than real work.

I thought the non-Greek respondents would be different than the Greek respondents responses, but surprisingly, they were eerily similar. McCain talked about his thoughts of what stereotype exist in general media coverage:

Are there stereotypes of Black Greek life? In my opinion yes. I think that when you join an organization, there are certain expectations and there are certain stereotypes that you are expected to hold. If you are a member of Kappa Alpha Psi, you are expected to become a pretty boy who gets all the girls. If you are an Alpha man you are expected to be distinguished. If you're an Omega man, you're expected to be someone who isn't afraid to be loud or rambunctious. If you are a member of AKA, you're supposed to be pretty all of the time. If you're a Delta, you're considered a Diva. Now is that true? In some cases yes. Is it true all of the time? No.

I found this perspective to be extremely fascinating. It would seem as if the ideas of assuming the role of a stereotype, whether positive or negative, is the basis of group identity and authenticity. It brought about an interesting question about group identity and its role in perpetuated stereotypes, a topic to be explored more in my project and a future area of study. Additionally, I questioned the origin of the stereotypes McCain talks about. Who generated these stereotypes? It is evident that through media such as *School Daze* that these attitudes can be perpetuated. McCain goes on to say that individuals in BGLOs are considered as a responsible group:

When you walk outside, you represent your organization. So let's say a member of 'blank' organization walks outside and hits a baby. All members of the organization are not baby hitters so in that same context, if I have a member of my organization who has sex with a girl, no all Kappas have sex with all the girls? Or if someone in the organization smokes weed, then all the members of the organization are weed heads? No. So it just goes to show you that when

you are a member of an organization, you are one or you are considered as one. Everything that you do, people are looking at and that affected me personally because there may be an event and it will shine positively or negatively based on how it is publically viewed.

Once this clip was shown, many respondents gave their own personal accounts of this type of confrontation. Campbell specifically cited that “This scene in *School Daze* is representative of what happens at Mizzou.” To place this topic in it’s proper context, it can be argued that the founding members of these organizations had a certain amount of privilege, being able to attend institutions of higher learning in the early 1900s when Jim Crow and racist attitudes wouldn’t allow Black people to prosper academically. Students still looked to this interaction as a measure of their own experiences in dealing with Greek life. While these attitudes don’t perpetuate themselves across the board, there is one stereotype that BGLOs and their leadership fight against every day: pledging.

Perhaps the most damaging stereotype of Black Greek culture is the abuse of the intake process. All respondents had a lot to say about intake but none of them mentioned that pledging is not exclusive to the Black Greek community. Nuwer (2001) has documented the history of hazing tracing its origins all the way back to 387 B.C. (p. 92). His researched shows that hazing is a behavior that didn’t originate with fraternities at all. In fact, the practice began in America with Harvard College students in 1657 (p. 100). A part of Nuwer’s definition of hazing, used here to conceptualize the idea as it relates to BGLOs, is: when a group perceived to have power over a newcomer requires someone to participate in intimidation, engage in rough rituals

involving physical force, suffer sleep deprivation, or being asked to perform task under pressures of members (p. 35-37). All the participants understood this definition of hazing and eventually pointed to *School Daze* as their single most source confirming their perceived notions of what initiation would be like. Above any other stereotype, this is the one most talked about in the Black Greek community. While many know that hazing is illegal in the U.S. many still do not recognize the realities surrounding the intake process. **Figure 2, Figure 8 and Figure 23** received the strongest reactions from respondents. **Figure 23** is the single clip that justifies my using video in this elicitation study. The fact that the physical act of hazing is illegal is grounds for using this video that emulates the pledge process. While many people speculate about what intake entails for BGLOs, this was one of the first public displays of the pledge process in media. I was also able to get my hands on an old picture from the time that pledging was legal in **Figure 8**. This photograph gave a glimpse into the pledge process but was still a long way from the representation I knew most had gotten through *School Daze* and other media. **Figure 23** is one of two pledge scenes in *School Daze*. In this scene the pledges of Gamma Phi Gamma fail to complete a task. The Dean of Pledges, Julian (Big Brother Almighty) is displeased and sentences them to punishment by having them turn around and get paddled. In this scene we see the part of pledging that has worried people for many years. The general consensus from the respondents is that these images are more powerful than any other.

Campbell illustrated the difference between the fictional representations and the real life discourse surrounding pledging and hazing:

There was a documentary that I saw on TV about hazing. Its kind weird when you hear about it because all the Greek organizations I know say 'We're a non-hazing organization' and then you hear all of this stuff.

With School Daze, it's a little more comical. In School Daze, nobody gets sent to the hospital. There have been instances where people have lost their lives. So if its shown in a movie, people don't get it that no one ends up in the hospital.

They get hit, but there are no bruises. When people see that, they do it but have real consequences.

Representation of the intake process has been the source of most BGLO culture controversy. Leadership has maintained a strict stance against pledging. Many States have laws against the practice and enforce policies preventing pledging. Regardless, every year there are stories about pledging gone wrong in the news media; someone gets hurt and, unfortunately in some cases, some are killed. Many believe the culture of pledging is too deeply rooted in BGLO to be removed without recourse. But for some the stereotyping of pledging can be harmful to organizations that desire more undergraduate participation in local chapters. Some students are discouraged with the thought of pledging and therefore never pursue an organization that could be crucial to their academic and social development. Banks confrontation with the stereotype was personally depleting. Her thoughts are that media like School Daze makes it harder to fight the stereotype:

Yes, it does. It enforces those stereotypes that my parents were worried about when I said I wanted to become a member of my organization. My mom

actually told me I thought you were smarter than that. She literally had me in tears talking about how disappointed she was in me cuz she thought I was smarter than that. But not all organizations do that, and not organizations that do that stuff do that to that extreme. I feel as though the underground process should create growth and you should take positive things from it. I don't see how beating someone can make a positive experience. If people choose to go through an underground process there's a possibility where it can be done where a person grows from it and doesn't have to go through physical abuse to grow.

The worry her parents felt is similar what most students feel plagues the organizations. Banks goes on to explain why this issue was important in the creation of a negative stereotype regarding the usefulness of BGLOs:

I think that's why sometimes our organizations lose so much respect from people is because they assume everyone walking around wearing our letters had to get beat to wear our letters and that's how you join our sisterhood is because we allowed someone beat us.

No matter the dialogue about BGLOs, the conversation of pledging will always come up. The stereotype of pledging is acknowledged by all of the respondents. Interestingly enough, people felt the response to pledging is exclusive to the aspirants' desires to want to become associated with a group they don't quite understand. In other words, many believe that aspirants of organizations submit themselves to the pledge process

in order to conform to the group identity of the organization. McCain felt that those films promoted similar trajectories as Banks on the issue:

The stereotype is that if you want to be a Black Greek, I have to get my ass beat. This [clip] doesn't say what brotherhood you're going to learn, it doesn't talk about networking in the organization, it doesn't talk about being built up. So in an hour you've successfully convinced me that in order to wear three letters I have to take a certain amount of pain and prove I can take the pain, and people do it. Every year. When I was younger, I thought it was dumb. My thought was why would you do that. I didn't understand why.

Other respondent's reflections mirrored McCain's pretty similarly. The idea that these stereotypes not only affect the organizations themselves but also the perception of these organizations by the general public was an interesting concept.

Of all the images that were presented, these received the most dialogue among participants. For many **Figure 8** was a rare view into pledging culture. The photograph's forwardness caught many off guard. Some gasped when the image came on screen. Although the two men could simply be posing, it is understood that this certain pose represents the paddle taking position, often called the 'cut'. The question: Do you think stereotypes portrayed in the media influence how people interact with BGLOs in reality? Was brought up several times in the dialogue about **Figure 8** and **Figure 23**. Another type of stereotype of membership made its way into the discussion when participants watched **Figure 22**.

The scene places Dap and his girl friend Rachel (played by Kyme) in Daps dorm room bed. During the nighttime conversation, Rachel reveals to Dap that she wants to

pledge Delta Sigma Theta next semester. Dap goes nuts. The scene is capitalized with Dap's words "*They* change people." The respondents thought this scene was one of the most prominent in the Spike Lee film. Gerald McLemore responded to the scene:

This is brutal. I mean, a lot of people think that Greek life changes them and it kinda does. I mean, the thing is that things change when you're Greek, the people you come in with are you brothers. It's a family mentality. You dedicate time and energy to help your family. Its not like you don't have time for other people but its hard when you can't explain that the frat is another commitment. It's not a luxury at all. I will say though that people do allow their letters to give them a chance to become a whole different person.

Most respondents shared McLemore's viewpoint. The acceptance of group personality traits was an interesting conversation to have with my subjects. In my personal experience, many people who I knew had become Greek had to deal with the pressures of maintaining expectations. I even had to deal with it at one point. Trying to find a balance between school, work, friends, family, Fraternity and social was a tough job. This challenge can sometimes but misinterpreted by others outside the culture, adding to the stereotype of elitism. Ferguson added:

People do change. But I wouldn't say for the worst. I would say that most people don't understand that. When you're online with these people and who all become brothers or sisters then you have this bond with them, you do get attached to them, you stay stay around them. Some people do change. Some people never want to talk to their old friends again because they feel like they're above. Some people, its not that way but it's more of a 'these are my brothers'

type of attitude. If your family was on campus, you would probably hang out with them a lot, so because their family is around they're around them. Some people feel abandoned, especially non-greek people. But its because greeks hang out with other Greeks and have other obligations so they cant just kick it with everyone, all the time.

All the participants agreed that Greek life changes people. Surprisingly, not much resistance was offered towards the point. Many cited multiple experiences of having friends who, after they crossed, changed their dress, overall appearance, and attitude for the worst or better. Regardless of whom you talk to about the touchy subject, it's apparent that there is a mental transition after being initiated in a Fraternity or Sorority.

With my last research question, I hoped to identify some areas with opportunities for stories. Moving forward, I will use this input to focus stories to help provide a well-rounded presentation of my work. When asked the question: what was missing from the photos in the elicitation, respondents immediately pointed to the service of Black Greeks as a vital piece missing from the media's perspective.

Anderson highlighted multiple examples of coverage that is lacking from the culture:

We don't see the unity and fellowship. We don't see the picnics or the parks or the mentors or we don't see how these men and women help their communities. We don't see that people in these organizations founded whole programs to aid with education or to help raise scholarships. Man, I don't think I have ever heard anything on the news about one of these Greek scholarships. Never.

We don't get to see the good side or the proactive side or them standing on their foundation. All we hear about is hazing and stepping. The media goes with that. As leaders in the African American community, if everyone was about unity and if everyone who ever joined a BGLO was talking about ending Black on Black violence and there was some national campaign for issues we have as a culture, how different could our society be?

Many of the respondents felt the same way about the last question but I also asked them to identify the images that felt most close their experiences with BGLOs. The results kind of shocked me because 7 of the 8 all picked **Figure 1, Figure 5, Figure 10 and Figure 16** which all have been photographed at some type of performance.

Exactly what they said they saw too much of.

Using visual elicitation for this project has been extremely helpful. Images I used from campuses around the United States helped spark some dialogue about the topics at hand. In addition, in some images, the respondents knew a subject in the photographs giving them a closer understanding of the image and thus providing more informed dialogue. While they were not read caption information, I was not asked by anyone about what was going on in the pictures. Many already knew what was happening and even commented about remembering some of the events that I took the photographs at. I think many of the respondents could appreciate the documentary style of images presented. It seemed to draw them in more because they were looking at real life. Posed images would have taken away from the natural interaction that exists.

Most of the images are of people doing 'stuff' which was one of my biggest criticisms of this collection of images. I didn't leave room for moments and I don't have too many images with interaction in them. This will be something I would focus on in the future. Showing the relationship between members and between members and their communities. What the images did allow me to do was prepare myself for the professional component when I was coming up with story ideas.

I think the fact that the respondents were directly related to the culture provided a level of understanding that the naïve seer would not get right away. As the photographer, we always have to be in consideration of our audience so it was a bonus that I could choose my own audience using photo elicitation. This helped promote a more insightful dialogue. This method proves extremely useful because it introduces people to the photographer's goals for the project. More importantly the method helps educate the photographer before he/she decides what to shoot during a long-term project.

As I continue this research I would like to interview Spike Lee and ask about his interpretations of the film *School Daze*. Using photo elicitation on the creator of the body of work I based my research on would probably help inform my work in a way I've never imagined. Additionally I would love to do another elicitation session with the images I shot after this research. Using this method in a long-term format I think would reveal some interesting images.

Ultimately, some of my goals for this project would be to continue to document Black Greek Culture in a long-term project form. I would love to make this a documentary film and continue building on the foundation I have had the ability to set up

over the last two years. I would also like to research more on the idea of novelty's influence on authenticity. The ideas in my original proposal mesh well together, but it would have been nice to explore the idea more. I do think that extremely limited content can alter a viewer's perception on that content. The fact that Spike Lee's film was the only media that had BGLO driving the plot was one of the only films depicting Black college life and was directed by a Black Director who attended a Historically Black College helps lend to this theory. It is something I'd love to continue to research in the future.

In conclusion, visual representations of BGLOs are a thin line that can sink the entire goodwill of this project. Even if the photographer has the best interest of a community at heart, it means nothing if the message is lost through surface images. Black Greeks themselves must define a clearer line between persona and identity to address some of the stereotypes that exist of the culture. I have often wondered if the concepts of stereotypes are unavoidable, especially in my community. At the end of the day, some stereotypes are good; like that members of BGLOs generally outperform their peers academically, have a better understanding of social and political issues and generally have higher graduation rates. In the future, my hope is that this body of work can help tell the story (maybe even inspire some) of the organizations that help assist solving larger contemporary issues.

Attached to the next page are screen grabs of the video clips used for elicitation. Additionally, the clips used for elicitation are included in the media folder inside Appendix 7 (The folder is named Elicitation_Figure_21-24).

Self Analysis

During this process it is easy to see why some photographers use the photo elicitation method to validate their own works. The ability for the method to 'judge' your images seems like an opportunity that many photographers don't get on a daily basis. While it is tempting to dive deeper into this dialogue, I had to remain steadfast on presenting the information that best explains the information that was elicited from subjects' experiences with the media, their own personal life experiences, and what stereotypes they had encountered through the visual realm.

This is by far one of the toughest challenges I have had academically since my 10th grade Pre-Calculus course. As one of the lucky students who had their idea implanted since second semester of the first year, I just knew I was going to fly through this project. I was wrong. Very wrong.

It wasn't the workload, but it was more about the process of putting together the research portion of the project that had me confused. In Project Seminar, I felt more time was spent recapping previous course work and by the time my proposal was ready, I had pieces missing. Thankfully, my committee helped me get everything approved. I could not have done this project the way I wanted to in 2008. If I had, I wouldn't be finished with my program until 2015. Breaking off a small chunk to focus on was great advice.

The fact is I really wanted to do it all this semester. I think because of that, I did way too much professional project shooting and not enough time on the research portion. It was a different experience having to critically sort through your work to complete the objective you set for yourself. This process will help me out in future

positions because as a journalist, we have to make quick judgments of what is important in a photographic situation.

Instead of making rushed judgments to 'capture the story' I will take a little bit of time to observe what's going on with a given situation. I have enjoyed working as a newspaper photographer, but I LOVE doing long-term projects. It is just so great to build relationships with subjects that are beneficial to them. The type of security that photos have in visual elicitation is fantastic. Its not about your vision, its about your subjects. That's what makes it fantastic. I started to realize mid way through my interviews that I didn't even need to put my own images in the process to try to judge whether they were authentic or not. The goal of photo elicitation is the experience the users thought behind the images and not the image itself.

During my initial interviews I mad a fatal mistake with the way I handled the interviews. Instead of having the respondent view all the images once then go back through to speak in more detail I prompted them to speak on their first time seeing the images. I am sure that that in some way took away from the elicitation process.

Another snag in my research was the reoccurring mentioning of *Stomp The Yard*, a 2007 movie bout fictional fraternities and their stepping competition (White). There are some who think the film's success in the box office give a better portrayal of Black college life and of Black Greek life, suggesting that it could be the new School Daze (Price, 2009). While the information about the movie and its representations were valid, I wasn't sure if I should include the video in my research for sake of having too many cultural artifacts. I would think the idea of talking about two motion pictures would dominate the conversation, leaving images with little to no elicitation power.

Overall, I really appreciated the scholarly piece of this work. I also learned two very important things about myself: 1) I cannot stand logging interviews and 2) I cannot stand logging interviews.

The most interesting development in this project has been the acceptance of BGLO stereotypes by the members themselves. I thought, "How can someone like Brittany Banks, who is a light skinned member of Delta Sigma Theta, question the decision of a pretty girl becoming a member of Zeta Phi Beta?" I have explored more about the concept of group identity and how it changes the perception of outside eyes. Most people I interviewed readily admitted that individuals don't all have the same physical or behavioral characteristics, but together groups of men/women in the same organization may perpetuate these stereotypes themselves as a way of identifying as different. This speaks more to the behavioral characteristics than the physical ones as there are people of all races, skin hue and sexualities that are members of all organizations. There are light skinned members of Delta Sigma Theta and darker complexioned members of Alpha Kappa Alpha. So why keep doing the things that make others think all organizational members are the same? When does the stereotype cease being stereotypes and become a characteristic? Of course there are no absolute truths of character but maybe the perception of all organizations having common characteristics is another way of promoting brotherhood and sisterhood of these organizations.

As a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated who has traveled all across the country meeting other brothers, I can honestly say that I have met members who have less than stellar grade point averages, who'd rather party than

study and who find ways to attend the hottest campus events but are nowhere to be found during finals week. So if all Alphas are supposed to be bookworms, we haven't done a good job spreading that memo. I've also met well-educated, articulate and monogamous men of Omega Psi Phi who are "supposed" to exhibit dog like behavior, bark and sleep around. I think the point is that others accept the stereotype of these groups because it's easier to identify them that way. As members, I think we embrace these identities because they give us a platform to ultimately do some good. I can't count how many times I have seen events that use flashy, iconic and attention getting techniques to help open the door for students to learn about safe sex practices, how to embrace responsibilities or to promote student mentoring for those who need the extra academic resources. There is no doubt that some of these stereotypes can help stunt the growth of these organizations but by accepting them organization members look to empower themselves with the energy and impact that stereotypes carry with them. All the stereotypes are not negative and some can even arm the organizations with tools to address serious challenges within the Black community. For example, if joining an organization motivates a Black college student to achieve higher than their peers while historically facing poor recruitment at retention rates (Whipple, 1998; Kimbrough, 1995; Sutton & Terrell, 1997), then why not allow the stereotypes considered by some to be fun help motivate students?

By the time I will have finished this research, it will have been five years since I began my studies for M.A. in Journalism at the University of Missouri. I took time away from finishing my project after being hired by the Detroit Free Press in 2011. A sort of unconscious agreement led me to believing this body of work could be finished

in its entirety in three years. It cannot. Not even in the five years it has taken me to complete this portion of my requirements for the fulfillment of my requirements. What this time has allowed me to do is to understand the reason why this method of research is critical to our profession.

I live, work and invest in a city where the financial and educational structure is failing. With the hiring of an Emergency Financial Manager, an Emergency Manager for Detroit Public Schools and various challenges facing this Detroit community, I have been forced to better acquaint myself with the city on an intimate and more human level. Making photographs in this city has been tough at times and while I would fully endorse photo elicitation as an awesome research method for long-term projects it is, at best, a luxury when having to tell stories for a community that has been disproportionately affected by crisis on a day-to-day basis. For photojournalists that have to tell stories quickly, elicitation is probably not the answer. But, when used properly, elicitation can help inform others in a way that normal interviewing techniques cannot. Then when that perfect project comes around and the opportunity for exploration finally exists, photographers would make better decisions and images if they knew how to research projects that reflect on entire communities. The beginning of this project has proved to be an invaluable part of my development as a photographer. I appreciate the dedication of my project committee to help push me when I needed to be pushed. I must also take this opportunity to stress the importance of finishing research before starting your professional career.

For anyone reading this who is looking for advice about how to go about working on your project I will offer this: finish your research while you have ample access to

your professors. If I had it all to do again, I would have finished my research component first while I was at Mizzou. I could have worked on my professional component anywhere in the country. Having a solid foundation of research makes all the difference.

In the end, I felt my research component helped to inform my project. Beyond This Place has received recognition for scholars all across the country. Many are looking to support the next development in the projects transformation. I have decided that I want to focus turning Beyond This Place into a book project. My research during the project introduced me to an entire scholarly community working on stories surrounding contemporary issues within the Black Greek community. I think I could help illustrate some of these challenges through my Beyond This Place book project. My plan is to develop a book proposal and use Kickstarter.com as a fundraising platform to propose a book with online video interviews and additional content. Moving ahead, I am confident and comfortable with putting together an appropriate research project. I am looking forward to the next steps of development in this series.

Professional Analysis Article:

The Images Inside My Head

by Jarrad Henderson

Close your eyes and imagine eating an apple.

What did the apple look like as you were chomping away on it? What representation of 'apple' did you come up with? Was it a Granny Smith? Gala? I bet it was a big shiny apple like the one Snow White bit into in the Disney film. Bright Red. The concept of internal images is not something new. Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (1978) and Chuck Klosterman's book *Eating the Dinosaur* (2009) explore the concept of internal images. Mander wrote about the concept in the pre-Google society of 1978, stating that TV takes away people's freedom to have whatever thoughts they want. Even more relevant to this article was Mander's belief that images influence our thoughts. Wait. Images? Photographs? Pictures?

Yes. According to Mander, these 'images inside your head' were either out of your own imagination or else they were created from media. This idea of pre-meditated imagination is eerily similar to a journalistic concept that photographers confront every time they photograph a subject: stereotyping.

In my early introduction to photography research I was asked to examine social and political dimensions of still photography in society. One day in class we discussed visual stereotyping. I had often wondered about the definition of visual stereotypes, where they came from and how to combat them particularly when they involved the black community. I wondered if they were undeniable or inevitable. How could I

photograph aspects of my own culture, one of the most stereotyped in the history of media, in a way that wouldn't be riddled with preconceived notions? How could someone completely unfamiliar to my culture photograph an aspect more accurately? As a black photographer, I needed to find a way to get closer to representation of a visual subject rather than relying on stereotypes to connect with my potential audience.

It is nearly impossible to talk about representation without talking about stereotyping. When you think about stereotypes, you automatically have images that unveil themselves in your head. These types of images are the result of decades of embedding. Unfortunately, what we generally associate with the term stereotypes normally encompass negative characteristics, but they can also be neutral characteristics like the 'redness' of the apple you imagined. Why didn't you think of a green or yellow colored apple?

Klosterman continues by giving one of Mander's examples: "he asks the reader to imagine a basketball game in your head." Do that. Imagine the game in your head now. What do you see? Klosterman concludes "One can assume that virtually everyone in the United States had attended a live basketball game at some point in his or her life, and almost as many have played in a basketball game for real...I played organized basketball for thirteen years. So why is my first mental image of basketball game moment from game four of a Celtics-Lakers championship series I saw on CBS in 1984?" It was clear to me that these powerful associations would not be easy to overcome. How could I approach a story more accurately? My solution was to use a research method called photo elicitation to help better inform my project on a longstanding African American cultural, political and social institution.

Over the last two and a half years I have been exploring the visual history of African American fraternities and sororities. I knew I wanted to complete my master's research project to help inform a long-term project called "Beyond This Place". This photo project will tell stories of members of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs), the historical context of which they were developed and the contemporary challenges faced by their leadership. The subject of fraternities and sororities is unfamiliar to most people. Even more unfamiliar is the historical significance and history of black fraternities and sororities. I was extremely familiar with the culture, being an initiated member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., one of the nine organizations that comprises the Divine Nine, but needed a way to explore the topic to go beyond the general, popular perception of these organizations. By using photos to elicit responses during my interviews, I could pull relevant facts, questions and concerns to the forefront of the design of my project.

From the time a visual journalist is given an assignment images instantly flood their heads. As a photojournalist, I have often felt that my job is not to define but to display. Many professionals around the nation are challenged daily with creating artwork that is representative of a situation or person. These images can be viewed thousands or even millions of times. Being in this position is tough. There are numerous considerations when photographing a subject. What angle should I take the photo from? Which lens should I use? What type of light should I use? Photographers who work for publications often have their viewers in mind. So how does one interpret photographic situations accurately without introducing his or her own biases and

projected stereotypes onto a visual subject? I had to deal with the same challenge, given the stereotypes that surround Black Greek Letter Organizations.

In my case when most people think about black fraternities and sororities, they think of the media associated with it first, just like in Klostermans's example. For me this means my subjects mention either or both of two movies: Spike Lee's film *School Daze* (1988) or Sylvain White's film *Stomp The Yard* (2007). Essentially I wanted to find out which external media source had the greatest influence on the internal images of my subject, and how those images or beliefs inspired people to behave a particular way.

I set up interviews with eight college-aged black students, four were members of BGLOs and four were not. During my interviews, I showed a series of images and video clips to participants and had them talk about what they saw and what it meant to them. I found that many people gave me specific examples of events and people they had encountered who essentially introduced them to Black Greek culture. A good number of them had their first interactions with a family member but all agreed that this wasn't where their understanding of black Greek stereotypes came from. In fact, participants thought the movie *School Daze* provided the most iconic images of the culture in popular media, falling in line of the hypothesis of Mander. The images inside their heads were of Dean Big Brother Almighty, the dean of pledges for the fictional Gamma Phi Gamma Fraternity Incorporated, or Half-Pint, a pledge attempting to make it through 'Hell Week', as portrayed by filmmaker Spike Lee.

When it came to identifying the stereotypical traits of the organizations many turned to behavioral traits first. Because of this, many felt that the stereotypes of

specific fraternities and sororities were a part of the actual character traits of members of these organizations in real life. For example, Spike Lee's film *School Daze* used the concept of fraternities to show viewers basic, yet effective, group identity traits that are familiar to people who were aware of fraternity men in the culture. His fictional fraternity, Gamma Phi Gamma drives the plot line as the viewer experiences the harsh realities of an early 80's pledge process, the 'dog' like behavior of the G Phi G organization, and the sexual promiscuity of fraternity men.

In my research these group traits were easily identified throughout the interview. One Greek participant, Justin McCain talked about the influence of these traits:

" I think that when you join an organization, there are certain expectations and there are certain stereotypes that you are *expected* to hold. If you are a member of Kappa Alpha Psi, you are expected to become a pretty boy who gets all the girls. If you are an Alpha man you are expected to be distinguished. If you're an Omega man, you're expected to be someone who isn't afraid to be loud or rambunctious....Now is that true? In some cases yes. Is it true all of the time? No. Does that stop the stereotype from existing? No, because I have experienced it."

Another non-Greek participant, Bailey Anderson, echoed the previous sentiments stating that "...Black Greeks play a big part in their media representations of themselves, and I think it's important for organizations to put themselves at a higher

standard.” The assumption of identity then could be likened to the experiences of internal imagery. Overall, the people I interviewed thought that not only did the stereotypes exist but also they stated that the members themselves were subject to the images inside their own heads when learning how to ‘act’ like a member of a BGLO once initiated.

After conducting my research, I learned that most of the participants quickly responded about lack of ‘service’, brotherhood/sisterhood and the existence of intergenerational membership images. Where the images simply overlooked? I wasn’t so sure. Lee’s film didn’t include any scene about BGLOs service to the community. By taking time to research what others who were or were not familiar with Black Greek culture, I found a key element that would make my project more holistic in its representation of BGLOs and an answer to combat general stereotypes of the culture.

Just as Klosterman’s basketball example, the images conjured by the mind at the mention of Black Greeks came from media representation. Klosterman continued by saying that people can’t differentiate between reality and fiction when it comes to internal images, citing that while we can explain the difference between the two stimuli, most times, we cannot manage the internal image any more than Klosterman could keep game four of the Celtics-Lakers Championship out of his mind’s eye. While these stereotypes may not be realistic, they are what people build their impressions on.

News photographers, who face increasingly shrinking print space and resources, have to communicate messages quickly. If they are faced with the decision to photograph a step show or a community service event, many factors including timing, access and context play a role. While many will associate BGLOs with stepping,

it may not have been the best way of communicating the representation of the fraternity or sorority members or of the culture itself. These decisions in the real world affect how people think internally about hundreds of years of historical achievement and significant contributions to the political, social and educational development of black America. For me the challenge was to better represent the culture by bringing emphasis to these little explored concepts.

After gathering all my information I was truly able to inform my work in a way that made it different from anything else currently on the discourse of black fraternities and sororities. This process helped keep the focus on the culture and not myself, allowing me to think less about which lenses I was using and more about the ideas I wanted to convey in the resulting images. I found the results to be satisfactory and was told the work presented a different degree of the culture not often seen. Ultimately, the lesson to journalist is simple: in this digital age, we must be careful what we choose to show and what we choose not to show. The images you present online and in print can very well become the images inside someone else's head...forever.

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FIELD NOTES

BEYONDTHISPLACE

FIELD NOTES

WEEK 1 & 2: January 31 – February 13

The first week is under my belt! Yay! I think the way I will structure these post is by giving an update on what I have thus far in the project followed by an evaluation of sorts, followed by ay correspondence from the past two weeks.

My first week back in the mix and I wanted to begin with the website portion of my project. I feel it will be an easier part of the puzzle because I have had an opportunity to build it in Dr. Greenwoods class this semester. I am excited about the possibility of the site. Much of it is coded through HTML which I feel proud about because it is all my design.

I have bought server space and also have registered the domain name Beyondthisplace.com, downloaded a free Text Wrangler and Fetch application as well as installed the Wordpress directory on my server. The process was actually more simple than I had imagined. I also started to document the Sprite Step Off during this time. Making images between this HTML made things a lot easier for me to stay comfortable during this process. I am still not sure what exactly I want to do with the website, but I'm just putting down the foundation for now.

From: tweetdeck@tweetdeck.com
Subject: **Thanks for registering with TweetDeck**
Date: January 13, 2010 3:12:09 PM CST
To: jarrad.henderson@gmail.com

Hi there!

TweetDeck is your personal browser, showing you everything that's happening now across Twitter and Facebook. With TweetDeck it's easy to stay in touch with friends, share links, record video and much more.

Whether you're a newbie or a seasoned veteran there's always something more to learn about what TweetDeck can do for you:

- Get organised with [groups](#)
- Stay up to date with [saved searches](#)
- Update [Facebook](#)

Your TweetDeck account syncs all your columns so you can restore groups in a couple of clicks and access multiple Twitter accounts with just one login.

Some of our users have told us that "Tweetdeck made Twitter a much more valuable experience" for them and that they "can't use Twitter without it". We hope you'll agree.

Don't be a stranger now. [Follow us](#) on Twitter, watch for news on our [blog](#) or ask us any questions you may have on our [support site](#).

Thanks again for registering,
The Team @ TweetDeck

You are not subscribed to TweetDeck mailings and will not receive any further emails. [Click here to subscribe now](#) and receive future emails.

BEYONDTHISPLACE

FIELD NOTES

WEEK 3 & 4: February 14 – February 27

These past two weeks have been filled with tons of opportunities, After photographing at the Sprite Step Off in St. Louis and the regional finals in Columbia, MO. I set my sights on photographing the final competition in Atlanta.

After reaching out to the sponsors and organizers, I was able to reach someone at the national level. They offered me a press pass and I was in static. I know a lot of images will come from this opportunity. I will be driving down there with some of my Fraternity brothers. The idea is to make some images that I can include in the final project.

I also had a conversation with Jenifer about a possible opportunity to work with the Black Studies program. They would like for me to do an exhibit of my work It sounds fantastic, but now I need to get this portion of my shooting done. I have not touched my research as of yet, but Its slowly coming along. I met my goal for this time period that was to go to student group meetings and distribute my surveys. I also have started to identify call back students for the research component.

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Black History Month Proposal

Langley, April C. [langleya@missouri.edu]

Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 8:40 PM

To: Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student)

Dear Mr. Henderson,

I am writing to ask thank you for submitting your proposal for a Black History Month event. Clearly, your work indicates that you are a promising MU artist and your work (I remember from Rollins Application as well) is quite impressive.

It is my understanding (based on a discussion with one of our committee members, Jennifer Wilmot) that an important aspect of your request for support (proposal) has to do with your desire to have assistance identifying and securing a suitable venue for this exhibit. That is, because you have not exhibited this aspect of your work in a population of this size before, you may require some additional assistance, beyond funding. We are happy to provide you with this initial help regarding locating a venue and other issues relate to the logistics of such an exhibit. Dr. Paula Roper will be contacting you shortly to work with you toward this end.

With regard to the funding element of your proposal, are asking that you resubmit your proposal once you have in fact secured a date and location for your venue. It is our hope that once you have received the necessary assistance from committee members with experience/expertise in the area of facilitating exhibits, your proposal will be complete and ready for resubmission and timely vote of committee.

We understand that a presentation of this kind, if is to be successful (and present the artist's work in the best way) needs the proper venue. Thus, we have not rushed to a hasty approval. Rather we are providing you with the necessary support to more solidly coordinate your event. Dr. Roper has graciously and generously agreed to assist in this regard.

We wish you the best with this event, and hope that we will be able to see this exhibit presented in Black History Month.

Sincerely,

Dr. Langley

- Mail
- Calendar
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- Deleted Items (76)
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RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Agnew, Leo G. [AgnewL@missouri.edu]

You replied on 2/4/2010 12:29 AM.

Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 8:01 PM
To: Agnew, Leo G.; Roper, Paula L.; Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student)

Greetings, Mr. Henderson. I hope you are the correct Mr. Henderson this time – if you would, shoot back a note to help Paula and I know we’re on the right track. If so, would you be free tomorrow to visit regarding your proposal for Black History Month? Thanks.

Leo Agnew
 MU Libraries

From: Agnew, Leo G.
Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 1:09 PM
To: Roper, Paula L.; Henderson, Jared (MU-Student)
Subject: RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Hi Paula and Jared. I’m free to meet tomorrow at those same times, essentially. I’m not here Friday p.m.

Leo

From: Roper, Paula L.
Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 12:29 PM
To: Henderson, Jared (MU-Student)
Cc: Agnew, Leo G.
Subject: FW: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Hi Jared,

I would be delighted to assist you with you Black History Month proposal. Do you want to get together, talk on the phone, or email? Tomorrow, we could get together basically anytime from 8:30 am- 1 pm and 2 –6:00 pm. Friday after 2:30 pm is good.

What’s good for you?

Take care,
 Paula

Paula Roper,
 Social Science Librarian
 168 Ellis Library
 University of Missouri
 Columbia, MO 65201
 573/882-3326
 fax: 573/882-8044
RoperP@missouri.edu
 web: [Roper, Paula](#)
 òtítò òdodo onídájö



From: Langley, April C.
Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 10:57 AM
To: Roper, Paula L.

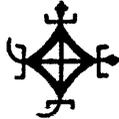
Subject: RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Paula,
Have you contacted this student yet?
april

From: Roper, Paula L.
Sent: Friday, January 29, 2010 5:24 PM
To: Langley, April C.
Subject: RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

I was off yesterday, April. Should I contact this student?

Paula Roper,
Social Science Librarian
168 Ellis Library
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65201
573/882-3326
fax: 573/882-8044
RoperP@missouri.edu
web: [Roper, Paula](#)
ötítö ödodo onidájö



From: Langley, April C.
Sent: Friday, January 29, 2010 1:09 PM
To: Agnew, Leo G.; Brown, Mary Elizabeth; Bruington, Erica M.; Brunnsma, David; Garth, Linda C.; Hoard, Adrienne W.; jlatfc; Langley, April C.; Placier, Peggy; Roper, Paula L.; Stephens, Nathan; Wilmot, Jennifer Marie (MU-Student)
Subject: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Dear BHM Committee,
Please vote on the following Proposals.

1. Jessica Care Moore Total: \$2,465
2. Brown Bag "One Read" Books: \$500

I am asking for a sub-committee (Paula, Leo, and Mary Elizabeth) to work with Jared Henderson on developing a coherent proposal to be submitted within the 7 days. He is asking for support in the areas of funding and assistance with the best venue and other pertinent information regarding this very specialized event. Please let me know if you can serve.

Finally, I will be out of town this weekend and back on Tuesday, but Erica will be sending information to you about Brown Bag, Contestants *WE REALLY NEED QUALIFIED JUDGES (Faculty and/or advanced graduate students)*. I will resume in earnest on Tuesday, but will likely not be available via email for the next 3 days—unless...
April

From: Wilmot, Jennifer Marie (MU-Student) [<mailto:jmwwv5@mail.mizzou.edu>]
Sent: Friday, January 29, 2010 9:36 AM
To: Langley, April C.
Subject: Dr. Gaines Title/ "Beyond this Place" Synopsis

1. Wednesday, February 24th—Dr. Jane Gaines, 11:30-1pm, South Memorial Union 206 (Gillette/Ware Room)
"The Black Economic Empowerment of Early Race Movies"
** Dr. Hearne and I are still requesting funding to provide lunch for this "discussion"

2. "Beyond this Place" Proposal

When

Ideally, the show would begin sometime in mid-February with an opening reception on a Sunday afternoon. The reception could be comprised of a welcome, short explanation of the work, various refreshments, a performance element, and the unveiling of the exhibition. My proposed date for the event kick off would be on February 14, 2010. The show would be taken down on March 14, 2010.

Where

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Why

This will allow for the Black History Month Theme: "Black Economic Empowerment" to be showcased through the explanation of the role BGLOs play in the socio-economic development of Blacks from the early 20th century to now. Most do not realize that BGLOs are fully functioning businesses, for example all BGLOs have fully functional headquarter offices with fully paid operational staffs. These organizations have always fought for civil rights from a social and financial position. Whether through the support of major fundraising efforts or the financial support in creating positive images in the media, BGLOs have played a role in the emancipation and rise of the Black middle class in America.

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- Community Service event fused with the exhibit
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- Direct encouragement and support of African American Mizzou undergrads
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Total	\$930.00	
	Framing/Hanging of Images (Including Mattes and largely dependent on final location)	
\$600.00	Photo Paper for printing (MOAB Papers X 2)	
\$170.00	Refreshments (Drinks, finger foods)	
\$100.00	Promotional Flyers (NextDayFlyers.com, QTY: 1000)	
\$45.00	Miscellaneous (Hammer, Nails, wire)	
\$15.00	Printing (Done by me for free)	\$0.00

Jennifer M. Wilmot
 English Department - African Diaspora Studies, M.A. Program
 University of Missouri-Columbia

Tate Hall 1
 Columbia, MO 65211

Physical Office Location

84 McReynolds Hall

"Difficult takes a day, impossible takes a week"



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RE: Black History Month Proposal

Roper, Paula L. [RoperP@missouri.edu]

Flag for follow up. Start by Wednesday, February 03, 2010. Due by Wednesday, February 03, 2010.

Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 10:40 PM
To: Langley, April C.; Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student)

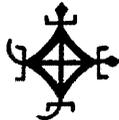
Hi Jared,

I would be delighted to assist you with you Black History Month proposal. Do you want to get together, talk on the phone, or email? Tomorrow, we could get together basically anytime from 8:30 am- 1 pm and 2 – 6:00 pm. Friday after 2:30 pm is good.

What's good for you?

Take care,
 Paula

Paula Roper,
 Social Science Librarian
 168 Ellis Library
 University of Missouri
 Columbia, MO 65201
 573/882-3326
 fax: 573/882-8044
RoperP@missouri.edu
 web: [Roper, Paula](#)
 òtítò òdodo onídájö



From: Langley, April C.
Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 2:41 PM
To: Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student)
Subject: Black History Month Proposal

Dear Mr. Henderson,

I am writing to ask thank you for submitting your proposal for a Black History Month event. Clearly, your work indicates that you are a promising MU artist and your work (I remember from Rollins Application as well) is quite impressive.

It is my understanding (based on a discussion with one of our committee members, Jennifer Wilmot) that an important aspect of your request for support (proposal) has to do with your desire to have assistance identifying and securing a suitable venue for this exhibit. That is, because you have not exhibited this aspect of your work in a population of this size before, you may require some additional assistance, beyond funding. We are happy to provide you with this initial help regarding locating a venue and other issues relate to the logistics of such an exhibit. Dr. Paula Roper will be contacting you shortly to work with you toward this end.

With regard to the funding element of your proposal, are asking that you resubmit your proposal once you have in fact secured a date and location for your venue. It is our hope that once you have received the necessary assistance from committee members with experience/expertise in the area of facilitating exhibits, your proposal will be complete and ready for resubmission and timely vote of committee.

We understand that a presentation of this kind, if is to be successful (and present the artist's work in the best way) needs the proper venue. Thus, we have not rushed to a hasty approval. Rather we are providing you with the necessary support to more solidly coordinate your event. Dr. Roper has graciously and generously agreed to assist in this regard.

We wish you the best with this event, and hope that we will be able to see this exhibit presented in Black History Month.

Sincerely,

Dr. Langley



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RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Agnew, Leo G. [AgnewL@missouri.edu]

Sent: Thursday, February 04, 2010 3:43 PM

To: Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student)

Sounds good. I'll check Paula's calendar, as well, and send a meeting notice via Outlook. See you tomorrow.

From: Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student) [mailto:jhvf6@mail.mizzou.edu]

Sent: Thursday, February 04, 2010 9:42 AM

To: Agnew, Leo G.

Subject: RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Leo,

Lets go ahead and settle on Friday morning. Anytime before 1230 is great for me also.

Jarrad

From: Agnew, Leo G. [AgnewL@missouri.edu]

Sent: Thursday, February 04, 2010 1:47 PM

To: Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student); Roper, Paula L.

Subject: RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Hi, Jarrad. I'm free today, Thursday, between 12-1, and free Friday morning until 12:30. Which date/time would work best for you?

Paula – Do you have any free time Friday morning, in case that works best for Jarrad?

Leo

From: Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student) [mailto:jhvf6@mail.mizzou.edu]

Sent: Wednesday, February 03, 2010 6:29 PM

To: Agnew, Leo G.; Roper, Paula L.

Subject: RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Leo,

How do you wish to proceed?

Jarrad

From: Agnew, Leo G. [AgnewL@missouri.edu]

Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 8:01 PM

To: Agnew, Leo G.; Roper, Paula L.; Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student)

Subject: RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Greetings, Mr. Henderson. I hope you are the correct Mr. Henderson this time – if you would, shoot back a note to help Paula and I know we're on the right track. If so, would you be free tomorrow to visit regarding your proposal for Black History Month? Thanks.

Leo Agnew
MU Libraries

From: Agnew, Leo G.

Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 1:09 PM

To: Roper, Paula L.; Henderson, Jared (MU-Student)

Subject: RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Hi Paula and Jared. I'm free to meet tomorrow at those same times, essentially. I'm not here Friday p.m.

Leo

From: Roper, Paula L.
Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 12:29 PM
To: Henderson, Jared (MU-Student)
Cc: Agnew, Leo G.
Subject: FW: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Hi Jared,

I would be delighted to assist you with you Black History Month proposal. Do you want to get together, talk on the phone, or email? Tomorrow, we could get together basically anytime from 8:30 am- 1 pm and 2 – 6:00 pm. Friday after 2:30 pm is good.

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Paula

Paula Roper,
Social Science Librarian
168 Ellis Library
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65201
573/882-3326
fax: 573/882-8044
RoperP@missouri.edu
web: [Roper, Paula](#)
òtítò òdodo onídájö



From: Langley, April C.
Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 10:57 AM
To: Roper, Paula L.
Subject: RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

Paula ,
Have you contacted this student yet?
april

From: Roper, Paula L.
Sent: Friday, January 29, 2010 5:24 PM
To: Langley, April C.
Subject: RE: BHM Proposals and Other Information

I was off yesterday, April. Should I contact this student?

Paula Roper,
Social Science Librarian
168 Ellis Library
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65201
573/882-3326
fax: 573/882-8044
RoperP@missouri.edu
web: [Roper, Paula](#)
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Sent: Friday, January 29, 2010 9:36 AM
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 English Department - African Diaspora Studies, M.A. Program
 University of Missouri-Columbia

Tate Hall 1
 Columbia, MO 65211

Physical Office Location
 84 McReynolds Hall

"Difficult takes a day, impossible takes a week"



Connected to Microsoft Exchange

From: "Alonzo E. Brown" <alonzoeb@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Sprite Step Off Finals Media Request
Date: February 15, 2010 9:13:27 AM CST
To: Jarrad Henderson <jarrad.henderson@gmail.com>
Cc: Julie Haferkamp <julie@commongroundmktg.com>, Nicole Roy <NicoleRoy@commongroundmktg.com>

Jarrad, I probably won't be working Atlanta this weekend. I'm copying Julie Haferkamp who serves as the event lead for the Atlanta show and will be able to assist you further.

Julie, Jarrad is the photojournalist from the Columbia Missourian who took the awesome photo that appeared in the paper when we were at Mizzou. He's interested in covering the Atlanta show for the paper. Can you please advise him on what he needs to do secure media credentials?

Best,
Alonzo

On Feb 13, 2010, at 4:57 PM, Jarrad Henderson <jarrad.henderson@gmail.com> wrote:

Good Afternoon Alonzo,

I wanted to formal request a media pass to next weekends Sprite Step Off in Atlanta. I will be representing the Columbia Missourian and look forward to working with you again. Please let me know if there is anything I need to do to proceed.

--

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jarrad Henderson

Masters Student
Photojournalism
University of Missouri

From: "Gatewood, Gena (LAN-RCN)" <GGatewood@rogersandcowan.com>
Subject: FW: Step Off Atlanta Request for Credentials
Date: February 15, 2010 1:52:46 PM CST
To: "jarrad.henderson@gmail.com" <jarrad.henderson@gmail.com>
▶ 1 Attachment, 63.5 KB

Hi Jarrad,

I'm the PR contact for Sprite Step Off and was forwarded your below request. You are confirmed for one credential to cover the Sprite Step Off competition and Service Challenge on Saturday. I'm needing to confirm the process for media check-in that day. Will confirm details with you by EOD Tuesday.

In the meantime, please pass along your cell info in case I need it. I'll be in touch tomorrow. Thanks!

GENA GATEWOOD
Rogers & Cowan
Account Supervisor | Consumer, Entertainment & Sports
8687 Melrose Avenue, 7th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90069
Direct: (310) 854-8166
Email: ggatewood@rogersandcowan.com

From: Gorki A. De Los Santos [gdelossantos@na.ko.com]
Sent: Monday, February 15, 2010 9:26 AM
To: Gatewood, Gena (LAN-RCN)
Subject: Fw: Step Off Atlanta Request for Credentials

Please see below.

----- Forwarded by Gorki A. De Los Santos/US/NA/TCCC on 02/15/2010 12:26 PM -----

From: Jarrad Henderson <jarrad.henderson@gmail.com>
To: Gorki A. De Los Santos/US/NA/TCCC@TCCC
Date: 02/15/2010 09:14 AM
Subject: Step Off Atlanta Request for Credentials

Greetings Gorki de los Santos,

My name is Jarrad Henderson and I would like to request a media credential for the Sprite Step Off in Atlanta, GA this weekend. Below is your desired information:

Jarrad Henderson, Columbia Missourian, Print/Online, Cell: (480) 220-7174
Date: 2/20/10 in Atlanta Finals of the Sprite Step Off competition
1 Media Credential requested
Photographer will arrive early to cover teams coming in and the community service event before hand.

Please let me know if I need to submit any other information.

--
Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jarrad Henderson

Masters Student
Photojournalism
University of Missouri

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE

This message (including any attachments) contains information that may be confidential. Unless you are the intended recipient (or authorized to receive for the intended recipient), you may not read, print, retain, use, copy, distribute or disclose to anyone the message or any information contained in the message. If you have received the message in error, please advise the sender by reply e-mail, and destroy all copies of the original message (including any attachments).

From: "Gatewood, Gena (LAN-RCN)" <GGatewood@rogersandcowan.com>
Subject: RE: FW: Step Off Atlanta Request for Credentials
Date: February 17, 2010 2:56:48 PM CST
To: Jarrad Henderson <jarrad.henderson@gmail.com>

You are confirmed for one credential to cover the Sprite Step Off event in Atlanta this weekend. Unfortunately I cannot accommodate additional requests at this time as space in the venue is very limited.

Your credential can be picked up at media check-in starting at 4:30PM the day of the event (2/20). Media check-in will be located at the main entrance of the Atlanta Civic Center.

Please provide me with your cell contact in case I need it. Mine is (917) 689-3884. Looking forward to meeting you on Saturday!

From: Jarrad Henderson [mailto:jarrad.henderson@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2010 12:30 PM
To: Gatewood, Gena (LAN-RCN)
Subject: Re: FW: Step Off Atlanta Request for Credentials

Hello Gena,

I just wanted to make sure I haven't missed anything from you, because I haven't heard anything about the Show as of yesterday.

Additionally, I may need one more media credential for an assistant of mine who is doing audio/video documentation along with assisting me. Is it possible to request one more cred?

--

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jarrad Henderson

Masters Student
Photojournalism
University of Missouri

BEYONDTHISPLACE

FIELD NOTES

WEEK 5 & 6: February 28 – March 13

My discussions about the Beyond This Place exhibit are starting to take solid form now. I proposed to the Black Studies program to allow me to host a reception. The idea of having Black greeks come to showcase their unique stories and expressions was a good on me. I have reached out to many of the organizations ad their members to be available that Sunday. I finally submitted my revised proposal and received some feedback from the event organizers. Attached are various documents as well as some comments and after action photographs from the event.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM & GAINES OLDHAM BLACK CULTURE CENTER INVITE YOU TO EXPERIENCE

BEYONDTHISPLACE

DOCUMENTING THE VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JARRAD HENDERSON

SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 2010
GAINES/OLDHAM BLACK CULTURE CENTER
RECEPTION BEGINS AT 3PM

FREE EVENT
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
PERFORMANCES BY NPHC ORGANIZATIONS
PRINTS FOR SALE
COME LEARN ABOUT BLACK GREEK LIFE
DRAWING FOR A FREE SIGNED PRINT

SPONSORED BY  **BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM** Angus and Betty McDougall Center for Photographic Studies Gaines/Oldham BLACK CULTURE CENTER 

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RE: Beyond This Place Event

Langley, April C. [langleya@missouri.edu]

You replied on 2/24/2010 3:04 AM.

Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2010 7:28 PM**To:** Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student)**Cc:** Bruington, Erica M.

Dear Jarrad,

This is great news. The committee has approved the revised proposal and you should contact Erica regarding funds disposition, etc.—She's can work with you on this matter. The committee is delighted and we want to thank Dr. Rees for his generosity.

Again, congratulations—We look forward to seeing your work grace the halls of BCC—and later the globe.

Best,

Dr. Langley

From: Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student) [mailto:jhvf6@mail.mizzou.edu]**Sent:** Tuesday, February 23, 2010 12:44 PM**To:** Langley, April C.; Brunnsma, David**Subject:** BHM: Beyond This Place Event

Hello,

I have been trying to find ways to cut cost of my event, which was originally scheduled to take place during Black History Month. It is from this spirit of progress that I have to share my good and some challenges for this project.

MU Professor and Photojournalism Department Chair David Rees has taken notice to my attempt at putting together this photography show and has graciously offered his personal and departmental support. Specifically, Professor Rees had donated over 15 professional quality frames, for use in the Beyond This Place exhibition.

The frames, which retail for \$70 a piece are being loaned to me to be returned after the show, and with a little credit to the McDougall Center Archives, A historical collective of images and documents by the Journalisms schools own Angus McDougall. This is a savings of over \$1,000 in monies that I would had to stretch to purchase frames for the images in my previous proposal. The only consideration is that I wont have access to all of the frames until March 1, 2010.

This pushes my anticipated opening reception back by at least a week. Ideally, I would like this exhibition to begin on March 7, 2010 and be taken down on April 4, 2010. I would still need financial resources to be provided by the Black Studies department. Specifically, I would still need to request funds for photo paper, refreshments, promotion, printing (which I now have to pay for), and mat board, totaling about \$450 but not to exceed \$550.

Should Black studies find this proposal still doable in the coming weeks, I will immediately get started on the printing process. I look forward to hearing your response and am excited about this possibility.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jarrad Henderson

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[Mr. Ph.D. Pending....] Comment: "And the Winner Is...."

comment-reply@wordpress.com [comment-reply@wordpress.com]

Sent: Tuesday, March 09, 2010 8:47 PM

To: Jhv6@mizzou.edu

New comment on your post #778 "And the Winner Is...."

Author : Tremaine White (IP: 68.73.242.170 , 68-73-242-170.ded.ameritech.net)

E-mail : tre_white06@yahoo.com

URL :

Whois : <http://ws.arin.net/cgi-bin/whois.pl?queryinput=68.73.242.170>

Comment:

Bro. Henderson-

There is so much I want to say about what you wrote, but it would turn into a dissertation. I will start by saying that since the Sprite Steppoff started, it has been plagued with controversy. In the regional rounds in Chicago there was a judging error, which the crowd figured out after Sigma Gamma Rho (who brought the house down) placed 4th, I just knew that they would either place 2nd or 1st. Tau chapter AKAs came in 1st and deserved it. SGRHOS who were present at the show started fuming and later on that night the teams had been notified that it was a judging error and that the SGRHOS came in 2nd. Their members took to the sprite facebook page days later saying that something fishy was going on and that they believed they had actually come in 1st place.

What concerned me was not that they were upset about what happened, but how they went about it. Members made comments threatening to sue and everything. They even started insulting the AKAs that won the regional round. Similar events happened in two other regional rounds. At the end of the day, this event was marketed to D9 orgs to draw out the crowds, although it was open to anyone who met the criteria to compete.

All D9 orgs presidents were cut a big check for partnering with Sprite. THEY should have looked over the fine print to make sure that the members wouldn't be taken advantage of and that the competition would be judged by competent Greeks, not Greeks who know nothing about stepping or celebrity judges. I am pretty sure none of the above happened on the part of D9 presidents.

I could care less about ZTA knowing how to step, but they, as well as everyone else in the competition need to make sure that they are using original steps and following the rules. I saw that they were booty popping at the end and that was against the rules. I know that Tau chapter AKAs did use some Alpha steps during the Chicago show, and even had an Alpha stepmaster help them with some of their routine. If Sprite would have had solid judges, this wouldn't be an issue, because they would have caught these things. I am also embarrassed at how passionate we are about this, oppose to BIGGER issues that we have going on in the NPHC. I wish we could build something and do events of our own. THAT SEEMS TO BE THE CURSE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS: we look out for self and have become too far removed from the concept of group cohesion. We whored out stepping to everyone and now the chickens have come home to roost. ZTA can step, but they did lack originality and a little soul. I think they won because of the wow factor, for MTV, and because they can step,

but they should have lost points for some the moves they performed. AKA TAU chapter should have lost points for the Alpha steps they did in Chicago. I hope that next year the D9 Presidents thoroughly consider this before signing on because of the \$\$\$\$\$.

The irony is some of our orgs were founded because of the racial climate of that time period, and yet some of us discriminate against a white sorority who is in a stepshow instead of looking at the whether they were original in their routine or not. Hey they were all cut a check and now they probably won't have college loans to pay back, so in the end I think all participants who got cut a check need to be happy.

As far as the Delta who said she would turn in her membership card...its not that deep and even if she was joking, I wouldn't joke like that. It makes you look small.

Lastly, you hit the nail on the head with this statement, "I see it everywhere I go: people, who have the talent and drive to be productive members of any BGLO, go un-sought for petty reasons." That is what is killing many orgs now. You have AKA wannabees who get picked because of how fly they dress or they have a certain look, instead of the outgoing girl who busts her azz in academics and community service who will hold the org down. With fraternities its worst, the thug mentality and equating being a man with being aggressive/violent will be the death of us, LITERALLY. Members pick people who make their chapter hot, not people who will have longevity in the org. Then when the next line comes through you have neos who pick individuals who are worst then them. Thugs, emotionally disturbed, thieves, and individuals who can give a damn about the community are running rampant in our orgs. It makes those on the right track not want to associate with us. We can sit and say thats their lost, but with retention issues in our orgs, is it really? They preach chapter loyalty above fraternal loyalty.
SMH

You can see all comments on this post here:

<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2010/02/26/and-the-winner-is/#comments>

Trash it: <http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/wp-admin/comment.php?action=trash&c=164>

Spam it: <http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/wp-admin/comment.php?action=spam&c=164>

You can reply to this comment via email as well, just click the reply button in your email client.



From: info@beyondthisplace.com
Subject: **Beyond This Place: The reception needs YOU!**
Date: March 17, 2010 2:13:03 AM CDT

To: dlc9rc@mizzou.edu, wyj4m7@mizzou.edu, bvd2d@mizzou.edu, ramvd7@mizzou.edu, bz9p8@mizzou.edu, baslerj@missouri.edu, kashd7@mizzou.edu, bwHPf6@mizzou.edu, jefy6@mizzou.edu, llfkc@mizzou.edu, hellola06@yahoo.com, dakxv4@mizzou.edu, daryl.kirkmorg@gmail.com, singerderrick@sbcglobal.net, seetgc@mizzou.edu, dlwyb5@mizzou.edu, dtwcmd@mizzou.edu, bbhwc6@mizzou.edu, brbnp2@mizzou.edu, antiana.valentine@sc.stephens.edu, antianavalentine@yahoo.com, askzp5@mizzou.edu, blustorm1973@gmail.com, asbk6@mizzou.edu, nee2fine13@aol.com, alsfg8@mizzou.edu, alsfg8@yahoo.com, jsr3h6@mizzou.edu, lcbhx5@mizzou.edu, chaneckawilliams@yahoo.com, chanecka.williams@sc.stephens.edu, jpsnn3@mizzou.edu, jkmmmd9@mizzou.edu

▶ 2 Attachments, 152 KB

BEYONDTHISPLACE

DOCUMENTING THE VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES.

Greetings,

On Sunday, March 21st, 2010, the University of Missouri and Columbia community will be introduced to *Beyond This Place: Documenting the Visual History of African American Fraternities and Sororities* ©. *Beyond This Place* © exist to document the important history of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs), the role these organizations play in shaping the African American college experience, and the challenges faced by these organizations when asked the question "Are BGLOs still relevant today?"

It is my pleasure to invite you, the people I admire and envy most, the undergraduate members to participate in the events which will show the Mizzou community that BGLOs are not only relevant, but essential to providing leadership which will help close gaps in achievement, resource, and disproportionate poverty deficiencies which plague the Black community today.

Sunday will mark the first reception to the beginning of a project which will be a first of its kind. Students, Mizzou faculty/staff, and numerous dignitaries will be in attendance to see what Black greek life is on this campus. I would like you and your chapter to represent for your organization at this fantastic event. As a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. I have respect and love for each of you here at Mizzou and would love for your participation to be at contagious levels of excitement.

The event will take place at the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center from 3PM to 5PM in the large conference room. I have asked several of you to do a small performance and am requesting that all of the organizations represented here on campus speak briefly about their organization and say something about what makes their organization special. This is a great time for you to show your love for your organization and to bring your Prophytes and old heads out to celebrate greek life at its fullest! WEAR PARAPHERNALIA! Be Owt! Chant, Stroll, Free Free to do your thing (Reminding to be respectful of other organizations and other people).

I would love for every organization to say or do something at the event. The outline for the night is below. Examples of the types of things I'm looking for could include: reciting of poems, stepping, singing 'pledge' songs, reenacting a probate (which would be really tight if you didn't tell anyone you were doing it, only to ultimately reveal already initiated members :-P), sharing stories about your organization, etc. Below I have included a schedule and given a tentative outline of the night based off what others have confirmed to do so far.

3:15- Welcome by Black Studies
3:20- Welcome by the Black Culture Center
3:25- Beyond This Place: The Vision by Jarrad
3:35- Song By Jaqui Rogers
3:50- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.- Poems
3:55- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.- Singing Songs
4:00- School Daze Video Clip
4:10- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.- TBA
4:15- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.- TBA
4:20- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.- TBA
4:25- Neophyte Video
4:35- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.- Poems
4:40- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.- Stepping, Singing
4:45- Greek Soundz (Possible Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. Slot)
4:50- Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.- TBA

4:55- That thing you do: Strolling/Hoping
5:00- Farewell

It would be an honor to have your chapter in attendance. Please feel free to invite your classes, professors, friends, and relatives. We want to make this event huge! It has been a pleasure to have known all of you at Mizzou and as my time draws to a close, I found it only right to help Greek life on this campus express themselves in many ways to showcase your talents, your love, and your commitment to the Mizzou community.

Please feel free to call me at (480) 220-7174 or email me with questions or to tell me what you would like to do at the event. I look forward to seeing you all Sunday.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

In true unity and peace,

Jarrad Henderson
Creator/Photographer
Beyond This Place

University of Missouri
Masters Candidate- Photojournalism

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM & GAINES OLDHAM BLACK CULTURE CENTER INVITE YOU TO EXPERIENCE

BEYONDTHISPLACE

DOCUMENTING THE VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JARRAD HENDERSON

SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 2010
GAINES/OLDHAM BLACK CULTURE CENTER
RECEPTION BEGINS AT 3PM

- ✓ FREE EVENT
- ✓ LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
- ✓ PERFORMANCES BY NPHC ORGANIZATIONS
- ✓ PRINTS FOR SALE
- ✓ COME LEARN ABOUT BLACK GREEK LIFE
- ✓ DRAWING FOR A FREE SIGNED PRINT

SPONSORED BY BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM Center for Photojournalism Studies

- Mail
 - Calendar
 - Contacts
 - Deleted Items (76)
 - Drafts [29]
 - Inbox (1)
 - Junk E-Mail [10]
 - Sent Items
- Click to view all folders
- Manage Folders...

Reply
 Reply All
 Forward
 Move
 Delete
 Junk
 Close

Beyond This Place
 Mayer, Joy M. [mayerj@missouri.edu]

You replied on 2/17/2010 4:53 PM.

Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2010 3:46 PM
To: Henderson, Jarrad (MU-Student)

Hey there, Jarrad. I've been nosing around on your project site, and there is some outstanding, beautiful storytelling happening there. Josh and Meghan both suggested I talk to you about a class assignment I'm working on.

I teach a new class in multimedia design, and I'm looking for content for my designers to work with. I'm wondering if you'd consider letting us use portions of your stories for a class project?

You could give me whatever parts would make the most sense together. My goal is for the students to learn how to use design tools (mood, color, type, etc.), in combination with good intro text, navigation and interface, to make the most out of the story.

If you have time to help me out and wouldn't mind us experimenting on you, it could work out well for you. You could trash everything we do (you'd certainly be under no obligation to use any of it), but if someone comes up with elements you like, you'd be free to talk to them about incorporating it in to your final product.

Up for it?

I'm hoping to assign the students their next project later in the week. If you could let me know as quickly as you can whether you're up for it, I'd appreciate it. Write back, or give me a call at 573-673-6867.

Joy

Joy Mayer
 Design editor, Columbia Missourian
 MyMissourian.com
 Associate professor, Missouri School of Journalism
 Twitter: @mayerjoy
 573-882-8182
 307 Lee Hills Hall

From: NABJ Missouri <nabjtheblackout@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Sprite Step Off Article
Date: February 24, 2010 1:24:16 AM CST
To: Jarrad Henderson <jarrad.henderson@gmail.com>
▶ 1 Attachment, 50.0 KB

Jarrad,

I read your article and I like it, you raise some excellent points, but it's reeally long. We can still post it (as is) if you... give us some more pictures to break up the text. :) Is that cool? Either way I'm sending it back with my edits/questions. I'll also have Vicki look at it cuz she always catches something I miss. I know you wanted to include links so send those whenever you're done.

Thanks so much for this,
Veronica

On Tue, Feb 23, 2010 at 3:25 AM, Jarrad Henderson <jarrad.henderson@gmail.com> wrote:

My first Blackout article with a picture. :-)

--

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jarrad Henderson

Masters Student
Photojournalism
University of Missouri



And The Win...doc (50.0 KB)

BEYONDTHISPLACE

FIELD NOTES

PROPOSAL

Greetings Black History Committee,

After much collaboration and planning, I have solidified a few of the elements missing from my previous proposal. You may find the necessary information below.

LOGISTICS

I would like to organize and exhibit the photographic and video work of the Beyond This Place © project. Ideally, the show would begin sometime in mid-February with an opening reception on a Sunday afternoon. The reception could be comprised of a welcome, short explanation of the work, various refreshments, a performance element, and the unveiling of the exhibition. My proposed date for the event kick off would be on February 28, 2010. The show would be taken down on March 28, 2010.

LOCATION

The Gaines Oldham Black Culture Center, which has space along the outside of the main conference room as well as inside the conference room which would be suitable for hanging large printed photographs, have agreed to allow me to hang the exhibition.

OPENING RECEPTION

The performance piece of the event would consist of both educational and entertainment components. This will allow for the Black Studies Department Theme: "Black Economic Empowerment" to be showcased through the explanation of the role BGLOs play in the socio-economic development of Black people in the early 20 century. I will supplement the entertainment with an educational slideshow, speaking briefly on my work, my motivations, and describe a brief history of BGLO life.

Another part of this piece could be entertaining allowing both students, faculty, and the like join in celebrating Black Greek culture in its entirety. Poems, pledge songs, sorority/fraternity hymns, and stepping would fill the halls with music and celebration as we acknowledge the social aspects of these organizations as well. The excitement that the performance piece has would draw in people from all over the Mizzou community. Hopefully, it will draw in those who have questions about BGLOs and allow

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FIELD NOTES

the Mizzou community to learn more about the organizations and the *PEOPLE* who comprise them. I have asked several organizations to be on standby in case I need to ask them to do something of the sorts.

BENIFITS OF THE EVENT

The potential for University outreach is extraordinary in this type of event. I was thinking (to stay with the theme of economic empowerment) that we could auction off the artwork at the end of Black History Month. A portion of the funds generated could be awarded to the National Pan Hellenic Council (BGLO collective body) to help fund a major service project that would benefit young people in the Columbia community.

The Black Studies department would be making a direct impact on the youth of Columbia, encourage and support the students of the University of Missouri in service efforts, and introduce many people who are not familiar to the importance of these phenomena to BGLO life. This program would be a great way to continue building the relationship between the people in Columbia and allow the members of these BGLOs to truly serve their community.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Central to the success of *Beyond This Place* © is the opportunity to reach out the community around us. This event will assist in the ongoing efforts of the project in my endeavors of meeting the needs of African American students as they relate to business, further more to promote culture, educational success, and establishing a relationship with the privileged in their community. Specifically, I would like your help with supporting the budget for this type of event as well as promoting this project.

The financial support I am asking for will ultimately create the opportunity to organize a memorable experience. In addition to the exposure you receive, Black Studies branding will be included on all promotional materials (i.e. Flyers, Posters, etc.) I will also provide a table at the event for your department to distribute information and promote other events and services that you provide. The impression left on attendees after the event is sure to keep your department in their minds, creating opportunity to foster new relationships. Below you will find a list of expenses for the *Beyond This Place* © Exhibit. It is my hope that your support can eliminate some of these needs.

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FIELD NOTES

Item Description	Estimated Cost
Framing/Hanging of Images (Including Mattes)	\$600.00
Photo Paper for printing (MOAB Papers X 2)	\$170.00
Refreshments (Drinks, finger foods)	\$100.00
Promotional Flyers (NextDayFlyers.com, QTY: 1000)	\$45.00
Miscellaneous (Hammer, Nails, wire)	\$15.00
Printing (Done by me for free)	\$0.00

CONCLUSION

Since being initiated into Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. via Mu Eta Chapter at Arizona State University, I have been passionately exploring and conceptualizing the visual story of BGLOs. My ultimate goal would be to publish this collection of images and photo stories in a book format, allowing people all over the world experience what I would like to be shared at Mizzou. This event would help to define and understand the institutions that make up the Black college experience today.

I hope that you take advantage of this opportunity and become a prominent key to the mutual success of the Black Studies department and the *Beyond This Place* © project. Please feel free to contact me directly at (480) 220-7174 if you have any questions about the project.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Jarrad Henderson

BEYONDTHISPLACE

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THANK YOU LETTER

Dearest NPHC,

I truly cannot express my sincerest appreciation for each and every one of you. The Beyond This Place event helped to inform as well as entertain the Mizzou community and I have heard a lot of positive feedback from not only yourselves, but also the community, which we serve.

It is not easy being a Black Greek. You know as well as I do that even after you are initiated, the trials and tribulations still continue to follow you in your everyday endeavors. People expect a lot out of you. I expect a lot out of you, but only for the purpose of making you a better person. In three years from now when you all graduate, you will remember these as the most precious days of your life. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of them.

There are some people who felt Sunday was the most unity displayed in the NPHC in years. I don't claim to have anything to do with that, but what you all should know is that your presence was felt, and there was something overwhelmingly positive and special in that room on Sunday.

**YOU ALL HAVE THE POWER TO EFFECT CHANGE ON THIS CAMPUS.
WHERE YOU GO IS WHERE THE BLACK COMMUNITY AT MIZZOU GOES.**

You don't realize it now, but you are better prepared than most when it comes to helping your people. You will soon become aware of what challenges lie ahead of you. When the real situations are presented to you, I encourage you not to be discouraged, but to remain as faithful and diligent as you were when you first entered your organizations. It is this type of energy that is needed to help save our communities. I know first hand. I have literally taught to save LIVES. Your skills, energy, commitment is needed.

I must especially thank you to the women and men of: Alpha Phi Alpha, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta, and Iota Phi Theta for your attendance and for answering the call when I needed you.

Thank you from top of my heart,

Jarrad Henderson

ADDITIONAL FIELD NOTES

What follows is a collection of blog entries taken from the Beyond This Place webpage and Jarradhenderson.wordpress.com, documenting my early progress with the Beyond This Place project. These entries represent my visual diary while working on the project and offer some insight to my motivations, daily challenges and a look into my creative process. All web links are still active; feel free to look up my early attempt at photo elicitation (A Neo's Perspective).

The highlights of this collection of images and blogging include:

- My trip to Atlanta, GA for the first ever Sprite Step Off Finals. A controversial decision crowned non-Divine Nine organization Zeta Tau Alpha the winners of the historic competition. I wrote about my reaction, the community reaction and how Black Greek culture has transformed popular culture.
- A dialogue about pledging as a social contract. This entry prompted a lot of discussion about the current affairs of the intake process for BGLOs. It was interesting looking back on how these conversations helped inform my shooting after completing my research.
- In "A Neo's Perspective" I try using photo elicitation for the first time. Using images to inform my interview with Neophyte Montel Evans was an awesome start to learning how to use the method.

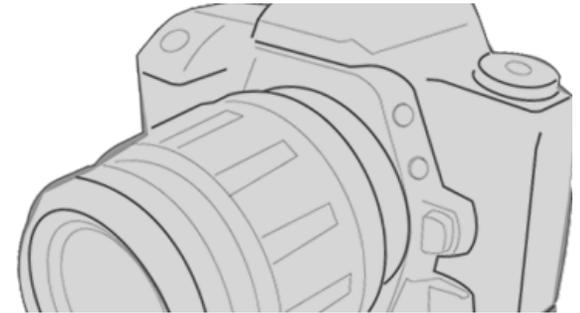
Additionally, I have included supplemental content on the DVD included in this book. This disk contains an after action look at the Beyond This Place Black History Month Exhibit:

community reaction comments from attendees, still images of the event provided by Clay Salter and Mark Mayes and video clips featuring members of Mizzou's Black Greek community. I am grateful for everyone's participation and have been honored with the attendance of so many friends, family, staff and instructors. The experience has been incredible and has made me a more consistent and better photographer.

Home (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/>) | About Me (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/about/>) | Beyond This Place (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/beyond-this-place/>) | Contact Me (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/contact-me/>) | Links (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/links/>)

JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



First Take: My Upcoming Task

“[The Man Who Thinks He Can](http://www.opcenter.net/~bjaffee/man.html) (<http://www.opcenter.net/~bjaffee/man.html>)” might be my poem of choice if I want to survive this upcoming endeavor. I went to the University of Missouri archives today to try and make some head way, thinking I could have some images from 1968 up and online to further illustrate what I want to do with *Beyond This Place*. As you can probably tell by this imageless post, my findings today were slim. Don't get me wrong; in four hours of intense rummaging I found some great photographs...but I also found some new challenges. The best of my findings are below.

1) This is gonna cost me. After being in that tiny space all day listening to my stomach howl for attention, I knew that it was only the beginning. I am fortunate I love this vision, otherwise I'd be going to the hospital for eye strain. This project is going to cost time. A lot of time. Time that I might only have until this literature review comes up. This is also going to cost me money, and lots of it. Unfortunately, my homebody hasn't quite perfected his money making tree yet so...I'm out o' luck. This is probably why the wonderful books I'm reading for my lit review only have ten or twelve images in them. Today I was told processing of images would cost \$5 a piece plus if I want to actually use any of the images, they would charge me a fee starting at \$60 a PEICE! I don't know about ya'll but right now, I can afford about 2 1/3 of a photograph. "You gotta think high to rise..." as in high stacks.....of money. Let the fundraising begin.

2) My ideas are freaking huge! With my pockets getting thinner, I also have come to the conclusion that I will have to do a ton of groundwork. I'll have to search through stacks of negatives, look through old photo albums, write tons of letters to University and museum archives, make hundreds of phone calls, and all the while stay organized. Shesh? Most of all, I have to come up with a plan for exactly what I'm looking for. I cant have images of just people in lettered T-shirts, but I can't have everyone's grandmothers images of their chapter bake sale either. My idea is that ALL of the divine nine are represented in at least 7 topics that I will choose to cover in the development of these organizations and the cultivation of the members who are a part of them. I would like for this to be a holistic view of BGLOs and not just about stepping and pledging. "If you think you dare not, you dont."

3) I need to travel. The BGLO experience is not exclusive to Black college campuses. In fact, the original reason these type of organizations were founded was to encourage social support of African American students at a predominately white institutions. Sure, I want to go to places like Howard University, Morgan State University, and Tuskegee but I also know the value in searching for this material at Indiana University, Butler University, Ole Miss, University of Southern Cal, and especially Cornell University. Problem is...who's gonna take the weight? (Thanks [Kevin Powell](http://www.amazon.com/Whos-Gonna-Take-Weight-Manhood/dp/0609810448/ref=sr_11_1/103-1526190-9417461?ie=UTF8&qid=1224802352&sr=11-1) (http://www.amazon.com/Whos-Gonna-Take-Weight-Manhood/dp/0609810448/ref=sr_11_1/103-1526190-9417461?ie=UTF8&qid=1224802352&sr=11-1)). Maybe we'll just get it how we live and send the collection plate around in every Black church in America. Between Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Jones I think we can get some support. "You've got to think high to rise."

Until next time..."Success Beings with a fellows will, its all in the state of mind."



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This entry was posted on October 23, 2008. It was filed under [Beyond This Place](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/beyond-this-place/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/beyond-this-place/>), [BGLO](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/>).

← (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2008/10/22/yeah-hawks/>)

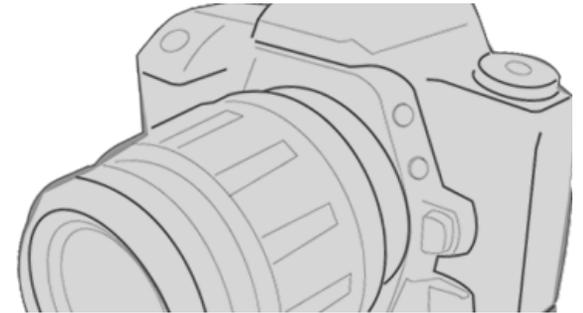
→ (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2008/10/24/first-take-btp-images/>)

Leave a Reply

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JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



A Neo's Perspective: Photo Elicitation Study



Meet Montel. Montel is a Spring 08 initiate of the Zeta Alpha Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. Montel's spirit is one that truly embraces the fraternity even in his young neo phase. He reminds me much of myself when I was a young neo. Montel's story will be the first of many stories for my *Beyond This Place* Project. Below you will find a small sample of our interview where I used photo elicitation methods to evoke responses about his experience in Alpha so far.

In short, photo elicitation uses images in place of words during an interview. The

method I used consisted of the subject is shown images and then asked to tell me a story about what he sees. The images I used where a mix of my own, some historical images (including James Van Der Zee's "[Alpha Basketball Team](http://www.negroartist.com/negro%20artist/james%20van%20der%20zee/pages/JamesVan%20Der%20Zee%20Alpha%20Phi%20Alpha%20Basketball%20Team,%20)" (<http://www.negroartist.com/negro%20artist/james%20van%20der%20zee/pages/JamesVan%20Der%20Zee%20Alpha%20Phi%20Alpha%20Basketball%20Team,%20>"), and video clips from the movie *School Daze*. Montel's responses to a few questions are found below:

Figure 2- "The Interview" (Image of young man at formal Alpha interview)

Montel: When I was in that seat...when the tables is really turned you really feel lost. You really feel like you've prepared yourself. I remember the night before going into that room I was just talking to myself like "dog, I am really nervous. I know my history, I know the Jewels, I know the Pearls of the chapter." I feel I am ready as far as the knowledge base of the Fraternity. I'm ready. You know? There is nothing they're going to break me down on. I got this. I walked in wanting to be confident and I had that sense of confidence but when I got in there...it was different. There was no way to prepare for that. There was no way to prepare for that interview because this interview tested who you were on a deeper level. Like if you had any flaw or any weakness within you it was exposed. And my weakness was exposed...My whole intention was just to impress and the more and more I tried to impress them, the more and more I wasn't impressing them. So upon leaving that interview, I remember the first thing that flashed in my head as soon as I walked out the door was "I'm not going to be an Alpha. I am not going to be an Alpha." And it hurt walking out of that room. As I got back home I told myself if they want me in their organization I will be there...so I wont worry.

For that experience I wish more people could endure that because that is one I will never forget...ever.

If a person who was not a part of a Black Greek Lettered Organization saw these types of photographs and videos, would they come away with a better understanding of Black greeks?

Montel: I believe they will walk away with a better understanding of Black greeks because it will make them hungry and want to know more. More so than just hearing about what it is, but when they're able to see the still life of it they can look at it and be like "Wow, that looks powerful to some degree and I don't know why. I'm gonna find out."

Figure 8- "Alpha Basketball Team" by James Van Der Zee

Montel: Some of the most important traditions in Alpha, as far as brotherhood, every time we do the hymn, a part of me just stops and recollects and gathers myself and really takes in how distinguished our seven Jewels were. I always sit back and think "man, seven Black men at Cornell?" As I take that in I become overwhelmed almost and I channel that back into the hymn so that I sing it with meaning. That right there is great in itself every time I sing it. Even anytime I recite a poem I take time to remember. I go somewhere in my head and I know what I'm feeling on the inside...With the tradition of the fraternity each individual chapter have their own tradition. I like how our alumni here at the Zeta Alpha chapter are really connected to the chapter. They love their chapter and they come back and express how much they love it. It compels us to love it just as much as they do. They're all about making sure we bring in good quality men into our chapter so we're always uplifting and holding the LIGHT of Alpha. Tats one thing about our chapter, we don't want it to die, just like our fraternity. We want it to be a legacy that continues on and on. We want the chapter to exceed and move on as long as the fraternity's here. As long as the fraternities moving the chapter is expected to move on. With my intake class we've been doing some great things and it showed when alumni came back and was like "Neos, Ya'll tight!". Tradition is everything in the fraternity. I take it serious and I do listen to a lot of the older brothers when it does come to tradition and I respect everything they have to say about tradition as a whole; the way to carry yourself as an Alpha man, the proper things to do in the LIGHT of Alpha, I take that seriously and I do it with my head held high at all times. For every tradition I have yet to be exposed to, being that I am a new initiate, I anticipate it and I await it so that I know that when it does arrive I absorb it and I take it in. So far I've met a lot of great brothers and I've gained great relationships with a lot of people in a lot of places. I just expect it to get greater. That's one of the great things about the Fraternity is that there is no limit.



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This entry was posted on December 6, 2008. It was filed under [Beyond This Place \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/beyond-this-place/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/beyond-this-place/), [BGLO \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/), [Fundamentals \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/fundamentals/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/fundamentals/).

[→ \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2008/12/06/i-have-brothers-everywhere/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2008/12/06/i-have-brothers-everywhere/)

[← \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2008/11/24/first-take-thanksgiving-food-drive/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2008/11/24/first-take-thanksgiving-food-drive/)

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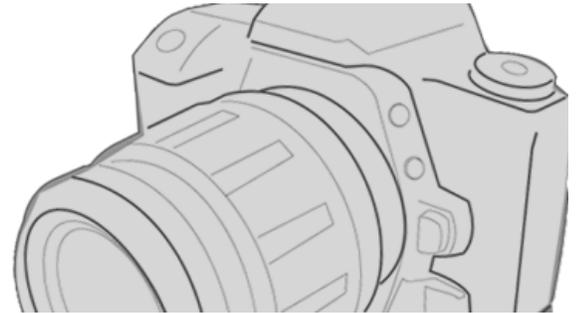
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[Blog at WordPress.com \(http://wordpress.com/?ref=footer\)](http://wordpress.com/?ref=footer). | Theme: [Modularity Lite \(http://theme.wordpress.com/themes/modularity-lite/\)](http://theme.wordpress.com/themes/modularity-lite/) by [Graph Paper Press \(http://graphpaperpress.com/\)](http://graphpaperpress.com/).



JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



ΔΣΘ Fall 08- Devastating Access



First, I have to show love to the wonderful women of Epsilon Psi Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Thank you beautiful sisters for allowing me to spend the day with you all and trusting me to do good work. Now, for the NEOS!

In Beyond This Place, I hope to be granted access to tell the stories that go untold. Through a real, unedited look at BGLOs I think we can find the greater good which ALL our Founders planned for us to have. Tonight I experienced a great sense of purpose for doing this project. The level of access for these images was amazing and I can not

help but again, thank the women of Epsilon Psi for their understanding and willingness to allow me into their lives, even if it was for a brief second.

Often spectators see the flash and glamor that comes with Greek Life during step shows and coming out shows. What you don't see is the long, hard hours preparing these shows (not to mention the time invested to become initiated into these organizations). Before every probate show, the new initiated and older members get together to practice the chants, steps, and strolls to be used during the probate show or coming out show. These shows are put together to introduce the newest initiated members of the sorority/fraternity to the community. Their origins are reminiscent of traditional secret society initiations or training and can be compared to older traditions like the ones found in Shamanism, where initiates are separated from the general community, taught specific skills/traits/knowledge, then re-introduced ceremoniously into the villages. Few scholars have written about this tradition but those that do, do it well (see Black Greek 101- Dr. Walter Kimbrough).

These images are taken from my day with the Deltas. Documenting the neo's final moments before they are announced to the general campus community as the newest members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.

Here are some of the images from tonight's events. Congratulations NEOS!!!!



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/dst1.jpg> <http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/dst2.jpg> <http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/dst3.jpg>



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/dst4.jpg> <http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/dst5.jpg>

<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/dst2.jpg>



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/wk1.jpg> <http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/make.jpg> <http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/fin.jpg>



http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/dst_neos.jpg http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/dst_isaid.jpg

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← (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2008/12/06/i-have-brothers-everywhere/>)

2 Responses

Stephanie Hudson

Jarrad -

THANKS for being with us and documenting our Neo's wonderful day. You did a WONDERFUL job and it was nice to have you around 😊

You are wonderfully talented and it's refreshing to see an artist such as yourself who is so open and concerned with matters important to the Black community.

Keep up the good work, I'll be looking for your work in the future.

Regards,

Stephanie Hudson

Epsilon Psi – Delta Sigma Theta

Spr 05

#11 Treasure

December 7, 2008 at 10:52 pm

Rhoshawndra



As always CLUB you do wonderful job! You truly know how to speak to the viewer with your lens! Keep making a sistah proud I can see that my Sorors were on a mission!

Be blessed,

Rhoshawndra

December 9, 2008 at 3:37 am

Leave a Reply

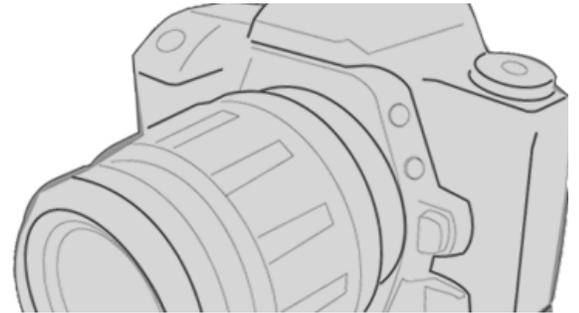
Enter your comment here...

[Blog at WordPress.com \(http://wordpress.com/?ref=footer\)](http://wordpress.com/?ref=footer). | Theme: [Modularity Lite \(http://theme.wordpress.com/themes/modularity-lite/\)](http://theme.wordpress.com/themes/modularity-lite/) by [Graph Paper Press \(http://graphpaperpress.com/\)](http://graphpaperpress.com/).

↵

JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



First Take: Howard University



I decided I needed to make a visit to the "Cradle of Black Greek Civilization" also known to scholars as Howard University. The nickname was given because 5 of 9 BGLO's were founded at HU. While Ithaca, NY is still #1 in my (and my brothers) hearts as the founding place for BGLO's, I still must show respect to the soil on which the founders of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. laid the foundations of

brotherhood/sisterhood.

My goal for this trip was to simply do some preliminary photographic research, meet the greeks on the yard, and take some photographs myself (of course). I was fortunate enough to have received a response from my inquiry on having someone to show me around on campus. My brothers from the Beta chapter were gracious, showing me around HU, telling me some of the background stories surrounding their chapter, BGLO plots, and the importance of Andrew Rankin Chapel. There are so many stories to be told here: What type of BGLO's culture is in Washington, D.C., how many people cross per line, and what type of hype surrounds the [NEO's \(http://web.missouri.edu/~ihvf6/Soundslides/BTP_NEO/\)](http://web.missouri.edu/~ihvf6/Soundslides/BTP_NEO/) which only come out in the Spring?

My research hit a bump instantly as soon as I got to the Moorland-Spingarn research center. Of course, everything we talked about over the phone wasn't plausible. I decided to begin my search in old HU yearbooks. The center had every yearbook as early as 1914. I found some awesome images but was not allowed to scan them in. After a frustrating day one, I decided to go to the University Archives to do more research. The archives and Day 2 proved to be more fruitful. Although the archives only had one box of images dedicated to BGLO's, I found some images that would be useful for my [Beyond This Place \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/beyond-this-place/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/beyond-this-place/) project. The problem: reproducing each image would cost me \$30....per image!

I went to lunch a little disappointed, ate my food, and decided to go back out to finish my search. On the way out the commons, I noticed a sign to my left. The sign said "The Bison"...HU's Yearbook Office. It was a breath of fresh air. I went in and introduced myself, explained my project, and was granted incredible access to old yearbooks that I thought were only in possession of the archives. The director of the Yearbook offered me a scanner and told me I could stay as long as I wanted. When a door shuts, God opens a window. I spent all day in that little room. Scanning images from 1949 to 1997. I only scanned the ones I felt would have a role in my project but came away with at least 20 photographs from historic Howard.

Overall, this go around was fruitful. My goal of meeting people, finding photographs and finding a story was right on point. I was fortunate to be on campus during the 95th Anniversary of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. Meeting some of the brothers was a pleasure. We talked about how it felt to be a member of the ALPHA chapter of Sigma. What were the hardest challenges? What kind of work do they do? How did they feel their chapter was different? I even met fellow photographer! They hosted a question answer session for students to ask membership and general questions to BGLO's. It was funny for me to sit in. I'm sure no matter where you go, people ask the same questions about BGLO's. What was interesting to me was the attitude surrounding certain questions. It was the same attitude I've heard on the West coast and the Midwest. Attitude which can best be presented at a informational near you. You know what I'm talking about questions about the definition of paper, how long is the process, and questions addressing stereotypes of BGLO's. I was puzzled but enlightened that even ALPHA chapters of these organizations deal with the same issues.

Anyway, overall the trip was great. I learned two important things: 1) Howard University has some of the most beautiful sisters I've ever seen. 2) I need some business cards ASAP

A special shout out to my guides Virginia (AKA) and Marcus (ΑΦΑ) for showing me around and making me feel comfortable on campus. I cant wait to come back. There are SO many stories to be told.



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/01/Howard-University-1949-1997-01.jpg>

<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/01/Howard-University-1949-1997-02.jpg>



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/01/Howard-University-1949-1997-03.jpg>



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/01/Howard-University-1949-1997-04.jpg>

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← (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2008/12/16/beyond-this-place-a-neos-perspective-fundamentals-of-photo-j-final/>)

One Response

Jesus Diaz

(<http://www.greekster.tv>)



Wow, this sounds like a trip to the motherland Mecca-like tours should be setup for Greeks to pay homage to the founders. We would be honored to have you share this voyage and future trips on our greek website. Nice writing style Jarrad.

January 14, 2009 at 4:34 am

Leave a Reply

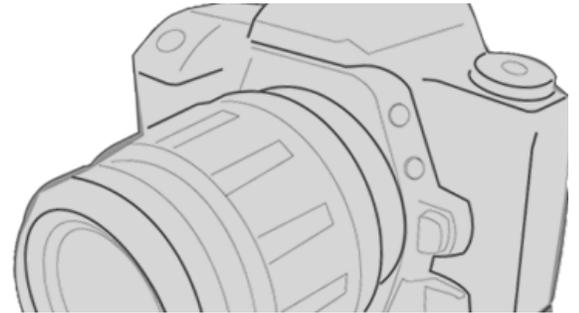
Enter your comment here...

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☺

JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



Greek Think: Pledging as a Social Contract?



Reproduced with permission from Howard University Bison Yearbook Office.

Greek Think is for my random thoughts about the status of Black Greek Life. Hopefully, these discussions (Which I encourage people to post back to) can help me find story ideas for *Beyond This Place*. So please read and reply!

After church today, I went home and began to browse the Internet like I normally do. I was doing some searching for resources to put into my upcoming presentation and remembered a site that was full of controversy and dialogue. Juicycampus.com was introduced to me for the first time last semester and can easily be the quickest way to determine the social climate on any given campus in America AND is also the easiest way to destroy a healthy one. Because the post are anonymous people will go to great lengths to make their opinions heard under the banner of secrecy. I decided to entertain myself and read some of the post, mostly about childish things, but then came across multiple post for a specific University about Black Greek Letter Organizations and the difference between pledging vs. paper. While I refuse to personally talk about that specific topic in this online forum, it did spark some interesting dialogue on this anonymous website. Of course this underground physical and mental obstacle course had been made formally illegal in 1989 after the death of [Joel Harris](#) (<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=950DE2DE1331F933A15753C1A96F948260>). Although mostly unacknowledged, the practice still continues today. What was interesting was the multiple post for this Universities Greek life openly discussed the difference between pledging and paper and included post from the general campus community and Black Greeks on the campus. "...i don't get what 'they went paper' means?" one user posted. A swift response posted "it

means that they just signed some damn PAPER then paid some damn PAPER!!! They don't know s___ about the letters they wear and did not earn the right to wear em! thats what PAPER means...". Other posted similar comments citing that somehow the persons involved had to prove themselves in the upcoming semester.

What was interesting to me was the huge stress on specific organizations on campus who pledged and who did not. I wondered to myself, Dang! People are putting out all this supposedly SECRET information out on the Internet for everyone else to read? What happened to discretion? The understanding that what ever happens in the house, stays in the house? What made it even worse was the other BGLO members were happily joining in on the dialogue. Now, I'm not claiming to be an authority in any way, shape, or form on how one should govern his/her organization, but I feel that the spirit of our BGLO founders would question this act. Are we not the SAME Greeks who took a pledge to uphold our organizations principles? I dont remember 'slander and degradation of Black people' being in **MY** oath. Unfortunately, the reality is so much dirty laundry was aired out in the open that it contributes to the NEGATIVE reinforcement that BGLO's are NOT relevant in the 21st Century. But was the social structure around pledging always this way?

No. The picture above shows the newest pledges of the Alpha chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. (ZΦB) after the first Sunday of their pledge process. These, and similar scenes like it, were the norm under legal pledge lines. There was no question about if someone was paper vs. pledged because they ALL pledged, and EVERYBODY knew it. Does this make it better? I thought about the post made on Juciy-Juice.com (a name given to the site by my Frat brother who said the site was for little children) and why the stigma of pledging was so important to a generation who had never witnessed the social responsibility of openly pledging another. The image above is one of my favorites I found at Howard University this winter. It's honesty and openness is what has lead me to the theory that pledging, as defined prior to 1970's, served as a social contract among the Fraternity/Sorority and it's members. I believe that by having open pledge lines and experiences that the community was able to identify the prospective members and not only give them support publicly and privately, but also hold the current members of that Fraternity/Sorority ACCOUNTABLE for the aspirants well being and personal safety. Does this make it better? Well, when it was legal prior to 1989, there were still incidents of hazing, but I wonder now if new circumstances would allow for different outcomes. I can't help to speculate on what would happen if those same guideline were true today.

University systems all across America have tightened their policies regarding pledging and hazing. Specifically some believe more so for BGLO's. As one brother of mine put it, "They're waiting for us to get caught committing suicide." Would current cases of hazing cease to exist if the combination of University recourse and public accountability played a factor in how a current members choose to physically or mentally 'test' an aspirant for initiation? If guidelines were put in place that allowed for public display of potential members, bringing the old traditions of open air pledging back, what do you think would result in the new found responsibilities placed on the current members? Does this make it better? It would certainly blow up the whole paper vs. pledged conversation, and maybe that would allow us to start being responsible citizens who actually care about our aims. Regardless, the goal would be to get back to the times when our BGLO's were never questioned, but asked.

Please Note: I am not making a suggestion on how things should or should not be done. I merely offer my thoughts for your consideration and feedback. Please process any of this WITH me: Juicy-Juice, BGLO responsibility, etc. You can reply to this post below by clicking the words "reply".



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This entry was posted on January 26, 2009. It was filed under [Beyond This Place](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/beyond-this-place/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/beyond-this-place/>), [BGLO](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/>), [Just Me](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/just-me/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/just-me/>) and was tagged with [Aims](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/aims/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/aims/>), [Beyond This Place](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/beyond-this-place/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/beyond-this-place/>), [BGLO](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/bglo/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/bglo/>), [Contract](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/contract/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/contract/>), [Hazing](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/hazing/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/hazing/>), [Howard](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/howard/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/howard/>), [JuicyCampus](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/juicycampus/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/juicycampus/>), [Oath](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/oath/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/oath/>), [Pledging](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/pledging/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/pledging/>), [Zeta](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/zeta/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/zeta/>).

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[← \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/01/21/first-take-columbia-mlk-celebration/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/01/21/first-take-columbia-mlk-celebration/)

10 Responses

Mary Poletti

Hi Jarrad! Even though I am an alumna of a white sorority and you and I talked just last week about the fundamental differences between white and black Greek life, I see this as one similarity worth commenting on. I was never hazed as a pledge and am very much against hazing, as are theoretically all of the houses I've come in contact with, yet many of the Greeks I know who were hazed wear it as a badge of honor. They see hazing as a shared trial that strengthens their bond to the house to which they've pledged their loyalty and, indeed, demonstrates their loyalty to the active members of that house. I've never been part of a system that did open-air pledging (and I'm fascinated by your description of it), but I think it would be interesting to see how that would play out—for all Greeks, actually.

Perhaps if all pledging activities (I hesitate to reuse the word "hazing" with all of its negative connotations) were to take place in public, it would certainly affect the sort of hoops through which a pledge would be asked to jump. This might be a little bit of an extreme solution, but I'm just throwing it out there. Certainly, public pledging and public display of pledges would show a pledge that he/she is always a representative of their given house and should conduct him-/herself as such. Just random ideas. Thanks for pointing me to your blog,



and thanks for sharing good thoughts like these!

January 26, 2009 at 4:06 am

Scarlett Hardin<http://myspace.com/angiebelleai>

Had! Just wanted to let you know that I stopped by and checked your blog out. I am going to refrain from commenting for discretion's sake, but I did enjoy your post very much.



Post a Facebook status the next time you add something.

January 26, 2009 at 9:53 am

Abe Cox<http://abecox.blogspot.com>

like we talked about the other night, we are no longer in the same org's that our founders were in. The youth/future are coming into power. J Atkinson will probably be general body prez in 10 years.... Maybe lol. But we cannot let people who get beat up in an undisclosed location and then sign a piece of paper and pay their pieces of paper dictate what is real. I was taught that we should be able to do everything with no reservation on those who cannot. But then again my chapter is the ish and is loved by ALL lol. Love the post, Black Greeks should take a one year hiatus, figure some things out then unleash on society a new wave of young individuals ready to change the country once again. A Rebirth iGuess.

Peace.

January 27, 2009 at 7:27 am

Naveed Shan

Great Post Jarrad

It's interesting to read this, coming from a multicultural fraternity I am currently seeing my org. going in the reverse direction from open "public" pledge programs to private processes and going underground. Is it a good thing? Not too sure yet, it's only been recently that we've seen many of our chapters make this change so we will see. I think the majority of hazing incidents come from the more traditional Greeks in which alcohol related incidents are the most common theme.

As far being "paper" I wasn't very familiar with the term until my 2nd year in the frat. Being around for a good amount of time I've come to the understanding that regardless of what others refer to you as, it's what you do for your org and how well you represent your org that matters, not how hard you pledged or what you went through to cross that matters although most of the time the two are correlated.

January 28, 2009 at 8:45 pm

Bryan Henderson

First, I would just like to say what a beautiful website this is. If people don't already know Jarrad Henderson is a Real dude and loves to speak his mind on Real ISSUES ..shoooooot. he's an HENDERSON! , So this would not of been brought up unless it was a REAL issue and something was itching his brain.

As an adolensce with my Father and Big Ears Brother Jarrad, I was introduce to BGLO's through a step show Omega Psi Phi was putting on in the great city of St. Louis. The first thing that sruck me was the energy and fire of the steps that was moving the bleachers, the next thing I notice was the sexy woman sitting next to me rocking her Pink and Green jacket and screaming a very loud high pitched sound:). The last thing i notice, was the chant of all the members got together and sung to the crowd(still remebered it to till this day). Back then it was a beautiful thing to see the unity of Black Men in an unorganized and violent part of the city. Now however it seems to just be a popularity contest throughout some schools and means for acceptance throughout others. Fraternities to me have always meant much more than that. Getting back to the community, Knowing the history of BLGO's(Not just yours but others ..Which Jarrad is good atmight i add:p), and also the unity between the BLGO. I know there has to be individuality in the Organizations, but to some people(me in particular) I would like to see the attributes of BLGO's I remember at the age of 12, then you would have potential prospects that would pledge on the greater good of the BLGO(History, Unity, and Future Purpose) That's the Organization I would love to pledge to. As a "NON-Greek"(but very complex and complicated individual;)) I would like to address the following issues I see wrong in Black Greek Organizations. 1. Why does it seem like some Fraternities seem one sided in the members who are in them. Some members I have met

love to throw up their sign and be recognized but don't have the slightest clues of the history of their Organization or how it was started.

2. Why does BLGO's feel they should only have some events and only on founders week(STOP BEING LAZY,people are interested!!) 3.I

love the traditions of BLGO's, hazing or not.

Last but not least....I would like to end this post on saying what my mentor Jarrad Henderson told me. "If you ever join any fraternity, It'll be like joining a dysfunctional family." I asked Jarrad, Whats the job of a new comer? To make the family better? He said, "Naw, it's to be the best member you can be! I love my blood brother!!!

If you would like to answer these questions, emial me. [Mr.bryan.henderson@gmail.com \(mailto:Mr.bryan.henderson@gmail.com\)](mailto:Mr.bryan.henderson@gmail.com)

Love you Brother and Keep them on they toes;)

Salami, Eggs, and Bacon..Im oUT!!

January 29, 2009 at 8:57 am

gibney

Hey Jarrad. I like your post and especially the open questions. These are a lot of the questions I've asked, though I was never a part of a fraternity (at least in name).

My track team got in trouble once (a couple of years before my time) for posting pictures of potentially "dangerous" hazing procedures. I put "dangerous" in quotes because the hazing could have been seen from a few different angles. There were both men and women involved.

I know that sounds bad.

But, in my opinion, the hazing itself was not entirely deviant, though VERY close to the line. The administration, however, placed that line much more conservatively than I do and athletes were dealt the consequences.

Now, I know what benefits a certain amount of hazing can have. I have had my share and have dealt a little myself. But I tell myself I know where that line is. "Good" hazing and "bad" hazing. Easy, right?

Maybe I do, but that's not enough. One man's punishment is another man's revenge.

The problem with hazing is that it evolves. One day you yell at a pledge, the next year you make him do your laundry. He takes that as a green light to abuse his own pledges any way he pleases. And he has the "right" because he, himself, was abused in a way.

This continues through the history of a frat/team/brotherhood/race/species as long as it exists. Hazing, while building understanding and empathy between people, really spreads hate and violence of a psychological, if not physical, sort.

As part of a BGLO especially, I think these are the qualities a fraternity wants to avoid. Now is not the time to create brotherhood by means of demonstrating another's weaknesses, but by highlighting similar strengths. Show pledges what the brotherhood is about, not how it can possibly destroy them.

I think, that way, you'll find a more devoted and motivated group of young men who don't need paper NOR submission to define their existence in the brotherhood to which they truly belong.

It's a really tough situation to overcome. In the aftermath of that track hazing incident I mentioned, involving black and white members (if that matters), men and women, we were the ones who truly suffered. We had to deal with heightened administration and meetings with the dean over the smallest things you can imagine. We couldn't do ANYTHING because of stupid things our elders had done.

It's the future who suffers. Hazing, like discrimination, is a short-term solution. In the long-run, it weakens relationships and presents a false sense of agreement.

In short, I don't think "paper" is the solution. I think alternatives to hazing are the real answer. Make pledges prove themselves in other ways, ways that cement their devotion to the values of the brotherhood they're joining.

Sorry for the long-windedness. Peace.

January 30, 2009 at 1:11 pm

Trareekniparf
<http://vertu-store.ru>

Your site displays incorrectly in Mozilla, but content excellent! Thanks for your wise words.

February 6, 2009 at 5:13 am

Tre'

What's up Frat-

This is an interesting topic and speaking to old school (Those who Pledged above ground) I have heard numerous stories about their pledge process and it varies for orgs and decade. My friend's mother who pledged Delta in the early 70's pledged for a year and stated although she was never "touched", though she had to work hard for her letters. I have spoken with other women/men in various organizations that will give you different accounts of what it was like for them at that time, they seem to be on the same page as far as what it meant to pledge.

The issue with our generation is that we have a jacked up view of what pledging is and what it means to pledge. People talk about individuals coming through MIP not knowing anything, but you have people who have been on for "months" getting hazed and barely know any info, but claim to be "made" old school. The idea of bringing back an above ground process seems like it would be a great, but could spell danger for any organization, if what hazing means isn't accurately spelled out for the pledge and the university. For instance, walking in line, taking orders, is seen as hazing. Also laws would need to be put in effect that will hold the individual who is pledging more accountable for the willingness to participate in said activities. People are now using fraternity/sorority lawsuits as a get rich quick scam. Fraternities/Sororities also would need monitor pledge activities a lot closer than before to minimize hazing risk. I believe it will never be like it was, but be nice to have something better than what we as the NPHC have now. If an above ground process was brought back, do you think that would cause more division between BGLO members who didn't have that and those that did?

February 14, 2009 at 2:41 pm

Justin Smith

What year is this picture because the woman in the background looks like presidential candidate Shirley Chisholm for some reason. I'm sure i am mistaken but just wondering.

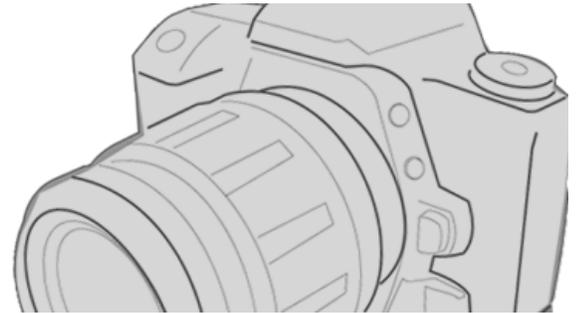
February 19, 2009 at 9:55 am

Diopierce

продам Форд-Фокус 2008 года за 200 тр. торг возможен. срочно!!!
 +7 960 200 9209

March 7, 2009 at 9:02 pm

JARRAD HENDERSON PHOTOGRAPHY



ZΦB: Such...I mean, Sooo Sweet Sisters



The wonderful women of Zeta Phi Beta (ZΦB) Sorority Inc. allowed me to follow the Neos of Winter 2008 during the days that led up to their probate. Below this post you will find a similar photo project I did with the Deltas at MU, but unlike the wonderful Delta event I knew this event was going to happen a few days in advance which made me jump out my seat at the possibility of going deeper into the preparation process.

I deeply appreciate the ladies of the Chi Kappa Chapter of ZΦB for allowing me into their lives during this important process. I only posted a few images

online as I have SO many great shots of last night. Im hoping this will be part two of the *Beyond This Place* video portion of the project! Stay tuned for Much, Much more.



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/01/2009-11-26-106681.jpg> <http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/01/2009-11-26-106681.jpg> <http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/01/2009-11-26-106681.jpg>



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/01/2009-02-01-zeta-remade-1646.jpg>

<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/01/2009-02-01-zeta-remade-1646.jpg>



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This entry was posted on February 1, 2009. It was filed under [Beyond This Place](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/beyond-this-place/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/beyond-this-place/>), [BGLO](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/>), [Just Me](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/just-me/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/just-me/>) and was tagged with [Beyond This Place](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/beyond-this-place/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/beyond-this-place/>), [BGLO](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/bglo/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/bglo/>), [Greetings](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/greetings/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/greetings/>), [Neo](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/neo/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/neo/>), [Neophyte](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/neophyte/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/neophyte/>), [Probate](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/probate/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/probate/>), [Sigma](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/sigma/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/sigma/>), [Sisterhood](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/sisterhood/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/sisterhood/>), [University of Missouri](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/university-of-missouri/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/university-of-missouri/>), [Zeta](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/zeta/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/zeta/>), [Zeta Phi Beta](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/zeta-phi-beta/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/tag/zeta-phi-beta/>).

[→ \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/02/03/im-a-man-of-my-word/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/02/03/im-a-man-of-my-word/)

[← \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/01/31/first-take-my-new-favorite-rockstar/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/01/31/first-take-my-new-favorite-rockstar/)

3 Responses

Jaqui Rogers

You have a genuine talent for capturing emotion, Jarrad. With every picture, there is a story; and while the viewer may not know the 😊 specific background behind the message, it's evident one exists...that's natural talent...Peace and Blessings

February 4, 2009 at 1:04 am

Rhoshawndra

Always powerful...always truth of that moment! Thanks for being you Number! Once again excellent photos!

February 4, 2009 at 1:28 pm

Your Best Friend

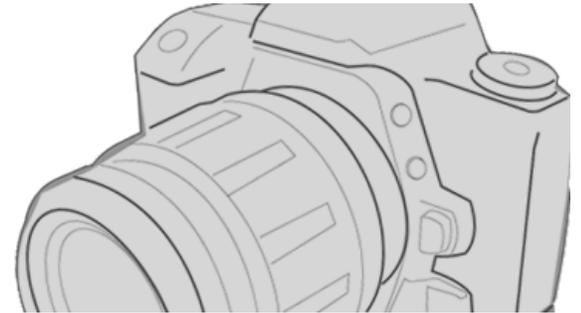
Great photos. They have canes hmmmmmm.....lol.

J. Thompson
Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc.

March 12, 2009 at 9:37 pm

JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



New Blood. Old Feeling.



There is a pure spirit in this point of a young mans life. You're so ready to finish when really you're just beginning. Something about the road you've traveled, the things you accomplish that you never thought you could, and the triumph of controversy makes the probate the ultimate measure of

Fraternity/Sorority allegiance. Honesty can be found here. The probate is the formal introduction of the newest members of a BGLO to the community.

Despite popular beliefs, this show isn't only about the hype and the excitement that surrounds the showmanship of the probate itself. In this moment is an opportunity to identify the men/women that the community can hold accountable to the high standards of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Omega Psi Phi, Delta Sigma Theta, etc. The people in the audience bear witness to the public pledge that these men and women stand for something bigger than themselves. It is the prophytes and the community that have to hold the brothers ACCOUNTABLE for their actions (or lack thereof).

I have always maintained the stance that if we, as Alphas, are not doing things that align with "Manly Deeds, Scholarship, and Love For All Mankind." then we have reached the apex of our greatest usefulness, at which point, we will have no purpose. This was the exact prediction that was made in 1952 in the words of my Jewel, Henry Arthur Callis, "I fear that in another generation, the relationship of the years 1890-1920 in the establishment and growth of Alpha and the subsequent Greek letter societies, will be lost entirely. When that occurs our usefulness will be over."

The energy one feels during that moment of purity, that sizzling sensation that runs down your spine when you're unmasked for the first time, that feeling of invincibility in your new BGLO should be kept close to your heart. Harness it, Cherish it, Love it, it needs to resurrect itself through your commitment to the very community you stood in front of to proclaim your victory. That same fire needs to be present in your attitude and position at all times. Manipulate it to help your community, not to destroy it. We ALL must remember those years of 1890-1920. WE ALL MUST REMEMBER WHO WE ARE!!!!

But enough logic and theory (THX Lauryn). Congrats to the Spring 2009 initiates of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Zeta Alpha Chapter at the University of Missouri who welcomed four new brothers to the Frat last night. Here are some flicks. Please leave comments.



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→ (http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/04/09/fill_and_balance/)

← (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/04/05/advanced-techniques-roller-derby/>)

8 Responses

iashe

I love the lead image- talk about raw emotion!

April 7, 2009 at 6:57 pm

Troy Spurlock

Congrats to the new brothers of ZA. Man the first picture brought a smile to my face and made me reminisce about my NEO and the emotion I felt. There was truly a deep sense of accomplishment, perseverance and responsibility after I crossed the "burning sands". Plus a brother just wanted to release some energy and kick it to feel normal after a long arduous road.

It does my heart good and makes me proud that my chapter, The Mighty ZA, is still doing things big and in the right way!

Congrats again brothers! I am sure our paths will cross.

Troy Spurlock

S.S. Episi Fall '92

The Anchor! (Ebony Ice)

April 7, 2009 at 7:34 pm

Darrien Echols

You're doing a great job bruh. Not just covering the bruh's but really shedding light on Black Greeks as a whole. I didn't get to come down for the probate but reading this story and seeing these pictures made me extremely hype and also made me remember the day I was introduced to the world as an Alpha man.

Darrien Echols

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Zeta Alpha Chapter

Spring 2004

S.S. Sita Sio-Jifanya

#6 Anchor

Alcatraz

April 7, 2009 at 8:00 pm

Bryan Henderson

YOooooooooo Big Ant congrats on becoming a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. You been doing big things since them good ole days as a Junior hawk. Didn't expect nothing less. Don't stop here tho bruh. Keep it moving and keep that same motivation. See ya/ Talk to ya soon.

-Bryan Henderson

p.s- Also kudos to the photographer. Whoever that may be. LMAO

April 7, 2009 at 9:22 pm

Andom Gherezghiher

New bruh's (feels good to hear, don't it?)

Like I told Kazi at your awesome probate, the work begins now. You all have been weighed, measured and found worthy of our dear brotherhood. I am so proud to have witnessed your progression and look forward to seeing all the great things that you all are sure to accomplish. All of ZA, past and present, is rooting for you and here for you in any capacity and at any time. God speed brothers and congrats !!

Andom T. Gherezghiher

#4 HerKut

S.S. IYK, Spring 2006

April 8, 2009 at 6:17 pm

Emeka

The pics are great. The visceral nature, the raw emotion captured at the precise moment, it reminded me of some of Boogie's street photography. The portrait of Kozi and the pic of anthony running down the aisle were intimidating and energetic respectively. Keep it up.

April 9, 2009 at 2:20 am

Montel Evans

That solo picture of Kazi definitely makes a great "Beyond This Place" photo because just looking at that picture alone, one can grab away passion and some type of story of what this all means to him. I'd even stretch to say that his grit is almost better than mine. lol

Montel Evans

#2 BI-POLAR

Spr. 2008

S.S. Tano Jasiri Binadamu

Zeta Alpha Chapter

April 9, 2009 at 1:50 pm

Whitney W.

I just wanted to say that the photo of Kazi by himself is absolutely beautiful! I don't know the technical terms but I know a good photo when I see it and that is a great one. I love your work and I am thoroughly excited for the next Beyond This Place piece. Outstanding work Jarrad!

-Whitney W.

April 12, 2009 at 4:40 pm

Leave a Reply

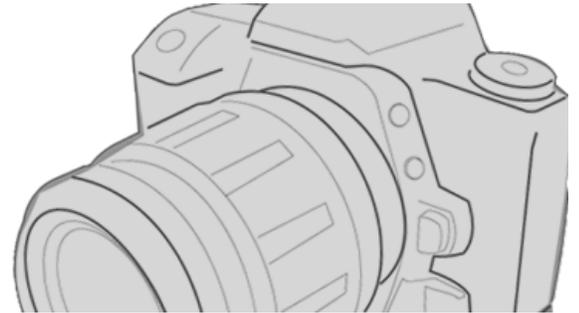
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⤵

JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



EPJ: Final Project Proposal



Electronic Photojournalism. Sounds almost redundant now a days huh? Well, EPJ is a course I am taking this semester at the University of Missouri. I have chosen to allow this class to help hone in my skills in Adobe Dreamweaver, Adobe Flash, and overall design/layout. I've already put some of my education at use, designing a page for my chapter brothers at Mu Eta to collect pre-sale ticket money to their annual [Pharaoh Step Classic](#)

(<http://www.mueta1976.com>). My previous experiences have taught me that if I would like to survive in such a meticulous class, that I need to find something I like to motivate me to do the work at a high level.

For this reason, I would like to pursue my ever-evolving body of work on Black Greek Life. My project entitled "*Beyond This Place: Documenting the Visual History of African American Fraternities and Sororities*" would serve as the perfect forum to build a foundation for a web project that would be presented as part of my overall Masters project. Slowly, but surely all my pieces are starting to come together and the result should be a project incredibly comprehensive for further use/study (one my classmates will supportive of and one I will be proud of).

Unlike any other Americans, people of African descent have had an ongoing cultural identity crisis since being freed from the institution of slavery. Too far removed from their African roots to have held onto any significant culturally relevant rituals and customs, the people who knew only a world that excluded them as first class citizens began the process of finding themselves. This process to discover the identity of what it meant to be "African American" has been explored in a way that can be considered organic to the shaping of a new culture. This original Black culture would, in its worst form, fall subject to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and experience disproportionate effects of social-economic disparity; In its best form it would give rise to social triumphs through the Black Arts, Black Power, and Civil Rights Movements. One of these successful institutions would be the development of Black fraternities and sororities.

Beyond This Place exists to document the important history of BGLOs, the role these organization play in shaping the African American college experience, and

the challenges faced by these organizations in the 21st Century. Examples of story ideas would be the current financial state of fraternity/sorority chapters, recourse from hazing allegations or convictions, rise of interracial membership, implementation of national programs (voting registration being a crucial and important one during the 2008 Presidential campaign), and the probate performance/ritualistic aspects of BGLOs. Eventually I hope my Masters work will provide a foundation for a book project with an online component.

More specifically for my EPJ class, I would like to propose a story idea which concerns an upcoming national step show. The Sprite Step Off is the largest step show in history. Giving away 1.5 Million dollars is a big deal, even bigger for the Black orgs who haven't ever been nationally sponsored. I feel I can find great purpose in this opportunity. I have already began reaching out to Sprite organizers in hope to get backstage access in the coming weeks. The competition will yield all types of stories: What do people think about Sprite's sponsorship? Who are the teams performing and what are their motivations? What will happen to that money? All are compelling issues. I would love to follow one or two teams through my project and figure out their motivations starting at the regional qualifying round in St. Louis, MO this upcoming weekend. The following weekend, MU will be swallowed in the hype as Sprite brings its national tour here to Columbia, MO. I am extremely excited about this opportunity. The essence of stepping itself is something that is multimedia worthy. Besides the show itself, I would like to use images, video and audio from the performances to enhance what I like to call my step and strife profiles. These profiles will focus on the issues and challenges the teams face while in and outside of the competition. The goal would be to show the humanity in these members of the fraternities and sororities who are basically helping Sprite build stronger ties with the African American and college student demographic. my challenges will probably be the fact that I need to get access early! I have reached out to a few of the contacts I was able to find after some tough research.

Documenting a culture is a difficult task. I feel the audio and multimedia has to go beyond the beats and rhythms of the culture. We dont need another representation of the entertainment facets such as in [Stomp The Yard \(http://www.sonypictures.com/homevideo/stomptheyard/\)](http://www.sonypictures.com/homevideo/stomptheyard/). What I am proposing is a type of project that has NEVER been done before. A collection of images/stories which explain a cultural phenomena, capable of withstanding some of the most troubled times in our nations history. In a time when there is so much stress on diversity, one must take the opportunity to preserve his/her own heritage in order to bring something to the table. I look forward to the work to come.



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This entry was posted on September 20, 2009. It was filed under [Electronic Photojournalism \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/electronic-photojournalism/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/electronic-photojournalism/).

[→ \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/09/24/first-take-1-day-madness/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/09/24/first-take-1-day-madness/)

[← \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/09/18/epj-website-critique-the-stone-the-fox/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/09/18/epj-website-critique-the-stone-the-fox/)

One Response

[Bill Bartmann](#)

<http://www.xbox360achievements.org/forum/member.php?u=239338> I did a search on the topic and found most people will agree with your blog. Keep up the good work mate!

October 9, 2009 at 10:47 am

Leave a Reply

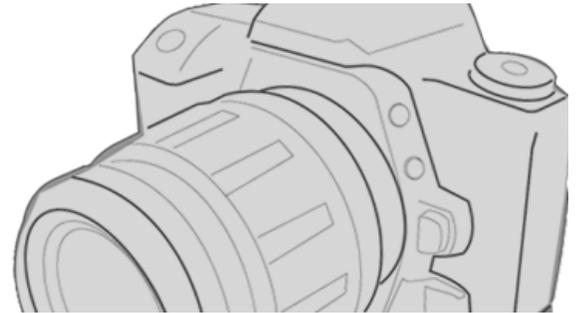
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⤵

JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



First Take: 1-Day Madness



The purpose of the one day story is important. Even during my time in Tampa for the NABJ Conference, I was told to shoot everything like a story...even the boring ones. Below are some of my images for my first one day story about the New Eyes and BGLOs.

New and returning students gather to watch the showmanship of dance, stepping, and strolling during Fall Fest 2009 at the University of Missouri. The Fall Fest event is sponsored by the Gaines-Oldom Black Culture Center and serves to introduce Black students to University resources and student organizations.

Attention glares over the ice cold brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. as Kendall Dumas "sets off" a stroll. For many new eyes, the relationship of organizations and their collective group identities help in the excitement of the shows. Historically, the "APE" identity assumed by members of Alpha Phi Alpha has only recently been an icon in the organizations 103 year history.

A group of Mizzou's Freshman class observe the performance of the brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. during Fall Fest 2009 at the University of Missouri. For many students, Fall Fest is the first glimpse into the world of Black Greek Letter Organizations. Beyond the attractive allure of stepping lies a foundation of scholarship, service, and a life-long commitment to brotherhood/sisterhood. These organizations have been found to dramatically increase the retention and academic success rate of Black



student populations all across the nation and continue to help bridge the gap in educational achievement. s

Mizzou freshman "PG" Johnson takes time to observe a performance during Fall Fest. Johnson, like many University of Missouri Freshman had never seen Black Fraternity or Sorority members this way before. Many of the students pull thier Black Greek references from movies like "Stomp the Yard" which depicts organizations from a purely entertainment based point. Fall Fest does more by allowing these students an opportunity to enjoy themselves as well as get in front of reasources which will help them during thier Mizzou career.

Brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fratenity, Inc. "hop" in showmanship Wednesday, September 9, 2009 at the University of Missouri. Omega Psi Phi is one of the nine historically Black Greek Letter Organizations found in the US today. The first fraternity founded at an Historically Black Campus on November 17, 1911, Omega Psi Phi has now expanded with over 750 chapters. Mizzou's Epsilon Delta Chapter was established in 1971.

AND IF I COULD ADD ONE MORE IMAGE (JUST NOT SURE WHERE)





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This entry was posted on September 24, 2009. It was filed under [BGLO](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/bglo/>), [Picture Story](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/picture-story/) (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/category/picture-story/>).

→ (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/10/04/this-is-what-it-is-about/>)

← (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/09/20/epj-final-project-proposal/>)

One Response

[Black on Campus](#)

<http://blackoncampus.com>) love this series of photos! Thanks for capturing this event with such beautiful and vivid images.

December 9, 2009 at 4:19 pm

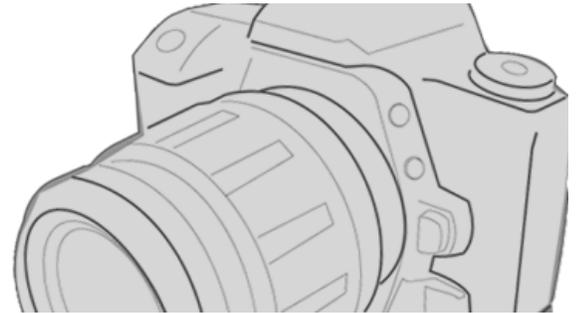
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☺

JARRAD HENDERSON PHOTOGRAPHY



This Is What It Is About



Sure. The Sprite Step Off could have brought an artist like Drake to perform at the University of Missouri this weekend. They could have had more teams. They could have lowered the price of admission. Instead, Columbia, MO got a taste of a beautiful culture. What the Step Off did do is give people an opportunity to learn more about Black greeks, provide a (dare-I-say) CRACKIN' Big Boi aka Daddy Fat Sacks aka Sir Luscious Left-foot concert, and give \$4,500 to the local Boys and Girls club. There is so much I could respond to in this post, but Im so excited to know the

true message of these events is being coupled with a national service effort. So, if you get mad about spending your \$21.50 this weekend, just consider your cash a donation to the community you pollute. Thats right. If you're not giving back, you're polluting the environment you are in; socially, culturally, and academically. I sincerely hope Sprite will see fit to bring the event back to Columbia if they have another competition. I'm not saying the competition is old gold, 😊 but there is an opportunity to learn something here. Hope you like the images.



[http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/un\(b0686jarrad\)henderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/dsc8026.jpg](http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/un(b0686jarrad)henderson.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/dsc8026.jpg)



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← (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/09/24/first-take-1-day-madness/>)

4 Responses

Taylor Glascock

(<http://temrey89.blogspot.com/>)ayer like no other!

October 5, 2009 at 7:44 am

April Janel

You are so right! Stepping is a culture...not just a "show" where Greeks jump around....your photos really capture this! Great job!

October 5, 2009 at 10:26 am

August

(<http://www.augustkryger.com/>)the frame with the little boy stepping on the left and the big bro on the right, very nice moments man.

October 12, 2009 at 9:53 am

Steve Remich

(<http://www.steveremich.com/>)ks like it was fun. I like the lead image although it is a little cluttered and borderline too cluttered. Still works b/c of the moment though.

Try to push it harder. Try to get beyond the event itself. Show what it feels like. You have some nice shots of the official events, but I don't see anything that goes any deeper than that. It looks like what I would see if I went to the event, not your interpretation, your insight in to the events or the access that you got that your average spectator could not. Show me something I would never see unless I looked at your pictures—that's uniquely Jarrad's vision. Show me what you felt, not only what you saw. A little ambiguous I know. Get behind the scenes, show me personalities so I can connect with them. Get beyond the event and show what the event means for people. I see the performer on stage, but really I am more interested in the people that came to see him. Show me why this is so important to these people.

I may be responding as much to what you said about "...letting students learn more about Black greeks" as much as the images above. I love this idea, its something I have never seen before, its interesting and is obviously something you are passionate about, have a connection to and could turn in to a killer story. However, this set of pictures (and I realize this is one event and not a story in itself), doesn't do that for me. Step contests are actually the only one thing I do know (or have seen at least been around) about Black greek organizations.

You're title says "This is what it's all about", but I am not sure what "it" refers to and I suspect its about something deeper than dancing. Whether its culture, community, brotherhood, tradition, whatever, but I don't quite get that yet. There are some nice side moments too, but they don't quite say "culture" to me.

Also,...photo gallery plugin. The thumbnails are big enough to see but too small to look good and I didn't pull them up. The full res pictures are gi-normous, 4000 pixel images, which I can't even load anyway.

Hope all is well at MU. Love seeing your stuff. I really like your ideas, I would just encourage you to go deeper to make the work feel more personal.

October 13, 2009 at 12:29 pm

Leave a Reply

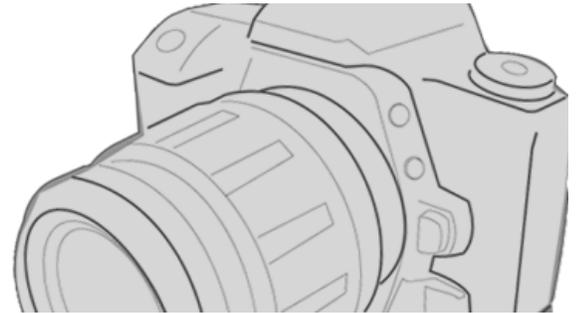
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☺

JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



And the Winner Is....



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/lead.jpg>

"What do you think?" asked a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. who stopped me as I walked up to the balcony. I hesitated to field her question because I was ready to finish watching the Epsilon Chapter of Zeta Tau Alpha (ZTA) perform their step routine, which was drawing incredible applause from the crowd at the Atlanta Civic Center.

This young lady was convinced that the first National Sprite Step Off competition was rigged, that ZTA was drawing all of their excitement simply because they were white. So as I contemplated my answer, I knew the truth wouldn't be well received.

"It's a step show," I responded, "and as long as you realize that stepping is all about promotion and recruitment, then it doesn't really matter if they win or lose." She quickly responded, "No, I am a member of Delta Sigma Theta baby, we don't recruit. If they let these white girls win, I'm turning in my membership card!"

My first thought was "so... you're telling me that a sorority, which is the largest of the Divine Nine Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) with a surplus of 350,000 members, does not recruit? Not one member?!" My second thought came two hours later. "I hope the DST membership office gets that young lady's card like she promised."



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/0019049.jpg>

Zeta Tau Alpha (<http://www.zetataualpha.org/cms400min/>) is actually not a sorority, but a women's fraternity, with origins in Virginia. Founded in 1898 and older than any current Divine Nine (D9) organization, ZTA's is currently the third largest organization in the Pan Hellenic council with over 187,000 initiated members. Never the less, few students thought that ZTA would compete in the Sprite Step Off, nor did they think they would out step the ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Tau Chapter, to a first place finish and a \$100,000 grand prize in Atlanta, Georgia this past weekend..

Reactions were mixed. Blogs, Twitter, and [Sprite's Facebook page \(http://www.facebook.com/Sprite?ref=ts\)](http://www.facebook.com/Sprite?ref=ts) have since been overrun with messages about the travesty of this event. A white sorority winning first place? During Black History month? Wow. Most people look at the situation from afar and wonder what happened. For those of us who attended the Atlanta event, we all know exactly what happened. We saw a great show from both the Indiana AKA's and the Arkansas ZTA's. Appropriate that these two teams tear up the house considering it was a local Arkansas chapter of AKA's who originally taught the ladies of ZTA how to step.

I was able to speak with the ladies of ZTA at the show. They were nice young ladies, well prepared, and very conscious of what they were doing in Atlanta: competing to win a stepshow. They even asked to take my picture with some of their girls, calling me "pretty eyes." Yeah take it how you want to, but their grace and mission entertained me. As the final teams and Drake performed, the house awaited the results.

<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/0018247.jpg>

What you probably won't see on TV when the [finals air on MTV2 \(http://www.mtv.com/shows/sprite_step_off/series.jhtml\)](http://www.mtv.com/shows/sprite_step_off/series.jhtml), is the in house reaction. People in the Civic Center went nuts. Hip-Hop artist and Step Off host Ludacris took the stage with the second place check of \$50,000. Even Ludacris (whose mother is an AKA) knew what he was about to do and the implications it would have on BGLO culture. "This is the judges decision...not mine," he stated, "second place goes to the ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha, University of Indiana." The shock that filled the room felt like cold flakes of salt had instantly made their way into the arena, falling like beautiful snowflakes, racing to settle on everyone's tongue. I stood in awe then turned my cameras to the crowd who were booing at the decision.

I think it was at this point that the celebrity judges were instantaneously escorted out of the building. Luda handed the oversized cutout over as the ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha accepted the check, still smiling but internally a little disappointed.

Then, the first place announcement.

Ludacris shook his head walking onto stage and made the announcement reluctantly, telling the crowd that they "had to understand", that their first place prize was awarded to the ladies of Zeta Tau Alpha. The building shook with disgruntled boos from the stands. The first row of the crowd didn't seem to mind as mothers, sisters, and fathers alike cheered their ZTA girls on. Disgusted comments flooded every social media outlet as the civic center emptied. BGLO members and non-greeks alike have threatened to boycott another Sprite Step Off (which Luda made reference to in his thank you to the fans), Sprite, and Coke in general. It got me thinking; responses to the outcome were so symptom oriented that we dare not speak about the true problems that infect all D9 organizations.



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/0018361.jpg>

Just as that young lady who swore she didn't recruit for her sorority; the symptom and problem have grossly been mis-identified for a number of years in the mentality of BGLO members. The issue is not that she didn't want to recruit, but rather that her collective ego had expanded so much, that she saw no value in the process of cultivation. Many would claim that BGLOs have reached way past their own usefulness, that BGLOs have no place in today's society. This single comment has bothered me for a couple of days. It made me think: What are the main symptoms surrounding this show, and thus affecting D9 organizations who have been so outspoken about the results?

Symptom: "...we don't recruit."

Problem: I see it everywhere I go: people, who have the talent and drive to be productive members of any BGLO, go un-sought for petty reasons. In fact, the young Delta's reason to not recruit new membership could be easily taken as an excuse; an excuse that would cause any BGLO's quality of membership to deteriorate over time. This is a false statement that can be easily settled with the reality of honorary membership. Organizations actively search for prominent people to add to their ranks. If one should want their organization to thrive, would you not want to hand pick the elite of your campus, putting your organization and personal collective identity in impeccable shape? People who do not feel their organizations worth supersedes personal or chapter ego are sadly mistaken individuals. I am not saying that we give out sign up sheets and take people on a first come first served basis, but I'm stating that for people to think the D9 are not relevant is saying that YOU are not relevant. You should take that personally, I do. I know as a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., that I want every Alpha man I run across to be the best they can be, to dare to be perfect. "Dare to be perfect," a message one of my prophytes would instill in me and that I would pass on to my neophytes. Yea, so you don't recruit? Well, then you need to market the hell out of yourself, fast. It is just that Sprite has beat us to the punch and now we're mad about it.

Symptom: Stepping belongs to Black culture

Problem: What will be the single most important thing that comes out of the Sprite Step Off has yet to be determined. I would think and hope that collectively, BGLOs from all across the world were impressed with the creative entertaining shows that our members can put on. I agree, stepping is a Black thang. It's ours, Black culture's. I think it was an impressive display of the art form that has evolved after so many years, but Sprite was extremely clear that they were not limiting ethnic specific teams. No one is crying foul at the fact Chi Upsilon Sigma, Alpha Theta Omega, and Lambda Beta Alpha who all participated, did well in the competition. So is it a problem that a non-Black organization can now say they are the best step team in America?

Apparently not.

Many outspoken people on blogs and Facebook agree that they are not upset with ZTA winning the \$100,000 and first place accolades. This means that we are really mad at.....at, uuuhhh....nothing? Yes, nothing. What? Are you mad at Sprite for having the competition? For giving Black people obscene amounts of money for stepping? Come on Black people. We should really be mad that we have no clue what the history of stepping is. Sure, anyone can say "stepping is a combination of African traditions and BGLOs' traditions", but what does that mean? Why do we step? Why was this competition so important? Rhetorical? Maybe. At this point, it doesn't matter what your answer is because ZTA answered all of them in silencing fashion. We step for expression? Check. We step for love of our organizations? Check. We step to win money? Check.



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/0018301.jpg>

Symptom: Money Matters

Problem: Nikki Giovanni, one of Delta Sigma Theta's most prominent (and recruited) members has this to say in Lawrence C. Ross, Jr book, *The Divine Nine*: "... we as adults have much more in terms of monetary resources, and maybe we should do more together. It would be lovely to have a Black Greek building which we all got together and built. We've just not taken those steps." Steps huh? Like the same steps that earned Sprite and MTV major revenue? People are rightfully upset about the financial implications of the Sprite Step Off. In reaction, I can say that Sprite deserves a pat on the back for doing what all of the D9 organizations and its members haven't been able to do in years: financially support undergraduate chapters. So often undergrad chapters are pushed to provide the general organization money to continue insurance coverage, fees, and obscene charges while suffocating chapter funds to be put towards funding service and social events. Individual members who work hard for their chapters are sometimes financially burdened by the current archetype of the Black college student: involved in multiple organizations, has a job or two, is a full time student, and wants a bit of a social life. I've experienced the extreme pressure these students face when dealing with their personal financial burdens; some turning to illegal or personally demeaning activities to earn money for school. Giovanni is right. We have NEVER supported our BGLOs like we should financially. Even as membership dues, conference registration fees and initiation rates skyrocket, we are void of financial support of our undergraduate chapters. Did it really take Sprite to take this out of our hands? Yeah, but you can thank the creator of the idea, an Alpha who is a Coke-a-Cola executive, and decided to help promote/recruit people to the idea of BGLOs. So, people are right to be mad at Sprite, who will use the event as a tax write off, but who can blame the idea?

The idea that a BGLO could win \$100,000 in a step show was freaking amazing. My chapter (Mu Eta) struggled to give a \$5,000 first prize and that was a lot of money. Not to mention that along the way to the Sprite Step Off finals, teams were awarded prize money for each round for a total prize pool of \$1.5 million dollars. That is 1,500,000 U.S. currency. It would seem the financial empowerment era of Black Greekdom would commence, but were we ready for it? No.

The second place AKA's from Indiana earned a total of \$77,000 during the competition. Where does that money go? Well, according to my sources, it is paid to the University in the form of a scholarship that is applied to every individuals account. The money that hits the account makes up for the students fees and tuition, but wait! What happens when the student only accumulates \$2,000 total tuition and that check for \$10,000 hits? You guessed right. It results in the sexiest refund check in higher education history. Undoubtedly, the members will place some of the funds in a chapter account, but then what? I hope no one is running around with new kicks and rims next semester. You will and should be put on blast by your community if that money doesn't go to help your university and especially your local community.

<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/0018993.jpg>

I was so hope for this possibility. I hoped that NPHC would strike a deal with Sprite that would have a portion of the proceeds go into an NPHC account to help generate revenue for the support of undergraduate members. Lets say 1/3 of the ticket sales go to NPHC. The Atlanta show was sold out, bringing a total of 4600 people and this is at just one venue! This is money that could be used to help generate scholarships for NPHC members. Additionally, why have a \$1.5 Million dollar prize pool? Lets say we have a tournament worth \$800,000 in total prize money with another \$700,000 being put up by Sprite, awarded to NPHC if the show generates at least \$1.5 Million in revenue (which I'm sure this show will do and 152 some). I'm sure those teams would have stepped just as hard for a \$50,000



finals first place prize as \$100,000 because of the sheer novelty of that type of financial investment. That money could be put in a long-term investment to be capitalized on every year as the funds grow interest. We would have effectively empowered our D9 organizations to create their own scholarships, buildings, NPHC leadership academies, etc. You get my point.

Now I do find it interesting that members of the D9 have called out Sprite mainly for its decision to award an organization like ZTA money that should have/ could have been placed in the Black community. While this decision may seem like a popular defense to the results, I would argue that the real travesty is in the historical records of ZTA. In 1967, the Beta Tau chapter of ZTA (at Albion College in Michigan) was put on suspension and finally terminated by their national body for pledging an African American woman. Their national organization was told that Albion College would no longer be affiliated with the national body "as a result of the national organization's national procedures which conflict with Albion College policies..." To this day, ZTA doesn't acknowledge Beta Tau chapter's existence, and neither did Epsilon chapter of ZTA during their quest to the championship. If they were aware of this fact, would Black people be happier if they vowed to place all of their winnings back into the community? I wonder. The same organization that didn't allow Black membership just 43 years ago is supposed to care about the Black community now? Don't think so.

This is another reason that D9 must support our own fundraising efforts. You mean to tell me that the likes of Bob Johnson, Michael Jordan, Earl Graves, Tom Joyner, Don Thompson, and John Singleton (the list can go on of Black Americans who have the resources to contribute) cant put together the same show that Sprite did? We can't raise over \$1.5 or \$3 Million dollars in scholarships to support BGLOs and their membership? It is estimated that African American spending power in this country will exceed \$1 TRILLION (With a "T") in two years. If we can't support ourselves, boy are WE in trouble and THAT'S a problem.

http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/mg_9731.jpg

Regardless of your feelings on the Sprite Step Off, I have to point out one thing. Amongst the crowd of observers last Saturday was a particular group we should pay special attention to. I must have seen a ton of kids from ages 3 to 9 in attendance all decked out in their "I'm a future AKA" or "I'm a future KAPPA" shirts. One young man in particular had a shirt which read "Future man of AFA". I mean this kid even threw up the hand sign and had AFA scribed into his bald fade. I don't know about you, but I know that I will do everything in my power to make sure that Alpha is around when that young man needs it.

"What do you think?" asked a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. who stopped me as I walked up the balcony of the Atlanta Civic Center. "It's a step show," I responded, "and as long as you realize that stepping is all about promotion and recruitment, then it doesn't really matter if they win or lose." I lied....I wanted the AKAs to win...but not because I wanted to see ZTA lose...because I wanted to see Black people take this moment. I wanted to see people rid themselves of symptoms, excuses, doubt for once and start considering solutions for problems; problems that have plagued our community for far too long... problems that we can solve if we refuse to let our image benefit everyone else but ourselves. Best described in the poem "Invictus" is this idea: "In the fell clutch of circumstance, I have not winced nor cried aloud, and under the bludgeonings of chance, my head is bloodied, but unbowed." 5 days later, my hope was realized. Sprite released a statement saying that "we got together to do our post-competition review and found a scoring discrepancy in the sorority results... Because the scoring discrepancy can't be resolved and due to the really tight margin between the first and second place sororities, we feel that the only right thing to do is to name both Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Tau Chapter & Zeta Tau Alpha, Epsilon Chapter, co-first place winners of the Sprite Step Off." Sprite ended up awarding both ZTA and AKA \$100,000 and named them co-Sprite Step Off Champs. I wondered how many people were happy about this decision,



and in just 7 minutes, people had flooded Sprite's Facebook page....AGAIN.

To my expectation, people are still mad. Citing that their pride and integrity can't be bought and that we (BGLOs) think Sprite is still full of it. You want to see symptom driven culture? You can find it [here](http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=66681829158&topic=14267) (<http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=66681829158&topic=14267>), proving our issues are more than a simple \$50,000 fix.

If we turn from the power of serious self-examination, financial empowerment, the dismantling of false egos and problem solving, I am afraid we will all fail. I am also confident that BGLOs will find their purpose and renewed dedication to the aims of their organizations to truly embody the meaning of service in the coming years. The results of one competition should do little to dampen the spirit of the D9, but should inspire it to challenge our own beliefs and charge our members accountable for the salvation and preservation of our legacies.

And the winner is.....Zeta Tau Alpha...oh, and Alpha Kappa Alpha.....for now. :-)

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<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/0016093.jpg> <http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/0016085.jpg> <http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/0016085.jpg>

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→ (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2010/05/31/texas-to-infinity-beyond/>)

← (<http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2009/11/10/first-take-pageantry-mizzou/>)

2 Responses

STEPHANIE HENDERSON

I LOVE U JARRAD. I JUST RECENTLY TOOK AN INTEREST IN READING WHAT YOU WRITE INSTEAD OF JUST LOOKING AT YOUR PICTURES. i LOVE U AND I LOVE HEARING YOU TALK AND YOUR VOICE COMES THRU SO WELL IN YOUR WRITING.(sO SINCE YOUR "TOO BUSY" TO HIT YOUR SIS UP ILL HAVE TO SEE WHAT YOUVE BEEN DOING THRU THIS). hAVE A GREAT DAY !! LOVE YOUR BABY SISTER

March 8, 2010 at 7:31 am

Tremaine White

Bro. Henderson-

There is so much I want to say about what you wrote, but it would turn into a dissertation. I will start by saying that since the Sprite Steppoff started, it has been plagued with controversy. In the regional rounds in Chicago there was a judging error, which the crowd figured out after Sigma Gamma Rho (who brought the house down) placed 4th, I just knew that they would either place 2nd or 1st. Tau chapter AKAs came in 1st and deserved it. SGRHOS who were present at the show started fuming and later on that night the teams had been notified that it was a judging error and that the SGRHOS came in 2nd. These members took to the sprite facebook page days later saying that something fishy was going on and that they believed they had actually come in 1st place.

What concerned me was not that they were upset about what happened, but how they went about it. Members made comments threatening to sue and everything. They even started insulting the AKAs that won the regional round. Similar events happened in two other regional rounds. At the end of the day, this event was marketed to D9 orgs to draw out the crowds, although it was open to anyone who met the criteria to compete.

All D9 orgs presidents were cut a big check for partnering with Sprite. THEY should have looked over to fine print to make sure that the members wouldn't be taken advantage of and that the competition would be judged by competent Greeks, not Greeks who know nothing about stepping or celebrity judges. I am pretty sure none of the above happened on the part of D9 presidents.

I could care less about ZTA knowing how to step, but they, as well as everyone else in the competition need to make sure that they are using original steps and following the rules. I saw that they were booty popping at the end and that was against the rules. I know that Tau chapter AKAs did use some Alpha steps during the Chicago show, and even had an Alpha stepmaster help them with some of their routine. If Sprite would have had solid judges, this wouldn't be an issue, because they would have caught these things. I am also embarrassed at how passionate we are about this, oppose to BIGGER issues that we have going on in the NPHC. I wish we could build something and do events of our own. THAT SEEMS TO BE THE CURSE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS: we look out for self and have become too far removed from the concept of group cohesion. We whored out stepping to everyone and now the chickens have come home to roost. ZTA can step, but they did lack originality and a little soul. I think they won because of the wow factor, for MTV, and because they can step, but they should have lost points for some of the moves they performed. AKA TAU chapter should have lost points for the Alpha steps they did in Chicago. I hope that next year the D9 Presidents thoroughly consider this before signing on because of the \$\$\$\$\$.

The irony is some of our orgs were founded because of the racial climate of that time period, and yet some of us discriminate against a white sorority who is in a stepshow instead of looking at whether they were original in their routine or not. Hey they were all cut a check and now they probably won't have college loans to pay back, so in the end I think all participants who got cut a check need to be happy.

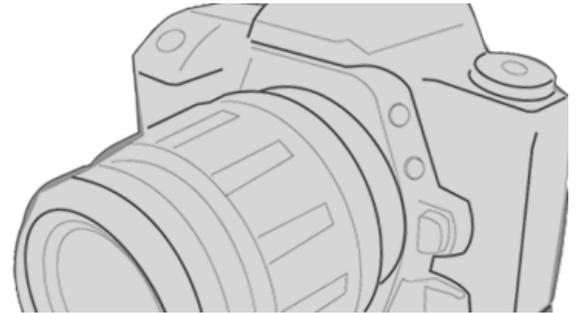
As far as the Delta who said she would turn in her membership card...it's not that deep and even if she was joking, I wouldn't joke like that. It makes you look small.

Lastly, you hit the nail on the head with this statement, "I see it everywhere I go: people, who have the talent and drive to be productive members of any BGLO, go un-sought for petty reasons." That is what is killing many orgs now. You have AKA wannabees who get picked because of how fly they dress or they have a certain look, instead of the outgoing girl who busts her azz in academics and community service who will hold the org down. With fraternities it's worst, the thug mentality and equating being a man with being aggressive/violent will be the death of us, LITERALLY. Members pick people who make their chapter hot, not people who will have longevity in the org. Then when the next line comes through you have neos who pick individuals who are worse than them. Thugs, emotionally disturbed, thieves, and individuals who can give a damn about the community are running rampant in our orgs. It makes those on the right track not want to associate with us. We can sit and say that's their loss, but with retention issues in our orgs, is it really? They preach chapter loyalty above fraternal loyalty. SMH

March 9, 2010 at 2:47 pm

JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



2010 LBC BBQ p.s. I love this camera



http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/20100826_lbcbbq_11.jpg

If I had to choose ONE camera to shoot with for my [Beyond This Place](http://beyondthisplace.com) (<http://beyondthisplace.com>) project, I'd have to choose this Nikon D3x. I have the opportunity to shoot with this beautiful camera this week while getting prepared to open the equipment window at Mizzou. Put simply: I focus on decisive moments. I don't need 12 frames per second to do the type of work I want to do. The D3x gave me the familiar feel of the Nikon D3 body with the incredible image quality that was absolutely awesome. I had to do very little sharpening and color adjustments to get these images to look the way I wanted. Basically, if you know someone at Nikon who can loan me one of these for a couple of years, please let me know. lol. More images from LBC BBQ....

http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/20100826_lbcbbq_04.jpg

Fire and Ice!

http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/20100826_lbcbbq_02.jpg

My homeboys cute daughter. They gonna have to watch out!!!!

http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/20100826_lbcbbq_09.jpg

Brothers having a good time at the LBC BBQ at the University of Missouri.



http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/20100826_lbcbbq_14.jpg

Nupes!

http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/20100826_lbcbbq_05.jpg

LaNee and her son, Jai.

http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/20100826_lbcbbq_06.jpg

The one, the only,
Marc Mayes.





★ Like

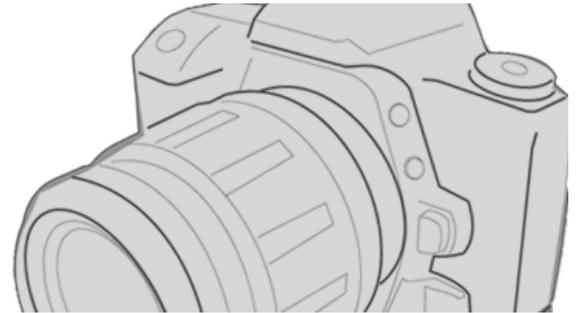
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[← \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2010/08/08/about-beyond-this-place/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2010/08/08/about-beyond-this-place/) 165 [→ \(http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2010/08/28/meet-chanecka-ana/\)](http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com/2010/08/28/meet-chanecka-ana/)

JARRAD HENDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY



Studio Bug: Ques!!!



http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/q_brand.jpg

Enthusiasm. Something every man of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. has. I finally got an opportunity to work with the brothers of Epsilon Delta Chapter at the University of Missouri. Among other things, the 'bruhs' had just gotten fresh 'hits' or brands. The significance of branding in Black Greek Letter Organizations allegedly stretches all the way back to the 1900s where members practiced the bodily scarring method to empower the members, signifying the lifetime commitment among other ritualistic beliefs the members held close.

<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/inh3357.jpg>

While little scholarly research exist on branding as a contemporary trend, there is much debate on the practice and it's relationship with branding enslaved Africans in America. Across centuries of history, branding has always been used to punish those who bore the scars. In Roman days, criminals were marked with the letter F as a mark of shame, usually on the face. I'll get more into branding at a later date, but for now, check out the 'bruhs'!!!



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/jnh3442.jpg>



[d.jpg](http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/jnh3442.jpg)



<http://jarradhenderson.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/jnh3505.jpg>



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Welcome to the New Site! 7

Posted In [Blog](#), [Delta Sigma Theta](#), [Misc.](#), [NPHC](#)

I am excited to present the first draft of my new Master project website. Here you will find information pertaining to my Black Greek Letter Organization (BGLO) project dedicated solely to the visual history and representation of BGLOs. Check out my recent work, more about this project, and leave your mark on my guestbook. More post to come soon. Also, check back for contest and event galleries. In the meantime add me on Twitter and Facebook and be sure to check back for frequent updates!

Lets start with a ROLL CALL!!!! State Your name, Organization (if applicable), Crossing Year, and give your shout outs!!!! Thanks for stopping by! 😊

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7 Comments

Bryan Henderson

December 2, 2010 at 8:48 AM

Let me be the first to congratulate you on the hard work and dedication to your project. This website is off the chain. You have nothing but fame and fourtane your way, Love you Big Bro!!

Bryan Henderson
The Dynamic MEPHI
Est. 1987

REPLY

Rachel Moten

December 2, 2010 at 6:18 PM

I also want to say congratulations on your project...as an aspiring journalist I love to see men put their talents and passion to work. I have seen the progress, changes, and

updates you have made to improve your website portfolio and I love all the work that you put into it.

Rachel Moten
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Fall 2008– Epsilon Psi

[REPLY](#)

Jarrad Henderson December 6, 2010 at 3:23 PM

Thank you so much!!!

[REPLY](#)

Seetleimimmef December 8, 2010 at 6:23 PM

Thanks, nice post. Keep up the good work

[REPLY](#)

LaShawn Pruitt January 16, 2011 at 8:36 AM

Great work!!! Keep it coming!!
LaShawn Pruitt
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Nu Eta Chapter
Spr. 09

[REPLY](#)

Brandon Pope January 16, 2011 at 10:44 AM

As always, good stuff bro.
B. Pope
Co-Founder of the **asis.

[REPLY](#)

Craig Smith January 16, 2011 at 1:34 PM

Congratulations Phrat!
Onward and Upward towards the light!

ALPHA PHI ALPHA FRATERNITY, INCORPORATED
Millersville University
Iota Sigma
FA 1998
#1 OB-1

[REPLY](#)

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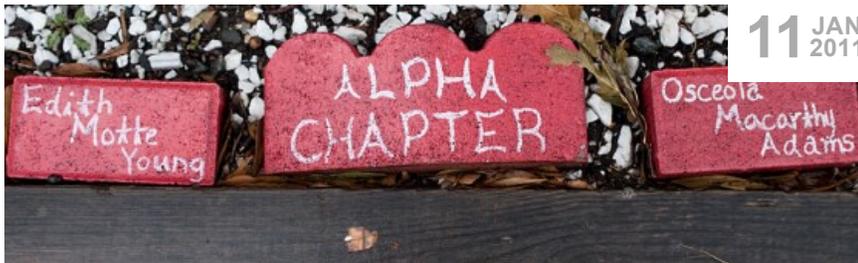
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First Take: Howard University 2

Posted In [Alpha Kappa Alpha](#), [Alpha Phi Alpha](#), [Delta Sigma Theta](#), [Iota Phi Theta](#), [Kappa Alpha Psi](#), [NPHC](#), [Omega Psi Phi](#), [Phi Beta Sigma](#), [Sigma Gamma Rho](#), [Uncategorized](#), [Zeta Phi Beta](#)

That's right, it's my return to the 'HILL'. Howard University has an energy that I haven't experienced before. My last visit, I was honored and a little dazed to be in the same space where so much history has taken place. Howard University (HU) is known as the "Cradle of Black Greek Civilization". The nickname was given because 5 of 9 BGLO's were founded at HU. The following are a small sample of what I found the last time I visited. I can't wait to see whats waiting for me this time!



Photo Courtesy of the Howard Bison Yearbook Staff.

While at HU, I spent some time in the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center and found some AMAZING images in their archives. The above image is from the 'The Bison', HU's yearbook. They were extremely nice for allowing me to work with them on finding images for my project. Here, the new Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. pledges, Archonians, line up outside of Rankin Chapel at HU in 1987. This practice was common at HU. During the first Sunday of the month, new pledges would line up and march to the center of the campus to spit information publicly to the campus

community. Needless to say that 1987 was and is a lot different from 2011.



One of the things I hope to do while at HU is photograph some Founders Day celebrations. Both the ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. were Founded this week (Jan.15,1908 & Jan.13, 1913 respectfully). I will be meeting with both groups of ladies as I travel to Washington. If there is one thing I was taught during my journey of becoming an Alpha Man, it was to respect EACH and EVERY Black Greek Organization in existence. If you have done any bit of research on these organizations, you know that there is a reason and benefit to having the brotherhoods and sisterhoods which extend around the world.



This was obviously the first time I had seen line numbers reach all the way up to the hundreds. At Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) it is not uncommon to see new member initiations reach the hundreds on a yearly basis. While all BGLOs offer both Fall and Spring initiation, currently at Howard, only Spring lines are initiated. It is one of my goals to photograph a probate in the spring. I love doing what I do because I get to meet so many great people! I will post more images when I come back from HU.



Concrete and statue monuments give HU a dose of character. Look around the campus and you will find a number of special monuments erected to represent the D9 to the fullest. It is one of the things I hope to focus on while I am there Thursday-Sunday. I will be taking the NPHC photograph on Saturday morning, Jan.15, 2010 on main campus and hope everyone can come out to say whats up!!! Stay tuned family!



I should be online at HU. Follow my Twitter updates @Beyondthisplace and on Facebook.com/beyondthisplace this SATURDAY!!! 😊 Shout out to the wonderful people who have already made my experience rewarding.

Rate This



2 Comments

Jarrad Henderson January 12, 2011 at 6:34 AM

Jake, I appreciate and respect YOU for holding up the aims of your organization. Good brothers and sisters is what keeps Greek Life relevant. We need more man. More people who care, thats all. Keep pushing my brother!

[REPLY](#)

Iman

January 19, 2011 at 9:06 AM

I recently came across your blog and just from these few stories, I can see and feel the passion you have for the Divine 9 and keeping them relevant in todays society. As a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., I commend you on your efforts and look forward to future stories.

[REPLY](#)

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ΔΣΘ Founders Day 8

Posted In [Blog](#), [Delta Sigma Theta](#), [NPHC](#)

Alpha Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Oh how I LOVE you. I spent the evening with some of the members of Deltas first chapter as they celebrated their 98th year since being founded on January 13, 1913. The story of Delta is often misunderstood. What most know is that the original Founders were members of the 1912 spring class of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Where other drop the story is really where Delta story begins.



The first public act of the Founders of Delta was to participate in the Women's Suffrage March in Washington D.C., March 1913. This political act pushed Delta into the forefront of women's rights (Black and White) in the 1900s. While Delta met some resistance for attending the march, they saw through the message of their presence.

Later, Delta Founder Florence Toms commented, "We marched that day in order that women might come into their own, because we believed that women not only needed an education, but they needed a broader horizon in which they may use that education. And the right to vote would give them that privilege." Years later, the

movement would allow women of other countries to claim their own rights. The impact Delta has had on a majority of communities is powerful.



Some of the best women I have ever met have been Deltas. At Arizona State University I have many people I admire and respect, yet, my chapter at Arizona State (MH) has had an ongoing relationship with my Delta sisters there (IK). So much so that my Alpha brothers have all married Deltas! Matter a fact, shout out to the Deltas that always hold me down (Rhoshawndra Carnes, Nikki Cannon, Valerie North, Iota Kappa, Mu Eta, etc.) Anyway, Howard was fantastic! To hear the sisters come together and celebrate the legacy of their founders was off the chain. I didn't realize this before, but a majority if not all of the Alpha Chapters at Howard like to sing in celebration. I have attached a few songs that the ladies performed today. 😊



“Doing Our Thing” : by the Alpha Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta ([Click for audio](#))

These sisters really impressed me today. I can't wait to go back! I will be doing a NPHC photo shoot at some point for the upcoming Mis-Education of the Black Greek Road Trip later this year. The legacy of Delta will hopefully be filled with another 98 years of success and growth. One thing that allows me to keep my head about the future of BGLOs are the people I meet. People are so talented, blessed, dedicated and honorable and it is one of the reasons I know Beyond This Place can help. By bringing others stories to light, I hope to bring some thought to our culture. I told someone today that the project wasn't to 'present then end the dialogue but rather to introduce the dialogue'. I'm looking forward to the tales we can tell. I kind of like that.



I'd like to thank the ladies of Delta Sigma Theta's Alpha Chapter for allowing me to spend some time with them. Check out another, and my favorite, Delta song/step!!!! I had so much fun out there with them today!!! 98 years!!! Congrats ladies. 😊

"Founders Step": by the Alpha Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta (Click for audio)

Below are other images from the day:



Alpha Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and visiting sorors on the yard after the Founders Day celebration.



Sisters greet each other before the ceremony.



In front of the famous Founders Library clock tower.



Cutie pies. Yes, that is the official caption.



This photo is for the sista on the right. Last but not least a shout out to you, Javetta, for doing what very few special members do, lead your chapter. Keep setting the example and be the brightest light that you could ever be for others.

Rate This



8 Comments

admin January 14, 2011 at 9:22 PM

Not sure what happened to my comments! I loved all your responses. We're trying to resolve the issue now! Until then, Comments are still active!

[REPLY](#)

Lauryn Mangum January 15, 2011 at 12:00 AM

Jarrad thanks for the shout out IK loves and appreciates you too! Wonderful piece!

[REPLY](#)

Sierra Jewell January 15, 2011 at 4:15 AM

i see you sorors 😊
 big ups to the photographer-
 great images !
 i'm looking forward to the
 mis-education of bglo project;
 its an on-going topic w/in
 my chapter.

[REPLY](#)

Lisa January 15, 2011 at 6:38 PM

This was a nice pice. Good work! Congrats to my beautiful Sorors!

[REPLY](#)

Tierra Ellis January 15, 2011 at 11:52 PM

Mr Jarrad Henderson!! I've known you before I even knew about Delta let alone Greeklife. I knew you were an exceedingly intelligent individual, but never really saw your works.. this was beautiful! IK loves you! 😊

-Tierra Ellis

[REPLY](#)

Katrice January 16, 2011 at 4:01 PM

Jarrad this was beautiful, I love your work! IK loves you also! Congrats Sorors on 98 years of excellence...OO-OOP!!

[REPLY](#)

Iman January 19, 2011 at 9:07 AM

OO-OOP to my sorors!!!

Great pictures!!!!

[REPLY](#)

Alexis Jenkins Mu Theta January 24, 2011 at 9:43 AM

I love this dedication and appreciate that someone took out time to recognize the work and sisterhood we do and have. That you for giving our Alpha Chapter a Present that can never be replaced your Time!!! Thanks to the Alpha Chapter for REPRESENTING!!!

[REPLY](#)

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Behind The Scenes In ATL 7

Posted In [Blog](#), [Misc.](#), [NPHC](#)

I'm expecting to gain a few more [Facebook](#) friends after this weekend. Mostly cute ones, with affiliations which end in Sorority, Inc. :-) Last weekend, I traveled down to Atlanta, GA to photograph the [2011 Atlanta Greek Picnic \(ATLGP\)](#). The resulting trip is going to yield an extremely cool video summary and photo web gallery, which will be online very soon. The ATLGP is regarded by most to be the premier Greek picnic. While other notable picnics occur in Texas, Virginia, Florida and other cities, the ATLGP stands as one of the original and most successful yearly regional events for alumni and current members of BGLOs.



This was my first year attending the ATLGP and I must say that I had a fantastic time! I finally arrived in Atlanta around 7PM on Friday, June 10, 2011. My long time mentor and friend [Rahim Rasul](#) (below) picked me up from the airport and it was officially on. Rahim wanted to learn photography techniques from me through some hands on experience so what better way than for him to come to the picnic and to shoot with me? We spent most of the day Friday catching up and spending time at

the 'Welcome to Atlanta' party at the Compound. Needless to say, we had a GREAT time speaking with people and just hanging out.



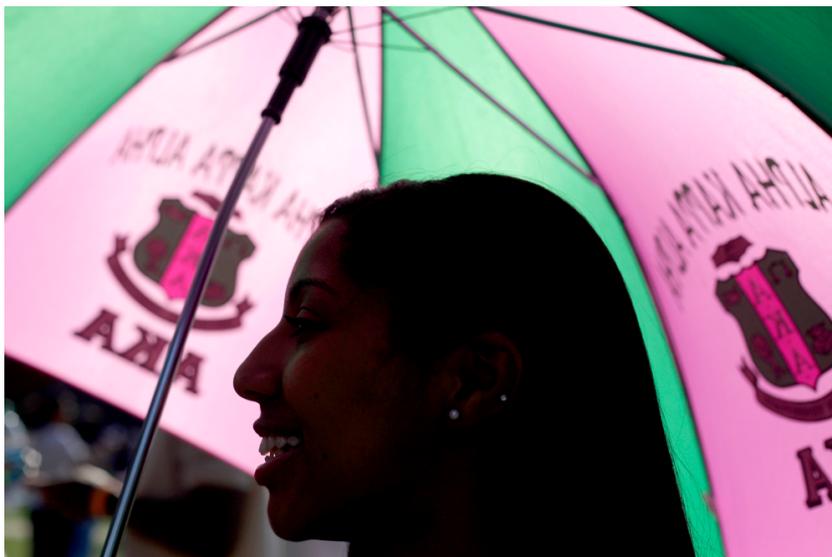
I didn't know what to expect from the Atlanta picnic. I had been to other Greek picnics before, but the reputation of ATLGP was superior. Once Rahim and I pulled up to Morris Brown College it was apparent that we were in for a long day. Wave after wave of beautiful people spilled onto the campus, bringing alive its empty yard. ATLGP is actually a fundraising event for Morris Brown College. With recent financial challenges threatening the schools condition, ATLGP organizers teamed up with Morris Brown College and sponsors such as State Farm to provide a platform for a fundraiser. Over time, the gathering grew into an annual event bringing thousands of people to the picnic.



Everyone comes out representing their organization. Surprisingly, more than several generations of initiated members are represented. Mostly everyone gets along and is gathered to have a great time, setting out chants, strolls and songs entertaining the public. The event is actually one of many over the course of an entire weekend of events which include: a \$10,000 step show, community service events and even a BGLO town hall meeting, which provides a forum for campus greek leaders to have an open dialogue about the challenges facing Black Greeks in the 21st century.



Overall the experience was an incredible one. I have to shout out the hardworking men and women who put the event together, all the sponsor and all the photographers out there working hard doing what they love to do (S/O Silas and Demi)!!! Special thanks to Tiwa Works and Erik Gordon who made the weekend accessible.



The highlight of my week was spending time with my boy Rahim. It is the ultimate compliment (in my opinion) to be able to help other photographers develop their craft. I really do want to teach photography some day. Rahim kicked butt at this shoot and Im looking forward to developing our philosophy next year! It is funny how things work. About 2 years ago, Beyond This Place was simply an idea. Now, people recognize me at these types of events and show me a lot of love. I mean everyone, Alphas, Omegas, Deltas, Iotas, etc. It is that type of love that drives me to take this project to the next level. Check back with Beyondthisplace.com for more photos and our video coming soon!!!! Follow us @Beyondthisplace and at [facebook.com/beyondthisplace](https://www.facebook.com/beyondthisplace) . Oh, yea, dont forget to add me as a friend. 😊 Tag yourself in my FB album.

Rate This



7 Comments

Silas

June 12, 2011 at 9:03 PM

Hey bro, I love the few photos you put up. Especially the one of the Ques and the AKA silhouette. Keep up the good work. Your stuff definitely makes me want to start paying more attention to the composition of my photos. And I wish I'd known that you needed help at AGP!

[REPLY](#)**Everette**

June 13, 2011 at 8:22 AM

Good Job! This is a great site not to mention I'm captured in one of the pictures above. Keep up the good work and I will be sure to inform others of beyondthisplace.com

[REPLY](#)**Kristen**

June 13, 2011 at 9:18 AM

Definitely a remarkable weekend, great photos!

[REPLY](#)**Gerrod**

June 13, 2011 at 5:13 PM

Looking forward to the pictures you took of me and my brothers of Iota Phi Theta!

[REPLY](#)**Danielle**

June 14, 2011 at 10:36 PM

The pics are great!! I especially like the one with the cute Delta, (lol). I always love your work and how you can convey the true essence of the event. Congrats and keep up the good work! <3

[REPLY](#)**KingPHIsh**

June 15, 2011 at 3:31 AM

Good job, bruh!

[REPLY](#)**Contagious Dog**

June 23, 2012 at 7:02 PM

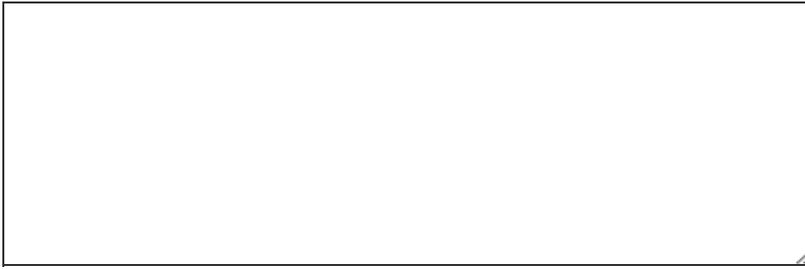
i was only able to come to the picnic for one day to see some of my bruhs but it was the best experience that i have had in a long time i always thought that the CIAA in Charlotte NC was big but it will never have anything on the greek picnic in atlanta im already getting plans together to be able to come all of next year believe that roo

[REPLY](#)**Leave a Comment**

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TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWS

Interview #1
Brittany Banks
Senior
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

(Edited for related content)

JH: In a few words could you explain or tell me what Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) are?

BB: That's a really loaded question. BGLOs are individuals who have come together for a greater purpose to continue to create positive change in the community, who have similar interest for different reasons, which is [the reason] for different organizations. As a whole, I feel like our purpose is to continue to create positive change within our community and the United States as a whole. And the world really because most of us are international now.

JH: Could you give me an example of a BGLOs? What would I see that identifies them?

BB: You would see people wearing certain colors represent their letters, there are different colors for different organizations. You would see people out in the community doing community service, putting on positive programs in their community to help positively impact people in their community. You may also see things such as strolling, see things like stepping, chanting, stuff like that.

JH: Give a brief overview of your first experience with a BGLOs or a member of one.

BB: My Dads family, a lot of them are greek, and my Aunt is "super Delta" and so I don't really remember a first experience, but just always knowing that when I saw her she'd always be in some Delta stuff or red. I can think of one or two times in my life when she's been in another color other than red. Black and white maybe, but always in red.

JH: Explain that experience more please.

BB: I cant remember a certain time with her and I don't remember talking to anyone in my family too much about greek stuff it was just kinda like, you may have known they were in the organizations, you may have not. Growing up I wasn't extremely close with my Dads side of the family as close as I was to my Mom's side. So I would see them, but I wouldn't really ask questions. So I cant think of many examples. Meanwhile, I'm thinking of the negative examples I would get from other people about what they are more than the examples I would get from them.

JH: Like What?

BB: Growing up my Mom never talked about greekdom it just wasn't a conversation that really came up. My Dad called being greek the 'Buy A Friend' program and so it was a joke. I don't think I really fed into it, but he would always call it the 'Buy A Friend' program. Everyone in his family is greek. Most of the women on my Dads side are Deltas, and his father and his brother are Alphas. His entire step fathers family are Qs (Omegas) so everyone is greek, but he never really saw the point of it. I guess if you really were to sit down and see what the organizations do, of course there would be benefit in it, but it was a joke he would always say it was a buy a friend program.

JH: I'm going to show you some photographs now and I'm going to ask a series of questions and then I'd like for you to talk about them, ok?

BB: I think for me whenever I heard anybody in my family talk about greekdom it went through one ear and out the other because I really didn't pay attention to it. It wasn't like my Aunt asked me to do any of the programs for the sorority. I actually, in high school, participated in Fashionetta, a scholarship program put on by the AKAs in St. Louis. The president of AKA's daughter went to my school and sent an invitation out to the seniors. I considered doing it, but I had to decline at the last minute. (AKA photo)

JH: Zetas at Chapel @ Howard

BB: I think this is a probate. Just for the fact that...or maybe it may not be. Because of secrecy now, the way things are now. I would think it would be a probate because the ways the girls are standing and they seemed to be dressed alike. It probably was more of the members of the organization bringing out the girls that they were going to bring into their sorority. Based on the way the girls are standing and the looks on their faces, I think its more during the middle of their process begin the the middle of campus going through that sort of situation.

JH: Where do you this photograph was taken?

BB: I'm just going to guess Howard (University) because I feel like that is the mecca of greek life. Maybe, this is just a wild guess, maybe in the 60s or 70s.

JH: Delta Hands.

BB: This brings back a lot of personal memories for me. You know the memories on that day and the probate, practicing before the probate before. I see my prophete Camille Hardiman holding up the pyramid or the Delta depending on where you are its what its called which is a symbol from our sorority that symbolizes hard work and honor to be able to hold that up. To me and from what I see on our campus its representation of the hard work that we do and the fact that we've worked hard to get our letters and we've worked hard with our letters. You know this is the symbol that represents our work and commitment, and the fact that we are constantly trying to better those around us, ourselves, and our communities.

JH: Delta Plot

BB: Those are bricks and they have the names of our charter members on them. I'm guessing this is probably at Howard because the fact that the Alpha chapter stone is there. I'm thinking its around their plot of land they have there. The plot is a meeting place. Somewhere the chapter meets and has significance to them.

JH: How did you learn about colors, symbols?

BB: Research. The research that I had to do to make sure.... Well the research I started doing Freshman year when I kinda figure I wanted to be in a Black greek organization, Im going to be quite honest and I don't tell anybody this, but I, before coming to college and before coming to Mizzou I went to an all white high school. A majority of my friends were white. When I decided to come to Mizzou I was really thinking about joining a PHA (Pan-Hellenic council). One of the girls who was interning at my moms hospital for the summer was in a PHA here and she really took the initiative to get my number, call me, ask me if I was interested in rushing, you know all that stuff before I even came to college. She tried to explain what it was about and told me if I had any questions she was there. I'm thinking that's probably not something they do for African Americans, but Im thinking because of where I went to high school and her knowing my mom and whatnot is why she took that initiative In thinking that there is a great possibility that I may be interested in a PHA. I remember sitting down with my dad at breakfast the summer before I came to school and telling him that I was thinking about joining a white sorority.

JH: What was his reaction?

BB: Pump the brakes! His thing was he said that he didn't have an issue joining a White sorority but he said that he wanted to make sure that I was making the right decision and he said while he was here (MIZZOU) at Law School the Black girl who tried to join a White sorority got denied because she was Black and that she tried to join a Black sorority and they didn't take her because they were like "Were just a backup for you. Why would we take you?" So his thing was, he just wanted to make sure that I looked into this and am sure that you were making the right decision because once you do that, you know, you cant undo anything you've done. I was like ok.

The summer before I graduated from high school, I bumped into my Aunt at the mall and she was like "I see that youre going to Mizzou that means that you can join my chapter if you wanted to!" and I looked at her, I didn't say anything, but I kind of gave her a side eye and was thinking to myself like "please, I will never be greek. I am too much of an individual for that, I don't need an organization," and that's just coming from the years of my dad telling me that it is the 'buy a friend' program.

Coming back to Mizzou my freshman year is when I stared seeing more of what the White organizations symbolized and seeing more of what the Black organizations symbolized. That's when I started thinking; maybe I should start looking to see if this is something that is really for me. So I did research on all the sororities of the Divine Nine and basically was trying to see if I could make a decision for me because I knew it was one of those things that I knew no one in my family was paying for this and it's a buttload of money and then also these would be letters that I would wear on my back for the rest of my life. This is an organization I would be a member of for the rest of my life. This is an organization that I would be paying money to, a significant amount of

money to, every year for the rest of my life, so since this was all stuff I was getting myself into, I wanted to make sure I was doing it for me and not for anyone else. I did online research, as far as like looking up different national organizations, then I read several books about Black Greek Life as a whole, and I talked to different people at different schools.

JH: At any point of this information gathering process did you turn to any type of media?

BB: I watched School Daze before I was greek like during my Freshman year. But I didn't really, I haven't watched it since I've become greek. I know there were correlations to greek life in there, but at the time I was watching it had to be before my research or maybe I was just too new about the research and the facts about the organizations and not the stereotypes as much. I still knew about some stereotypes but all of them. So I didn't correlate School Daze with the real world and I had saw other movies like Stomp the Yard, but to me, Stomp The Yard was a movie, it depicted Greek Life or certain aspects of Greek Life but to me it wasn't something that was "oh that's exactly how it is. Oh, I really want to be in a greek organization now, no that's not what I saw from it. It was a movie, it talked about the fact that Greek organizations stepped against each other and how internal competition and different things went on but it wasn't anything that impacted me personally.

You know I think I watched more, to me, YouTube was not a place I went to look for Delta information. If I was looking for Greek stuff on YouTube it was most likely because I was watching someone else watch about their organization. I know I watched YouTube and I was excited because it was an organization that I wanted to be a part of.

JH: What do you think people get out of YouTube?

BB: I think for the most part, they get the wrong things. I think what I see on YouTube for the most part is stepping, is strolling, is stuff like that. I don't think that they see all the programs that go on all the hard work that goes on, all the impact that our different organizations make. I'm sure that YouTube does persuade people one way or another to join organizations but I feel like before you turn to YouTube you would have to have some type of knowledge about the organizations because theres everything on YouTube. Whatever you want to find on YouTube, youre gonna find it, so I feel like before you turn to that resource youll probably have some sort of persuasion one way or another and it may confirm or validate your perspectives a little but but at the same time, you probably would have known some things before.

JH: Like what, what things would they (students) have know before?

BB: I think they take away the stereotypes, for example, the AKAs archetype is that they're pretty, I honestly do not know any Delta stereotypes, maybe I've forgotten all the bad ones. I like to think the Delta stereotype is that "All around woman" who just has it all going together. I tried to research S G Rhos, but couldn't really find anything, You're not really going to find stereotypes when your looking on websites for your research. Zetas I feel have a negative stereotype. Stereotypically, I think people make correlations with them eating a lot, being larger, people will joke around. I'm guilty of it to, last night I was talking to my LS, and she was talking about this girl who grew up

with her in Edwardsville, and this girl is absolutely gorgeous. And she's a Zeta and she just crossed this semester and we were both like why would you become a Zeta? Why? She didn't even look like a Zeta. But that brings forth the question, "What does a Zeta look like". But its more of saying that Zetas here are not pretty, but its more of saying, stereotypically because of all the different stereotypes that we put in our heads over the years you know someone who is model type, you know, why would she become a Zeta. Even with us being greek and knowing the real reasons behind being greek, and the fact that we cherish what our organizations do and the founding principles, its still in our minds. We spent 5 minutes talking about why this girl became a Zeta.

JH: Where do you think these stereotypes come from? (38:43)

BB: Well, I can say the AKA stereotype comes from the fact that in the past, AKAs were known for taking only girls who came from privileged backgrounds, girls who had long hair, light skinned, pretty in the face, slim or at least had some type of shape or attractive girls which is why AKAs were known for being the pretty girls. Even today there are still people who are members of the organization who people will look at them and be like "Really, the AKAs took her"? just because of the color of her skin. I know this is biased, but the Delta stereotype is being the all around women who are all about change and positive change, which you can find in our founding. I feel as though, being a member of Delta, the beginning of our stereotype comes from the fact that were about change and that's our purpose. Being something to make positive change.

JH: Do you see these stereotypes in the media? (42:41)

BB: YouTube of course because its showing people is organizations. For example the AKAs say "I'm so pretty" and that's what they say, that would be a way to be portrayed. You know with different films and stuff I feel that they show BGLOs for the most part they show the stereotypes wither it's the actual organization or another organization that they've made up to portray a real organization with fake letters. They show the stereotypes to let you know that they are talking about those types of organizations.

JH: We talked a little about School Daze, please watch this clip and tell me how you feel about these representations. Dap and Rachel Bed Scene. (46:16)

BB: Ok, I think its very valid. I agree with what hes saying. I think a lot of people do change when they become Greek. Some negatively, some positively. I think they allow their letters to define them. I think they allow their letters to make them a new person. It makes them act differently.

JH: Would you say this is accurate?

BB: I think that sometimes people feel like they have to fall into the stereotype of their organization once they become a member. Perfect example, I remember standing in Brendans dorm room the day before there probate (Kappa) and I was talking to Brendan and Donald. Brenden was in some sweat pants and he goes "yea this is the last time Ill be able to wear something like this on campus" and I was like "why" and he responded "Because Im a pretty boy", and that's nothing negative its just the fact that you feel the need to fit within the stereotypes of your organization. Personally, I

had a long conversation with several people because a lot of people were not for me being Greek. Several members of my family were not for me becoming Greek, mainly because of the stereotypes of what you have to go through to become Greek. I always told my family members that I am who I am and I'm always going to be me, but at the end of the day there's no guarantee that I'm going to be a Delta but there's always a guarantee that I'll be Brittany Banks so there's no way in the world that I am going to do anything that's going to deface my character or my name because at the end of the day I'm always going to be Brittany Banks, so I'm not going to do anything that would make me ashamed of being myself.

JH: Dap and Big Brother Almighty Clip (51:40)

BB: Seeing that video brought back a lot of memories about my dad and stories my dad told me. My Dad was in Law school here when my Uncle was in undergrad at Rolla. My Dad would always talk about how he would be on the phone with him. My Dad would be so pissed because my Uncle would talk about him joining Alpha. My Dad, being the big brother talking about how he always wanted to drive down to Rolla and kick the Alphas Ass. Because of what my Uncle was put through to become a member of the organization.

JH: Wayne State/ Pledging

BB: I didn't hear about this when it first happened. One of my LS told me about it last weekend. Pledging gone wrong is the best way to describe it. I think that some organizations take pledging to the extreme. There is a thin line between pledging and hazing. I don't see the purpose of beating someone to the point where they have bruises all over their body. I cannot say that I haven't seen it done before, I've had several friends who I've seen the bruises from being beat, but I personally don't see the point of it. I don't see where the growth comes in from that. This is reality for a lot of organizations.

JH: Does this enforce stereotypes? (55:10)

BB: Yes, it does. It enforces those stereotypes that my parents were worried about when I said I wanted to become a member of my organization. My mom actually told me I thought you were smarter than that. She literally had me in tears talking about how disappointed she was in me cuz she thought I was smarter than that. But not all organizations do that, and not organizations that do that stuff do that to that extreme. I feel as though the underground process should create growth and you should take positive things from it. I don't see how beating someone can make a positive experience. If people choose to go through an underground process there's a possibility where it can be done where a person grows from it and doesn't have to go through physical abuse to grow.

JH: The average person who isn't greek, what do they take away from this clip?
(1:02:00)

BB: That that's what every organization does. Definitely when it comes to the paper vs non paper thing. They assume that that's what it means to be non-paper. To be "made" is to get the stuff beat out of you every night for months. Paper is a term used for people who did not go through the underground paper. You didn't go through

anything or 'put in work' to join that organization. 'Made' could mean you got the crap beat out of you, like that young man, or that you had to go to the hospital several times. Made could mean you had some type of psychological process that forced you to be creative and come up with different means to be successful at certain aspects of different areas. The two biggest differences in being Made has to do with the mental and the physical. And sometimes people make too big of a process focusing on the physical and people see getting beat as how you wear your letters. I think that's why sometimes our organizations lose so much respect from people is because they assume everyone walking around wearing our letters had to get beat to wear our letters and that's how you join our sisterhood is because we allowed someone beat us.

JH: How do visual representations create stereotypes of BGLOS?

BB: Because people focus more on the bad. If you hear about a stereotype your gonna remember that over other things. You know, like when you hear AKAs are pretty girls, then you see an AKA walking down the street who seems to carry themselves correctly and look pretty and always be presentable, youre gonna help you perpetuate the stereotypes you have heard in the past. When you hear Q dogs and theyre nasty and you go someplace and you hear them chanting about vulgar activity that doesn't need to be chanted about. Or you see them sticking thievr tongues out or wearing leashes around their necks, youre going to think of that stereotype of Q dogs being nasty people.

JH: Anything else you would like to say about whats missing in media portrayals?

BB: I think the media doesn't portray greek life how it really is. I feel like people who are non-greek may not ever appreciate Greekdom in the light it was meant because you're not there. You can see the positives and the negatives, but I think the fact that the media chooses to show us stepping, the media chooses to show us making our sounds and chanting, the choose to show us when there are issues like this where someone has been beat to join their organizations. Its one of the reasons why BGLOs have such a negative stereotype associated with them. I think that if the media covered the community service that we're doing in countries all over the world, if they would have coverage on the mentorship programs that we have in our community, the financial programs we have in order to help African Americans understand the purpose and importance of saving money and owning your own property and being financially responsible, people would really see what our purpose is and what we really are about. I think there are situations like this that not only make Kappa Alpha Psi look bad, but make all of our organizations look bad and its unfortunate that it could be a few people, who make up a very small percentage of the organization that can have such a negative impact on all nine organizations as a whole. At the end of the day, this may be the Kappas who are doing this, but a majority of people are not going to remember Kappa, they're going to remember Black Greeks so they're gonna associate them with this story.

Interview #1
Khadija Tejan
Senior
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

(Edited for related content)

JH: In a few words could you explain or tell me what Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) are?

KT: The purpose of BGLOs originally was to foster community and brotherhood and sisterhood on college campuses. I believe that their purpose and function changed over time to include uplift, service as well as prosperity.

JH: Could you give me an example of a BGLOs? What would I see that identifies them?

KT: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

JH: Give a brief overview of your first experience with a BGLOs or a member of one.

KT: I did Delta Academy when I was in 7th grade. I was introduced to this because my father worked in an office full of women and there was only one other Black female and she was new to town, she was a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She had no kids so she asked my dad if he had daughters? She invited us out to their Juneteenth celebration because her sorority had a table and was giving out information on the Delta Academy. I went to Juneteenth in Jefferson City. I went and met them and they told me I could participate. It was pretty exciting. It was the whole summer and at the end of it we had this big fashion show and this big banquet and we got a lot of stuff. I even have a t-shirt somewhere. That's how I was introduced to BGLOs.

My junior year I was asked if I wanted to do cotillion and due to scheduling conflicts, I wasn't able to go. But the interaction I got to have with the ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha that just was great. I felt like I fit there. How I was feeling, I was feeling, How I did things, they did things. That type of interaction continued through college.

JH: I'm going to show you some photographs now and I'm going to ask a series of questions and then I'd like for you to talk about them, ok? (Alpha @ Boys and Girls Club)

KT: This reminds me of what we have in Jeff city called 'Little Alphas'. In Jeff city, the graduate chapter of A Phi A mentors the young boys and it shows the service and mentoring that is missing from main stream media.

JH: Are there other stereotypes for each organization?

KT: With the AKAs they're pretty, they're snooty, they're prissy, and I think for our campus, they keep to themselves, they're very private. They always have their hair

done. Their outfits are cute and hip to the style. The Deltas kind of look manly. With the whole short hair thing, may have short hair and they are more masculine. But they are also very strong women. With the Ques, its always about the rough rough. They are tough and will always be a man about their business. The sad part about it is that you see his over masculinity and you'll never see a softer side. I would venture to say that's not all true of all Ques. The Alphas are the nerdy ones. They are the engineers. They're the skinny ones. I really cant say what S G Rhos are. All I know is that depending where you go, they're really tight with the Kappas. The Sigmas are trying to be cool but theyre laid back. I think that's what a lot of Sigmas are about. The Zetas feed into the perception that they are very afrocentric. They're individuals. Kappas are supposed to be cute.

JH: Dap And Rachel Scene

KT: This hit home in a lot of personal ways. I had support originally, but that changed a week after I became an AKA. Somebody wrote in my honesty box on Facebook telling me to stop acting like I was better than everybody else. Stomp walking around campus like you earned those letters, you've changed. I was like how have I changed? I couldn't help but to think that it was from jealousy. There was no difference how I acted before, I felt they were afraid that I would change so they tried to beat me to the punch so I couldn't beat them to it. You know, I feel I didn't do anything, but I feel like I didn't change my personality. You know before I became a member of AKA, I was kept tight anyway. So I thought people think you're gonna change because they don't understand the time commitment. Simple miscommunication can be seen as really bad. I've just given up on it.

Some people, this changes them. I've have seen good people become ugly monsters. I have seen that particularly with males. I've seen them become promiscuous and loose their mind and loose their humbleness. On the other hand, I think people can change for the better. You're not going to be the same person, but it all depends what you allow these letters do to you.

JH: How do these types of scenes influence the realities of situations like Pledging?
(Pledging clip)

KT: Around the corner at SEMO, Kappa Alpha Psi killed someone. Because of that, people don't realize that Kappa Alpha Psi will never be on SEMOs campus. People also don't realize there are consequences for his actions. The purpose of a process is to go through something to cultivate bonds that keep you together. There are ways to form those bonds without hazing. All Fraternities and Sororities have rules and policies to protect themselves. To protect themselves the will say 'we told them not to do it', but its not to protect their members. I don't like that. I feel like these policies need to go. I don't think these policies do much to help the struggle to educate members.

JH: How do visual representations create stereotypes?

KT: They do all of that. Stomp The Yard came out when I wasn't greek and I thought it was so cool. Then I talked to Andre Thorn who told me it wasn't a real depiction of BGLOs. When I thought about it, I re-watched the movie and knew it wasn't right. But what Ive noticed about media in general is that they also try to cultivate bad stereotypes of Black people in general, but to give them credit, they're trying to change

that. You see more of them serving their community. You do see them doing something positive which is good.

JH: Anything else you would like to add?

KT: I think media plays an important role in the stereotypes of BGLOs but it isn't the necessarily they are giving them but they may be re-enforcing them. You must remember that people form these stereotypes but either personal observations or there own knowledge.

Interview #1
Gerald McLemore II
Senior
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

(Edited for related content)

JH: In a few words could you explain or tell me what Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) are?

GM: Black Greeks are organizations that provide a background for Black students socially, educationally, and emotionally.

JH: Could you give me an example of a BGLOs? What would I see that identifies them?

GM: AKA's. Alpha Kappa Alpha. They wear pink and green.

JH: Give a brief overview of your first experience with a BGLOs or a member of one.

GM: The first thing I saw was an Alpha probate on campus. I had never seen anything like that before. There were so many people and it was so cold outside.

JH: Explain that experience more please.

GM: In College its more in your face than it is in High School. I thought that Fraternities were not anything like they are. So much so that I thought I was going to expect something totally different than I got at the probate. It was intense. It wasn't about games like some movies had showed me.

JH: I'm going to show you some photographs now and I'm going to ask a series of questions and then Id like for you to talk about them, ok? (

GM: The Alpha are always cool, light skinned with good hair. The Ques are big and loud. The Deltas have short hair, considered more natural. The AKA is prissy and have long hair. The Zetas and Sigma's are brother/sisters. And the Zetas are considered the big girls. No one really says anything about them. The Kappa's, they're smooth and usually have a cane.

JH: Where did you hear about these stereotypes of Black Greeks?

GM: Talking to people.

JH: Any other ways you get those ideas?

GM: The Media. I have heard about School Daze and I know it kind of plays into the entire thing. I haven't seen School Daze, but I know what people have said about it.

Saying its like a negative portrayal of the organizations. The Sprite Step Off was different because the way it was presented was really good. It was something that was different, something that helped the organizations make money and showing them in a positive light.

JH: Step Show Clip

GM: The exchange between the girls was a little intense. It kind of makes it seem these are AKAs and Deltas arguing with each other. Even though theyre not that. If you know the history of the two organizations, you would understand the intent of the scene.

JH: Dap and Rachel Scene.

GM: This is brutal. I mean, a lot of people think that Greek life changes them and it kinda does. I mean, the thing is that things change when youre greek, the people you come in with are you brothers. It's a family mentality. You dedicate time and energy to help your family. Its not like you don't have time for other people but its hard when you cant explain that the frat is another commitment. Its not a luxury at all. I will say thought that people do allow their letters to give them a chance to become a whole different person. I don't think that is cool at all. You know, its more about the relationship the community has for you when you become greek. They expect a lot from you.

JH: What would you like to see in the representations of BGLOs?

GM: More happiness. I mean the exterior looks so mean and serious. I mean even in movies if they could show how the organizations go to work with and tutor kids or to see how people do service it would help a lot. I mean, if all you see is drama and stepping then that's what you're going to think about the organizations.

JH: Where did you find most of your information about Blac Greeks?

GM: Observation and talking to other Freshman (at the time) about their perspectives on Greek life. That's where a majority of my thoughts came from. I think Black people perpetuate the stereotypes as well. We are the ones who carry out the stereotypes. I mean, maybe its because we find the identity fun and secure. Regardless, unless we change our thoughts and behavior we will still do the same thing for years to come.

Interview #1
LySaundra Campbell
Junior
Non-Greek

(Edited for related content)

JH: In a few words could you explain to me what Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) are?

LC: In my opinion, BGLOs were created because they weren't allowed to join White Greek organizations so they created their own. A lot of them are based on community service and brotherhood and sisterhood.

JH: Could you give me one example of a BGLOs? What would I see that identifies them?

LC: The Alphas. When I see them, if its at a big function, they wear black and gold colors. And the calls the do.

JH: Give a brief overview of your first experience with a BGLOs or a member of one.

LC: I think my first was my Freshman year in college. Friday, October 3rd, I was so happy to go to a college party and the Deltas were having a party. I thought they were pretty friendly. I had just gotten a tattoo and one of the girls complimented me. I thought they were friendly.

JH: Explain that experience more please.

LC: I was with friends, my roomates an we had gotten a ride from another greek who was a Q and he was cool too. Most of my experiences with any greek letter organization have been good. They have all been pretty nice to me. The event, was fairly big. It was one of the first parties of the school year so there quite a few people there.

JH: Where else did you get introduced to BGLOs?

LC: In the media. Usually shown by step shows.

JH: Give me some examples.

LC: Stomp the Yard is the prime example. In that movie they really don't talk about the service part or anything else. They just talk about the step show.

JH: I'm going to show you some photographs now and I'm going to ask a series of questions and then Id like for you to talk about them, ok? (Delta hands)

LC: I forgot how I found out about the Deltas. My mom went back to Washington State for my aunts funeral and I didn't get to go and I was looking through her pictures and I was like 'oh who is this?' Because she was throwing it up and I had already seen some greek life and she told me it was her best friend from high school Daphine. I didn't know she was greek.

JH: (Party Flyer)

LC: The AKA cartoon girl is kind of interesting because she looks like she is the prettiest one of the all. Its one of the stereotypes of AKAs, is that all of them are pretty. Every BGLOs have a stereotype. The Alphas are the nerdy guys, the Kappas are the pretty boys, the Ques are the dirty dogs and they just like to party, the Sigmas are just the leftovers of other organizations. The AKAs are pretty, supposedly light skinned. Ive heard of the brown paper bag test.

JH: Describe that to me.

LC: The brown paper bag test goes back to slavery, if you were African American and you were lighter than a brown paper bag, then you were considered better. Youd probably be working in the house instead of working in the field.

Stereotypes for the Deltas are that they all gang members and mean. The Zetas are considered on the heavier side and really country along with the Sigmas who are their brothers. The S G Rhos are just nerdy from what I understand.

JH: Where do these stereotypes come from?

LC: I heard them from friends, from people who don't really know about greeks, and in some ways or another very rarely, I find somebody who is a part of the organization that fit those stereotypes.

JH: Dap and Rachel Scene

LC: I've kinda seen this here. I know some people who cross and they do change. I know some people who Ive never heard of before and they cross and now theyre some big important person. There was a freshman who came to me and they said they weren't going to get involved until they pledged. Some people look at it in a negative light like when you cross you become a different person.

I would say School Daze enforced some of those stereotypes. I know its not a negative thing, but just by listening to 'Dap' even though I have another mindset, it almost changes my mind like 'maybe he is right'.

JH: Dap and Julian Scene

LC: He was very arrogant about it like 'I'm greek I'm better than you, I can do anything I want to'. There's like an unspoken hierarchy, not just Black community at Mizzou but even in the White community at Mizzou. Like greeks are seen as higher up. In this video the guy isn't scared, he's like 'im not scared' what are you gonna do to me?' this scene in School Daze is representative of what happens in the Black community at Mizzou.

JH: Do you feel this is an accurate portrayal of BGLOs?

LC: Yea. Its like "Im better than you". Not on a one to one thing, but an organization I was on the Exec board on had scheduled a clothing drive for late January. We started over Christmas break and we were telling people bring clothes for a clothing drive. A week before we came back, the Hati Earthquakes struck and a Greek organization decided to have a clothing drive for Hati when we were having ours. I was like 'I know they got the Facebook invites to our events.'" Our President was going with it. I didn't understand why they wouldn't do something with us. I just moved our drive to the next week.

JH: Do you find that different media effected your perception of BGLOs?

LC: I depends on the video. If it's YouTube, its usually positive stuff. Its usually a step show, or pictures from the Atlanta Greek picnic or a probate, but if its in a movie, say like School Daze, it kinda gives me a negative perception of it. With Stomp The Yard, its like if somebody didn't know anything about Black greek organizations, they could see Stomp The Yard and think 'ok I plan to join this organization so I can do this type of step. It doesn't really talk about anything other than stepping. Since I already knew a little history, I was hoping they'd talk about other stuff. Within the movie they had different stereotypes, but the only time I really have a negative responses against Stomp The Yard is when Im talking to other people like my friends in White sororities, and they wanted to come and where excited about it, but the asked 'Is it gonna be like Stomp The Yard?" I have to explain that Stomp the Yard only shows the stepping part, they do more than just step.

I remember one part of the movie where Dap's cousin has to sleep with another character in order to get into the fraternity, and I feel they are showing a lot of the negative side. I couldn't believe that scene. It was like Half-Pint the character was told he cant get in the Frat without sleeping with his girl, then he flips out it was crazy. But its kind of true, the relationship between Julian and Jane. We call them groupies. The different fraternities have their different groupies. Its pretty noticeable because the same girls go to all the Alpha parties or all the Kappa parties, then the word gets around if someone sleeps with someone else. Its pretty accurate.

JH: Pledging scene

LC: There was a documentary that I saw on TV about hazing. Its kind weird when you hear about it because all the greek organizations I know say 'We're a non-hazing organization' and then you hear all of this stuff. I know some of the organizations on this campus have been kicked off campus because they were hazing. So to even promote that youre a non-hazing organization and then get in trouble for it, me being non-greek its like 'Do I wanna go through this?' it makes you question what it really is.

With School Daze, it's a little more comical. In School Daze, nobody gets sent to the hospital. There have been instances where people have lost their lives. So if its shown in a movie, people don't get it that no one ends up in the hospital. They get hit, but there are no bruises. When people see that, they do it but have real consequences.

Interview #1

Tiio Watson

Junior

Non-Grek

(Edited for related content)

JH: In a few words could you explain or tell me what Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) are?

JM: In my opinion, in the core of all BGLO, is service. In their founding they were about service to their community. In this day and age they serve as connection to the community socially. We are supposed to be the voice for the Black community when no one else can speak for them. Ultimately its about service. As time goes on I feel its about more than just what you do in undergrad and when you graduate

JH: Could you give me an example of a BGLOs? What would I see that identifies them?

JM: Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

JH: Give a brief overview of your first experience with a BGLOs or a member of one.

JM: I had two experiences. My first experience was when I was about 3 or 4. I am something that is called a legacy. A legacy is someone who has a family member, brother sister, mother, father aunt, etc. and they're a member of an organization that you are aspiring to join. I was about 3 and I went to this picnic and I didn't know what was going on, I just remember a whole lot of guys in red and they were all really happy and cool with my dad. They would tell me 'this was going to be me' one day and that's what I remember about it. I had no idea what was going on, I had no idea this was a fraternity, It was just these guys and they had canes. That was that. I never saw it again until I was about 15, which is my second experience, which is when I saw Stomp The Yard. It was the first time I saw the social aspect of greek life. I had seen members of Kappa, but I never saw the social aspect where they're wearing twill letters or twirling canes but more so the men in the business suits. It was the first time I saw that and I saw how it was viewed by the general 'media.'

JH: What was your response to that experience?

JM: The very first time I saw it, it was almost like watching Americas best Dance Crew. And the main reason was because the actual movie itself stuck around certain aspects of greek life but deemphasized others. So it did speak on brotherhood. In some senses it didn't speak on all of the reasons for brotherhood. It emphasized the stepping portion, which is a great portion, but in my opinion its not what the organizations are

about. So in some senses it took away from it but then again, when I first saw it I was like 'these cats can step! We can do this in High School right?' By the time that I saw it at 18-19 when I was in college, and actually saw the difference I was like 'oh, ok this is why people who had an issue with the movie did have an issue with it'.

JH: How did seeing Stomp The Yard effect your perceptions on BGLO life?

JM: a lot of people my age didn't necessarily know about Greek life, so a lot of people had the same reaction I did to the movie that was 'ok what is this'. And really I felt like if this was your first time being exposed to greek life, it sparked a certain curiousness to you to go research. As soon as I saw that movie I went to get divine nine in the library and read it, because I wanted to know more.

JH: I'm going to show you some photographs now and I'm going to ask a series of questions and then I'd like for you to talk about them, ok?

JM: Are there stereotypes of Black Greek life? I'm my opinion yes. I think that when you join an organization, there are certain expectations and there are certain stereotypes that you are expected to hold. If you are a member of Kappa Alpha Psi, you are expected to become a pretty boy who gets all the girls. If you are an Alpha man you are expected to be distinguished. If you're an Omega man, you're expected to be someone who isn't afraid to be loud or rambunctious. If you are a member of AKA, you're supposed to be pretty all of the time. If you're a Delta, you're considered a Diva. Now is that true? In some cases yes. Is it true all of the time? No. Does that stop the stereotype from existing? No, because I have experienced it.

JH: How so?

JM: When you walk outside, you represent your organization. So lets say a member of blank organization walks outside and hits a baby. All members of the organization are not baby hitters so in that same context, If I have a member of my organization who has sex with a girl, no all Kappas have sex with all the girls? Or if someone in the organization smokes weed, then all the members of the organization are weed heads? No. So it just goes to show you that when you are a member of an organization, you are one or you are considered as one. Everything that you do, people are looking at and that affected me personally because there may be an event and it will shine positively or negatively based on how it is publically viewed.

JH: Step Show Clip

JM: That clip shows perhaps why Greek life is so attractive. The reason why is because the mass public sees the social side of greek life. By nature, when you see things like that, it makes you curious. Stepping in my opinion, it's the most attractive piece. That conflict between the two groups showed that many time, they don't see the bigger picture.

JH: Dap and Rachel Bed Scene

JM: What is see here is how some people will view greek life in a negative aspect and I can understand why. When you join a BGLO, you are no longer representing you, because of this you are losing a large part of your individuality. Just as I wear three letters with the same colors, so may the person next to me who may be a completely different personality than I am so in that since it is viewed as a form of conformity. In some cases its very true and in my opinion is it important that before you join an organization that you know who you are. If you don't have those expectations, you don't know what to expect of yourself after you join. Which is why some people will become members and then they change but you cant figure out what it is. You gotta stay true to you. Period.

JH: Dap and Julian Scene.

JM: There is that arrogance. The main thing that Julian said was 'I am greek' this goes back to the stereotype that if you are a member you feel a sense of entitlement, that you are better than someone who isn't a member of any BGLO. Because of that, you may consider yourself on a higher pedestal. In several cultures people go through a process to become a man from a boy. Theres a problem, American doesn't have this process. What does that mean for Black Greeks? It means if you can endure a pledge process or initiation process, then once you cross the burning sands, then you are now considered a man. And because a person didn't or couldn't do it its become a major issue in Black Greek life. This has been around for years.

JH: School Daze pledge scene

JM: This represents one of the largest issue with Black Greek life. Number 1 lets put it out there: Does pledging happen? Yes. Does it happen regularly throughout the United States of America? Yes. Do people who pledge endure bodily harm, bruises and pain to the point where they cant walk? Yes. Does it make it right? No, but here's the problem. Number one, the reason that hazing became illegal is because someone died from it. Particularly, a member of Kappa Alpha Psi at Southeast Missouri State University. Pledging exist. It is what it is. People who are members of an origination more than likely believe in the tradition of the organization. A very huge part of greek life is tradition. So you may feel it is not your place to change tradition. The issue is, why are people still submitting themselves to this pledge process? They may want that acceptance of their big brothers.

I would say 60% of people who begin a pledge process have no idea what they're doing because of their lack of respect. In some cases, people may thing hazing is right, because they know at one point, pledging was ok. The bottom line is that people are dying and that is not cool. Lets say you have one person who pledges and he gets hit 5 times. Because he has been hit 5 times, he may feel that the next initiate has to prove the same so the next initiate may get hit 10 times. Then the new initiate hits the newest member who feels he has to hit 20 times. Is this the fault of big brothers not teaching them? Yes. Is this the fault of the people who are doing the act because they can hurt someone physically? Yes. Is it right? Depends on who you ask because some people feel so strongly about it that they will put aside any religious or Christian morals for the sake of the organization.

JH: What do you think non-greek people feel about these representations?

JM: Prior to being a college student myself and prior to understanding it, it was a turn off to greek life because I may want to be a member of an organization with all my heart and my should, but no one wants to die for something. Everyone is self-preserving and no one wants to die pursuing an organization that isn't God.

JH: Do these films promote a stereotype?

JM: The stereotype is that if you want to be a Black greek, I have to get my ass beat. This doesn't say what brotherhood you're going to learn, it doesn't talk about networking in the organization, it doesn't talk about being built up. So in an hour you've successfully convinced me that in order to wear three letters I have to take a certain amount of pain and prove I can take the pain, and people do it. Every year. When I was younger, I thought it was dumb. My thought was why would you do that. I didn't understand why.

The media is like a parent; when you're doing a really good job, the media will tell you that you're doing a really good job. When you don't, they don't. With that being said, I think the media would most often pull from the negative especially towards the Black greek community. I'm going to see something negative about Black Greek life before I see anything positive which goes back to people who may not understand that and think these dudes in the fraternities are just beating up people. They don't know any better. I see a lot of negativity there but I wish it was more positive. How could you do it? Get someone in the position to do it. Though I may disagree with some of the reasons behind the Sprite Step Off, I thought it was a great showing of positivity in the organizations that wasn't there before. It had been four or five years after Stomp The Yard so it gave a better representation to a fifteen year old who has no idea of what BGLOs are.

JH: What is missing from the representations of BGLOs?

JM: I would like to see a broader range, because I don't have an issue with movies like Stomp the Yard or School Daze. So I want to see more of that scholarship, that community services the positive things. You can't tell the media not to be the media, so if something negative is happening, it's the job of the media to check BGLOs to say that were not doing something right. That would be a sign to us as Black Greeks that we need to step up. I think that is where we are at right now.

I think there isn't enough visual representation I think that's why there is curiosity about Black Greek life. I think that's why people were excited when Stomp The Yard came out because these are things that have never been done before. I would like to see more understanding in the Black community and I feel like if you wish to seek admittance into an organization that you need to know as much as you can. It's not like it's not something you can't find. It's all there. Just understanding that Black greek is not greek, it's African. I guess I say that to say that I want more understanding on a broader scale. Understanding equals togetherness. **When you communicate what you want people to understand it is so much easier to get the results you want.** We as Black Greeks aren't communicating well enough the media is not communicating well enough and the media isn't either and these are our results. We can't be mad at our results, but we don't have to like them either. I'm willing to put in work to make that happen.

Interview #1
Bailey Anderson
Sophomore
Non-Greek

(Edited for related content)

JH: In a few words could you explain to me what Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) are?

BA: Black Greek Letter Organizations are collectively sisterhoods and brotherhood between people of African American decent. They are a way to promote the standards of each individual organization as well as unity in college, which I guess was the original purpose for all of them,

JH: Can you give me an example of a BGLO?

BA: Sure, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. is a BGLO that was founded in 1911 with the purpose of achieving in every field of human endeavor.

JH: Give a brief overview of your first experience with a BGLOs or a member of one.

BA: My first memory is that I was involved in Black greek since I was born. My father is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. So my first real memory was when I was 4 or 5, my father was really active in his organization and so we went to a picnic together and I had on a K A Psi pretty boy's pretty girl t-shirt and I know my God-father is one of his fraternity brothers and so I definitely had a lot of influential men and women in my life who are involved in BGLOs.

JH: Explain that experience more please.

BA: I walked into a sea of Crimson and Cream, which are the Fraternity's colors. And it wasn't just the men of Kappa Alpha Psi, but then you have the wives of Kappa Alpha Psi, you have the Kappa kittens, and the Kappa sweethearts, which are all auxiliary groups of Kappa Alpha Psi. There were hundreds of men there. You get blinded by the colors and for young kids; you get a lot of attention. For me, my father married a mixed woman so we definitely got a lot of attention. I have a lot of 'uncles' who are there for me that were my dad's brothers. So for me I got started at a young age being involved in something even though I'm not in the organization I definitely feel I have an extended family through those men.

JH: I'm going to show you some photographs now and I'm going to ask a series of questions and then I'd like for you to talk about them, ok? AKA Sweatshirt

BA: This is a woman wearing her Alpha Kappa Alpha sweatshirt. I think the significance of being able to wear paraphernalia is definitely important because people can definitely

get challenged on being a part of something, so you never wanna wear something that your not a part of as far as BGLOs go.

JH: Que hugging Mother

BA: This is sweet. I don't know why they still call them probates. Probates, to my understanding, were not the coming out shows it was a difference. The probate was a probationary period where you weren't actually in the Fraternity or Sorority yet. Basically meaning that was more of the start of you being online as opposed to you being the end. Its kind of crazy that we call them probates, but this is a probate at Mizzou. This is where they finally unmask themselves to the public eye. So the new members show themselves off to the community.

Men of Omega Psi Phi are also known as Omega men. A stereotype of Omega men is that all of them are dogs. And they help themselves perpetuate that stereotype, which is fine. I think its all in good fun.

JH: Explain that more please.

BA: I don't know who necessarily started that stereotype but I know that most Ques say that as undergrads a lot of people say that they are Que dogs, and as they grown out of college and into the business world and the real world they're called Omega men. I love that, I think it's so funny because I feel like a lot of my friends, some of them are dogs. Some of them are in committed relationships with beautiful young women, some of them like to mess around but there are definitely guys in every organizations and outside of organizations who aren't in committed relationships, or don't want to be in committed relationships or who are promiscuous. Over time its kind of evolved into a nasty thing like now instead of being a Que Dog, you have to be a nasty Que dog and there are some people who I think don't live up to what they should to be living up to because they're distracted by the stereotypes. I don't think its ok to be biting somebody and people you don't know and you know, I guess its cool as long as they're not biting me and not picking me up. So I think its gone to a new level of disgustingness.

JH: What other stereotypes do you know of?

BA: Lets say the Alphas, they're know to be the business savvy, smart. I don't know where I heard that, Its just something that is associated with it. A lot of people say the stereotype of Alphas is that they are gay. But everyone says everyone is gay. The Alphas will say the Kappas are gay, the Kappas will say the Alphas are gay, the Ques say everyone is gay, it just comes with the territory of loving your organization. I know that the women of Alpha Kappa Alpha are known to be boushee or siddity or light skinned. There is a 'therory' of the brown paper bag ideology where if you were darker than a brown paper bag you weren't going to be in the sorority. The other big

stereotype is that they only accept beautiful women and perpetuate the stereotype of beauty instead of service or opposed to what they actually stand for. The Deltas, I suppose were know as the darker girls, the chill and down to earth girls. They are known for being more vocal and a little more hood women. I know this is going to sound terrible but I was told to never come home in Blue. And I know that sounds bad, but I personally have a lot of love for the Zetas on my campus and I don't know many S G Rhos, and I really don't know what their stereotype is. I know the Zetas, people say the Zetas just were there because the Sigmas needed help but I don't really know. A lot of people say the Zetas are the bigger women and they pledge Zeta because they cant get into anything else. The Sigmas, for me, here, they are the rest of the dudes. They don't really have anything. People say they are the dudes that couldn't get into anything else, they just party and they want everybody to joint their fraternity. The omegas, I knew older Omegas first. I can say they were always very well put together. But I will say that Omegas have always been more on the promiscuous and not caring about it side. Like they don't care about their image. And then you have the whole Que Dog thing were you cant get too close to them. Then Kappas, people say they're pretty boys and the like to look nice at all times and they try to stay smooth and other greek men say theyre gay.

JH: Do those stereotypes exist everywhere?

BA: There are a lot of different stereotypes in house under NPHC and outside of house how people perceive them. It does have a lot to do with what campus you're on and what you know about Black greek life.

JH: Phi Beta Sigma @ Howard

BA: This to me is really important. We don't do it here, but it shows ownership over something. They take it seriously, very seriously. It shows the respect that your supposed to show in Greek life. We don't have that here. People don't really know when they're coming into college at a majority school how much Greek life is supposed to be respected and how they are supposed to be leaders in their community and this is a very good picture of how that really is in different places.

JH: Stepping Scene from School Daze

BA: You have the brothers of A Phi A stepping and doing their thing at a show. Normally what you'll find is that members of all the fraternities and sororities at these events. These two groups of women and one group none of them have they hair done, they don't wear makeup, they wear their sweats and they're kind like 'Youre hair fake, your eyes fake, why yall doing all of that to perpetuate beauty?' And then who have women on the other side who are calling them jigaboos. We're going to do our nails and were going to be cute and they go back and forth. I think that the problem is that we're perpetuating, I don't want to say hate, but I think we're doing a disservice to African American people as a whole. The last thing that I would want for myself is to be seen downing someone else. Its one thing to be proud of the organization that you're in and to be able to have fun, but its another to downgrade people just because they don't believe in the same thing that you believe in.

JH: Did this have an impact on your perception of Black Greeks?

BA: Its bougus. There is a lot of glitz and glam with the whole stepping thing. Theres a masculinity/femininity thing going on where you know, you just feel like you're the best of the best but if I saw that I would just say ' wow, is this really how we are as people just because you don't do your hair like I do my hair. I also didn't mention that there were also two different skin complexions. I think that was also a big thing because the women in one organization were all light vs all the women who were not dressed up and dark skinned. I tell people all the time that when I was younger, I always wanted to be dark skinned. I think the problem is that we put a stigma on what beauty is, so if you want to be seen as a women who carries themselves in a higher stature then a part of that is being a leader in your community and trying to be proactive in discussing what beauty really is.

JH: Dap and Rachel scene

BA: Looking at this clip, she's talking about the pros of being greek and he is just so opposed to greek life. She ask him a out the good things and he responds by saying becoming greek changes people. I love that statement because it is true to a certain extent I believe. I have a really good friend who just crossed and hes the same person. Even almost better in some ways, and then I know people who cross and change. For me I knew two different people who crossed who were friends before and afterwards they act fake like they don't know each other. That's so crazy! I tell people that youre a woman first, or a man first, and then your African American second, and then you have all these different role in life and then you are a part of your organization. People have to realize that they're still human. None of my friends want to join what I want to join, but at the end of the day I know we will all still be friends. I think this clip makes a valid clip on how greek life can change people and how some people are opposed to it because people can change for the worst. Youre still human being, youre just in a higher leadership position. You shouldn't change for the worst, more people should want to know who you are as opposed to people being like 'I don't like her because she's like this'.

I think this clip is an accurate reflection of what happens in the real world. I agree that some people do change when they become greek. Especially when they are first

initiated, they get this whole 'I am God' syndrome or 'I am royalty' and people here are so guilty of it. I think people do change. Im the type of person who If I don't know you, I will speak to you. Ill introduce myself to the person I don't know. Ive noticed recently when I speak to someone who is in a BGLO they look at me like Im crazy. Im like' you are a human being. I'm not trying to get in your sorority. Its cool. I can speak. Right?" Nobody is knocking you for being in your organization but you are still a human being.

You know this film shines some light on a lot of problems in BGLOs. We also still are trying to make it in America as Black people so for me there needs to be much more love and unity. My daddy used to tell me all the time that the only thing we've got is our word, our image, and out respect. The problem is that they're so busy downing people that they can't promote just love and fellowship. I think the most beautiful times I see here in Greek life is when people are just outside chilling. By having these challenges like black on black violence and downing each other it just promotes all the things that you say your against.

JH: How does this type of media influence how people think about Black greeks?

BA: School Daze was supposed to be an educational but really a pun on Clack college life. But Stomp The Yard, the media really played a part in making it seem like greeks don't do anything. I don't even remember any service going on in Stomp The Yard. It was just like we just step and stroll. That's a problem. In Stomp the Yard, the hazing thing was brought up also. It was kind of discrete. They didn't show it happening or anything but Hazing still exist. And that's ok. Its gonna happen.

The media and a lot of these shows and pictures and videos of people, like on YouTube the videos are always downing somebody. Theyre always talking about how bad somebody else organization is, can you talk about how great yours is? Can you tell us something about you because I really don't care to hear about how bad others organizations are. All the time. How is that making me want to be in your organization that much more? That doesn't make me want to be a part of what youre about. For me, I wanna promote unity and friendship and I want to be able to be a women that people can look at me and say that is a woman of higher stature. I feel like BGLOs need to know its ok to have fun, or tell people publicly why you didn't want to join this but still show the greater aspects of your organization is something that needs to happen.

JH: Pledging Scene in School Daze

BA: I remember when hazing became illegal. I don't want to be initiated into a gang. You don't have to be beat to have a brotherhood or a sisterhood. You do not have to be admitted to the hospital to show strength. You don't have to stand up all night to be beat down to say that you're strong and now you love your organization. I always tell people that going through a process shouldn't be a death sentence. Now, situations like at Wayne State university was beaten trying to pledge Kappa recently. He was beaten. And now he will always be known as the guy who tricked. You know people get hit with paddles. I don't know how I can say as a woman of God that I condone pledging. I'm so vocal about Black on Black violence and providing love and unity then again, but I know that it happens. It happens in reality.

JH: Do you feel because of these films that Black Greeks assume these roles or stereotypes?

BA: I mean there are incidents that are well covered. All the time. I know people who have been in the Hospital. Its crazy and people are dying. You lost your life for this organization that you don't even get to participate in. You don't get to do nothing. You not even a member, When you die you wont be known as a member of a fraternity and sorority.

JH: What's missing from the media coverage that would be a better representation?

BA: We don't see the unity and fellowship. We don't see the picnics or the parks or the mentors or we don't see how these men and women help their communities. We don't see that people in these organizations founded whole programs to aid with education or to help raise scholarships. Man, I don't think I have ever heard anything on the news about one of these Greek scholarships. Never. We don't hear about how organizations were founded by members of BGLOs. My father founded an organizations and is a volunteer Athletics director of a little league program. We don't hear about the networking and how people have helped people. How students who have graduated have gotten jobs due to their connections. We don't hear how it teaches you maturity and economic growth. People don't see the unity amongst each other. I think that is important for them to see that. I think that we have to have a better understanding of these organizations.

We don't get to see the good side or the proactive side or them standing on their foundation. All we hear about is hazing and stepping. The media goes with that. As leaders in the African American community, if everyone was about unity and if everyone who ever joined a BGLO was talking about ending Black on Black violence and there was some national campaign for issues we have as a culture, how different could our society be?

JH: Anything else that you would like to share?

BA: I think I want to say that ignorance is bliss and education is so important when talking about these organizations. I don't need to know secrets but some stuff is just common knowledge. Some stuff is on your chapter website, so you shouldn't be ashamed to talk to me about that stuff. People should be proud of their history and some people have to learn they must give respect to give it. When you give respect in our community, and the people in our community, and on our campus that is such a huge problem, but you have to give respect and educate people. **I think Black Greeks play a big part in their media representations of themselves, and I think its important for organizations top put themselves at a higher standard.** Its important to have education and have fun! People don't even know they're disrespecting greeks sometimes and people have to let people know instead of snapping on them. There is a huge sense of entitlement and elitism that has to go.

Interview #1
Marcus Ferguson
Freshman
Non-Greek

(Edited for related content)

JH: In a few words could you explain or tell me what Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) are?

MF: A BGLOs is an organization and or business that is used as a support system for not only people around campus but the members of the organization. Primarily serving as a social networking system, which stands on core values in order to advance Black people or minorities.

JH: Think about your first experience with a BGLO or a member of one.

MF: I actually got a dose of all of them my first time. I was down south in Alabama and I kept hearing things about greek as a child. And my Mom put up this jacket, and it was pink and green and on the bottom it said 'Unseen 17' then it had a number one in the middle and on the top it said 'Distinguished' and I said mom what is this jacket? She said 'You're going to find out' So we went out to this campus and since I was little I got a front row seat. My mom said "Wait here this is my sorrow' I said 'my sorrow?' "My sister" she said. 'I was like 'but that's not my aunt.'" I was 7 and all I heard was this sound and then I saw these dudes in red and they were twirling canes. Then I heard barking, and I looked and these guys were just flying, they were flying and yelling and I got real scared for a second. The next thing you know I heard a monkey sound. And then I heard loud pounding and I was like wow. Then I heard a ladies sound and I saw my mom and she was making the sound to. People started cheering and I was amazed.

JH: Do you remember what campus you were on?

MF: The University of Alabama.

JH: Lets talk about some of these stereotypes that you mentioned. What stereotypes do you know of and where did you learn about them.

MF: Lets start with AKAs. They're supposed to be oh so pretty, stuck up, light skinned, and have long hair. I'm not sure where that stereotype came from but I would say that is a stereotype because I've met many who aren't. The Deltas are supposed to be hard. Basically all the girls that couldn't be AKAs as in they weren't pretty enough for AKA. That's what people say sometimes. They don't have long hair; they're not conceded, but still ladylike at the end of the day. Omega Psi Phi, honestly people think every Omega man you meet is supposed to be huge, swoll, ruff, ready to fight before he's ready to go to class which is a stereotype because I know many who are about

the books and are small. You have the Alphas who are supposed to be cold bothers, the beginning of BGLO life. Stereotypes about them are that they are the down low brothers. I think I was told because they do the snake sign. The lady of Sigma Gamma Rho, they're supposed to be the sorority that all the leftovers of every other group is supposed to go to. They're kind of forgotten. Then Phi Beta Sigma, where I've been they're called the copycat frat because they copy everyone else's characteristics. The Zetas are supposed to be the lesbians, the girls who are rough. That's another stereotype but again, I have seen different. The Kappas are the ones who are the smooth brothers, they're the ones who spit game, who are the pretty boys and they're all about ladies. Other people also consider them gay or the down low brothers.

JH: Dap and Rachel Scene

MF: People do change. But I wouldn't say for the worst. I would say that most people don't understand that. When your online with these people and who all become brothers or sisters then you have this bond with them, you do get attached to them, you stay stay around them. Some people do change. Some people never want to talk to their old friends again because they feel like they're above. Some people, it's not that way but it's more of a 'these are my brothers' type of attitude. If your family was on campus, you would probably hang out with them a lot, so because their family is around they're around them. Some people feel abandoned, especially non-greek people. But it's because greeks hang out with other greeks and have other obligations so they can't just kick it with everyone, all the time.

JH: Where do you get most of your information?

MF: A lot of research and my experiences. Before I got to college I was helped a lot by one organization in particular, which was Kappa Alpha Psi. It instilled this drive of achievement in me. When I got here, the first people I met were the Alphas, then I met Kappas, then I met Ques. From research and then being around them that's where I get my information because I don't feel everyone can just tell you something and you just believe it. That's when you don't know. That's why some people hate organizations because of the stereotypes but they didn't research themselves, they didn't talk to any members of the organization to ask them what is your organization really about.

JH: What role has media played in your research process?

MF: Honestly, before I started looking at research and website, I stayed on YouTube. While I was in high school I was looking at the stuff. You don't know nothing about anything greek, but you start looking at the videos thinking you're informed about what they do, but going through different stages, I felt I was drawn to the Ques. I thought I didn't care about nobody and I was extra hard. I thought Que was for me because that hardness, that attitude of getting respect YouTube showed me that. YouTube showed me that they were about the masculinity. It didn't show me the business side, they didn't show me that they had the highest GPA. YouTube showed me when I'm mad, I wanna be a dog. The media allowed me to think that. When I went through another stage, I thought I wanted to be an Alpha. Because they were powerful and cool and neat. And when I wanted to be the guy that got all the ladies, I was drawn to the Kappas because the girls would all scream on the videos they got the loudest applause.

The media plays those stereotypes up. From movies to specials on TV, a lot of the information and videos presented upon stereotypes. Had I not researched, I would have thought I wanted to be a Kappa. Or if I wanted to be a brainiac, I would be an Alpha. If I wanted to be nasty, and play girls, and have a 'don't care' attitude I would be a Que. So that was an interesting realization when I got to college.

JH: Dap and Julian Scene

MF: This is the stereotypical asshole greek. The one that is like 'I'm greek, I'm better than you because you're not.' There are a few people that are like that. I've met some that are like that. I know some that were the most humble people but then they crossed and then the girls flock or the guys flock and then they get this whole persona of what their stereotype is and they become it and they live the stereotype because that's what they've been told they are. Not necessarily by the organization but by the students, the people. If people tell you enough, you can believe it so he becomes that! The funny thing is, stereotypes change depending on the location. So it's all about how people and how they respond to the media itself.

JH: School Daze Pledging Clip

MF: What is said is that these organizations are non-hazing organizations. Organizations are going to do it regardless. This feeds into a stereotype that is so huge. This is what scares people away from being Greek. Organizations that are meant to do such good things for the community. All the things they do in the community are great, but they're overshadowed by events and scenes like these. This scares parents. These are the attitudes and beliefs that could kill organizations; to stop them from continuing to grow. It overshadows everything they really stand for. You have to be careful who you let into your organization because some of them only want to carry on the stereotypes including hazing. I'm the type of person if you're going to be representing me or this whole thing, one person can shut down an entire organization. People don't understand that.

So I feel like it's the judgment of the people in power right now is flawed. It's like you really have to be selective on who you allow to come into your organization. So if you're an organization who doesn't want people to be ignorant, then you're not going to allow ignorant people into your organization. Which is one of the places stereotypes comes from was because of someone was ignorant in your chapter. You can have the most prestigious chapter but one ignorant person can make your entire fraternity/sorority look ignorant.

This isn't all about jackets and strolling. If a guy is trying to come into my organization and has a 2.3 GPA, he needs to spend time with me to help his GPA. When you have another young man succeeding but he doesn't fit that stereotype so because of that he doesn't have a chance to join because his efforts?

JH: I'm glad you said that because nobody has talked about how stereotypes can prevent people from joining organizations.

MF: Definitely. If a girl isn't gorgeous, she can't be an AKA? I have a friend who was told 'we can make you pretty' she's beautiful. There are certain girls that they will look at and say 'oh no, she's not pretty enough'. When did it become about how you look for

the organization? If you have the credentials and have the ability to be a benefit to the business than I'm taking you. These stereotypes are the reasons why some people don't even look at these organizations because they're only looking for people who dress fly everyday or have the money to dress fly everyday, just as an example. I don't have the money to dress fly, I'm not going to be considered so why even try? They are missing out on those people who can really help their organizations.

There is no reason why people should be joining for a jacket. You don't need to join an organization to wear a jacket, to stroll, to step. There are youth step teams across the country. Its more than that. Know what you're getting into you know? People have lost sight that this is a business and an organization. They've forgotten what they stand for.

The power those stereotypes have are on us. As a community. As a people its on us because as a non-greek If I speak on stereotypes without research or anything else, just like sometimes whites stereotype us were doing the same thing. It's the exact same thing. Honestly, we're doing it to ourselves. That's exactly what were doing.

Honestly, I wouldn't join a white frat because all they do is drink, they kegstand. Man, I don't know a dang thing about greektown. That is because I haven't researched it and I haven't been over there. They could be doing amazing things, but it would stop me from doing it because that's what it shows on TV. There are a million of movies out there, so before I get here, that's what I think they do. A white greeks do it too. They party hard because that's what they saw before they got in. So when they joined and got in that's what they thought it was about. With everything we are doing, we are losing sight of what it was really built upon.

JH: Is there anything else you want to add to the dialogue?

MF: There needs to be a change. Everywhere. A small change that can be bigger as time goes. A change where these organizations are being selective as the once were, these organizations are thinking about what they're doing before they act on it. They watch how they represent themselves to the public. We need to stop stereotyping and kill this inter racism within us. We can no longer just sit and watch people walk into these organizations without the right mindset, without the right tools. It's not what the organization do for you, what can you do for this organization? People don't realize that once you get in, you work. Im not saying don't have fun. Have fun, But remember to remember what you stand for.

JH: What is missing for the documentation of BGLOs?

MF: In the media, I would like to see them showing brothers can get along, that not every Black male is just out here fighting each other, not every Black male is not out here sagging their pants. I want to see the media talk about the love and not just the beef. Even in Stomp The Yard it was a good movie but the whole movie was about hatred between two groups. They didn't even offer handshakes while other people view the movie and say 'wow, the fight over steps'. Show more than the bad. I would love to see a movie about how greeks get along. I would love to see news reports about the good things they are doing. The only reason they have these negative things to say is because we let them. And the funny thing is that people who are greek are feeding it.

Interview #1
Justin McCain
Sophomore
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

(Edited for related content)

JH: In a few words could you explain or tell me what Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) are?

JM: In my opinion, in the core of all BGLO, is service. In their founding they were about service to their community. In this day and age they serve as connection to the community socially. We are supposed to be the voice for the Black community when no one else can speak for them. Ultimately its about service. As time goes on I feel its about more than just what you do in undergrad and when you graduate

JH: Could you give me an example of a BGLOs? What would I see that identifies them?

JM: Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

JH: Give a brief overview of your first experience with a BGLOs or a member of one.

JM: I had two experiences. My first experience was when I was about 3 or 4. I am something that is called a legacy. A legacy is someone who has a family member, brother sister, mother, father aunt, etc. and they're a member of an organization that you are aspiring to join. I was about 3 and I went to this picnic and I didn't know what was going on, I just remember a whole lot of guys in red and they were all really happy and cool with my dad. They would tell me 'this was going to be me' one day and that's what I remember about it. I had no idea what was going on, I had no idea this was a fraternity, It was just these guys and they had canes. That was that. I never saw it again until I was about 15, which is my second experience, which is when I saw Stomp The Yard. It was the first time I saw the social aspect of greek life. I had seen members of Kappa, but I never saw the social aspect where they're wearing twill letters or twirling canes but more so the men in the business suits. It was the first time I saw that and I saw how it was viewed by the general 'media.'

JH: What was your response to that experience?

JM: The very first time I saw it, it was almost like watching Americas best Dance Crew. And the main reason was because the actual movie itself stuck around certain aspects of greek life but deemphasized others. So it did speak on brotherhood. In some senses it didn't speak on all of the reasons for brotherhood. It emphasized the stepping portion, which is a great portion, but in my opinion its not what the organizations are

about. So in some senses it took away from it but then again, when I first saw it I was like 'these cats can step! We can do this in High School right?' By the time that I saw it at 18-19 when I was in college, and actually saw the difference I was like 'oh, ok this is why people who had an issue with the movie did have an issue with it'.

JH: How did seeing Stomp The Yard effect your perceptions on BGLO life?

JM: a lot of people my age didn't necessarily know about Greek life, so a lot of people had the same reaction I did to the movie that was 'ok what is this'. And really I felt like if this was your first time being exposed to greek life, it sparked a certain curiousness to you to go research. As soon as I saw that movie I went to get divine nine in the library and read it, because I wanted to know more.

JH: I'm going to show you some photographs now and I'm going to ask a series of questions and then I'd like for you to talk about them, ok?

JM: Are there stereotypes of Black Greek life? I'm my opinion yes. I think that when you join an organization, there are certain expectations and there are certain stereotypes that you are expected to hold. If you are a member of Kappa Alpha Psi, you are expected to become a pretty boy who gets all the girls. If you are an Alpha man you are expected to be distinguished. If you're an Omega man, you're expected to be someone who isn't afraid to be loud or rambunctious. If you are a member of AKA, you're supposed to be pretty all of the time. If you're a Delta, you're considered a Diva. Now is that true? In some cases yes. Is it true all of the time? No. Does that stop the stereotype from existing? No, because I have experienced it.

JH: How so?

JM: When you walk outside, you represent your organization. So lets say a member of blank organization walks outside and hits a baby. All members of the organization are not baby hitters so in that same context, If I have a member of my organization who has sex with a girl, no all Kappas have sex with all the girls? Or if someone in the organization smokes weed, then all the members of the organization are weed heads? No. So it just goes to show you that when you are a member of an organization, you are one or you are considered as one. Everything that you do, people are looking at and that affected me personally because there may be an event and it will shine positively or negatively based on how it is publically viewed.

JH: Step Show Clip

JM: That clip shows perhaps why Greek life is so attractive. The reason why is because the mass public sees the social side of greek life. By nature, when you see things like that, it makes you curious. Stepping in my opinion, it's the most attractive piece. That conflict between the two groups showed that many time, they don't see the bigger picture.

JH: Dap and Rachel Bed Scene

JM: What is see here is how some people will view greek life in a negative aspect and I can understand why. When you join a BGLO, you are no longer representing you, because of this you are losing a large part of your individuality. Just as I wear three letters with the same colors, so may the person next to me who may be a completely different personality than I am so in that since it is viewed as a form of conformity. In some cases its very true and in my opinion is it important that before you join an organization that you know who you are. If you don't have those expectations, you don't know what to expect of yourself after you join. Which is why some people will become members and then they change but you cant figure out what it is. You gotta stay true to you. Period.

JH: Dap and Julian Scene.

JM: There is that arrogance. The main thing that Julian said was 'I am greek' this goes back to the stereotype that if you are a member you feel a sense of entitlement, that you are better than someone who isn't a member of any BGLO. Because of that, you may consider yourself on a higher pedestal. In several cultures people go through a process to become a man from a boy. Theres a problem, American doesn't have this process. What does that mean for Black Greeks? It means if you can endure a pledge process or initiation process, then once you cross the burning sands, then you are now considered a man. And because a person didn't or couldn't do it its become a major issue in Black Greek life. This has been around for years.

JH: School Daze pledge scene

JM: This represents one of the largest issue with Black Greek life. Number 1 lets put it out there: Does pledging happen? Yes. Does it happen regularly throughout the United States of America? Yes. Do people who pledge endure bodily harm, bruises and pain to the point where they cant walk? Yes. Does it make it right? No, but here's the problem. Number one, the reason that hazing became illegal is because someone died from it. Particularly, a member of Kappa Alpha Psi at Southeast Missouri State University. Pledging exist. It is what it is. People who are members of an origination more than likely believe in the tradition of the organization. A very huge part of greek life is tradition. So you may feel it is not your place to change tradition. The issue is, why are people still submitting themselves to this pledge process? They may want that acceptance of their big brothers.

I would say 60% of people who begin a pledge process have no idea what they're doing because of their lack of respect. In some cases, people may thing hazing is right, because they know at one point, pledging was ok. The bottom line is that people are dying and that is not cool. Lets say you have one person who pledges and he gets hit 5 times. Because he has been hit 5 times, he may feel that the next initiate has to prove the same so the next initiate may get hit 10 times. Then the new initiate hits the newest member who feels he has to hit 20 times. Is this the fault of big brothers not teaching them? Yes. Is this the fault of the people who are doing the act because they can hurt someone physically? Yes. Is it right? Depends on who you ask because some people feel so strongly about it that they will put aside any religious or Christian morals for the sake of the organization.

JH: What do you think non-greek people feel about these representations?

JM: Prior to being a college student myself and prior to understanding it, it was a turn off to greek life because I may want to be a member of an organization with all my heart and my should, but no one wants to die for something. Everyone is self-preserving and no one wants to die pursuing an organization that isn't God.

JH: Do these films promote a stereotype?

JM: The stereotype is that if you want to be a Black greek, I have to get my ass beat. This doesn't say what brotherhood you're going to learn, it doesn't talk about networking in the organization, it doesn't talk about being built up. So in an hour you've successfully convinced me that in order to wear three letters I have to take a certain amount of pain and prove I can take the pain, and people do it. Every year. When I was younger, I thought it was dumb. My thought was why would you do that. I didn't understand why.

The media is like a parent; when you're doing a really good job, the media will tell you that you're doing a really good job. When you don't, they don't. With that being said, I think the media would most often pull from the negative especially towards the Black greek community. I'm going to see something negative about Black Greek life before I see anything positive which goes back to people who may not understand that and think these dudes in the fraternities are just beating up people. They don't know any better. I see a lot of negativity there but I wish it was more positive. How could you do it? Get someone in the position to do it. Though I may disagree with some of the reasons behind the Sprite Step Off, I thought it was a great showing of positivity in the organizations that wasn't there before. It had been four or five years after Stomp The Yard so it gave a better representation to a fifteen year old who has no idea of what BGLOs are.

JH: What is missing from the representations of BGLOs?

JM: I would like to see a broader range, because I don't have an issue with movies like Stomp the Yard or School Daze. So I want to see more of that scholarship, that community services the positive things. You can't tell the media not to be the media, so if something negative is happening, it's the job of the media to check BGLOs to say that were not doing something right. That would be a sign to us as Black Greeks that we need to step up. I think that is where we are at right now.

I think there isn't enough visual representation I think that's why there is curiousness about Black Greek life. I think that's why people were excited when Stomp The Yard came out because these are things that have never been done before. I would like to see more understanding in the Black community and I feel like if you wish to seek admittance into an organization that you need to know as much as you can. It's not like it's not something you can't find. It's all there. Just understanding that Black greek is not greek, it's African. I guess I say that to say that I want more understanding on a broader scale. Understanding equals togetherness. **When you communicate what you want people to understand it is so much easier to get the results you want.** We as Black Greeks aren't communicating well enough the media is not communicating well enough and the media isn't either and these are our results. We can't be mad at our results, but we don't have to like them either. I'm willing to put in work to make that happen.

PATRICIPANT SURVEY FORMS

BEYONDTHISPLACE

DOCUMENTING THE VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES ©

Attached is a short survey for the purpose of selecting a sample of students at the University of Missouri to participate in a study regarding the media representations of Black Greek Lettered Organizations (BGLOs). Please take your time and answer the following questions honestly. The content of this questionnaire will only be shared with me. Should you want to participate in the interview, which will follow this questionnaire, please indicate your desire on the last question of this page. Thank you very much.



Jarrad Henderson

Candidate for Masters of Art in Journalism

May 2010

Beyondthisplace.com

JarradHenderson.wordpress.com

Jarrad.Henderson@gmail.com

1. Age?

- Under 18
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-29
- 30 and Up

2. Gender?

- Female
- Male

3. What is your ethnicity/ethnicities?

- African
- African American
- Asian
- Asian American
- European
- European American
- Hispanic
- Hispanic American
- Native American
- Other

4. What year are you in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate School

5. Do you agree with Greek life as a whole?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

6. Rate your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations.

- No knowledge
- A little knowledge
- Average knowledge
- Above average knowledge
- Expert knowledge

7. Where does your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations come from?
(Check all that apply)

- Personal Experience
- Movies (Ex. School Daze)
- Television
- Parents
- Mentors
- Friends
- Other (please list):

8. There are nine historically Black Greek letter organizations called the Divine Nine. Which ones do you know?
(Check all that apply)

- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
- Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.
- Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.
- None of the Above

9. Are you currently a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

10. If so what organization are you affiliated with?

11. If you answered question 9 & 10, what semester and year were you initiated?

12. Check all the movies/media you have seen which depict Black Greek life.

- School Daze
 - Stomp The Yard
 - Secret Sisterhood
 - In The Name of Brotherhood
 - Sprite Step Off (MTV)
 - Sprite Step Off
 - Other (please list):
-

13. If you are not currently in a fraternity or sorority, have you ever thought about pledging or joining one?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Never thought about it

14. Do you feel that there are stereotypes about black fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't Know

15. If you answered yes what are some of the stereotypes that you have heard?

16. Do you feel that people join fraternities and sororities for the wrong reasons?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

17. What is the main reason(s) why you feel that people join fraternities and sororities?

- Because they have done their research and feel that it is the right organization for them
- To become more popular
- Because of their parents
- Because their friends are doing it
- Because of stereotypes
- Because of movies like School Daze or Stomp the Yard
- Other

18. Do you feel like black fraternities and sororities have a stronger bond than white fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

19. Do you have any members of your family that are a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

20. Do you think that there are any benefits of joining fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

21. Do you feel that they are any negative aspects of joining a fraternity or sorority?

- Yes
- No
- Depends
- Don't know

22. Describe the scene below in as much detail as possible. Include the who, what, where, and when if possible in your explanation of the scene.



May I contact you for further study? Yes or No

Your Name: _____ Cell Phone Number: _____

BEYONDTHISPLACE

DOCUMENTING THE VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

Attached is a short survey for the purpose of selecting a sample of students at the University of Missouri to participate in a study regarding the media representations of Black Greek Lettered Organizations. Please take your time and answer the following questions honestly. The content of this questionnaire will only be shared with me. Should you want to participate in the interview, which will follow this questionnaire, please indicate your desire on the last question of this page. Thank you very much.



Jarrad Henderson

Candidate for Masters of Art in Journalism

May 2010

Beyondthisplace.com

JarradHenderson.wordpress.com

Jarrad.Henderson@gmail.com

1. Age?

- Under 18
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-29
- 30 and Up

2. Gender?

- Female
- Male

3. What is your ethnicity/ethnicities?

- African
- African American
- Asian
- Asian American
- European
- European American
- Hispanic
- Hispanic American
- Native American
- Other

4. What year are you in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate School

5. Do you agree with Greek life as a whole?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

6. Rate your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations.

- No knowledge
- A little knowledge
- Average knowledge
- Above average knowledge
- Expert knowledge

7. Where does your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations come from?
(Check all that apply)

- Personal Experience
- Movies (Ex. School Daze)
- Television
- Parents
- Mentors
- Friends
- Other (please list):

8. There are nine historically Black Greek letter organizations called the Divine Nine. Which ones do you know?
(Check all that apply)

- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
- Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.
- Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.
- None of the Above

9. Are you currently a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

10. If so what organization are you affiliated with?

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc

11. If you answered question 7 & 8, what semester and year were you initiated?

Fall 2009

12. Check all the movies/media you have seen which depict Black Greek life.

- School Daze
 - Stomp The Yard
 - Secret Sisterhood
 - In The Name of Brotherhood
 - Sprite Step Off (MTV)
 - Sprite Step Off
 - Other (please list):
-

13. If you are not currently in a fraternity or sorority, have you ever thought about pledging or joining one?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Never thought about it

14. Do you feel that there are stereotypes about black fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't Know

15. If you answered yes what are some of the stereotypes that you have heard?

Greeks think they're better than
everyone else. It's just a
gang

16. Do you feel that people join fraternities and sororities for the wrong reasons?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

17. What is the main reason(s) why you feel that people join fraternities and sororities?

- Because they have done their research and feel that it is the right organization for them
- To become more popular
- Because of their parents
- Because their friends are doing it
- Because of stereotypes
- Because of movies like School Daze or Stomp the Yard
- Other

18. Do you feel like black fraternities and sororities have a stronger bond than white fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

19. Do you have any members of your family that are a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

20. Do you think that there are any benefits of joining fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

21. Do you feel that there are any negative aspects of joining a fraternity or sorority?

- Yes
- No
- Depends
- Don't know

22. Describe the scene below in as much detail as possible. Include the who, what, where, and when if possible in your explanation of the scene.



Scooter, Buddy, and a visiting brother take some time out with a real-Que dog.

3 members of Omega Psi Phi preparing for an event.

May I contact you for further study? Yes or No

Your Name: Gregory Green Cell Phone Number: Removed for privacy reasons

1. Age?
- Under 18
 - 18-21
 - 22-25
 - 26-29
 - 30 and Up

2. Gender?
- Female
 - Male

3. What is your ethnicity/ethnicities?
- African
 - African American
 - Asian
 - Asian American
 - European
 - European American
 - Hispanic
 - Hispanic American
 - Native American
 - Other

4. What year are you in school?
- Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Graduate School

5. Do you agree with Greek life as a whole?
- Yes
 - No
 - Somewhat
 - Don't know

6. Rate your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations.
- No knowledge
 - A little knowledge
 - Average knowledge
 - Above average knowledge
 - Expert knowledge

7. Where does your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations come from? (Check all that apply)
- Personal Experience
 - Movies (Ex. School Daze)
 - Television
 - Parents
 - Mentors
 - Friends
 - Other (please list):

-
8. There are nine historically Black Greek letter organizations called the Divine Nine. Which ones do you know? (Check all that apply)
- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
 - Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
 - Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
 - Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
 - Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
 - Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
 - Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
 - Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.
 - Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.
 - None of the Above

9. Are you currently a part of a Greek organization?
- Yes
 - No

10. If so what organization are you affiliated with?

-
11. If you answered question 7 & 8, what semester and year were you initiated?
-

12. Check all the movies/media you have seen which depict Black Greek life.

- School Daze
- Stomp The Yard
- Secret Sisterhood
- In The Name of Brotherhood
- Sprite Step Off (MTV)
- Sprite Step Off
- Other (please list):

A Different World (TV show)

13. If you are not currently in a fraternity or sorority, have you ever thought about pledging or joining one?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Never thought about it

14. Do you feel that there are stereotypes about black fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't Know

15. If you answered yes what are some of the stereotypes that you have heard?

That ^{black} greeks have a strong bond
They get hazed.

16. Do you feel that people join fraternities and sororities for the wrong reasons?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

17. What is the main reason(s) why you feel that people join fraternities and sororities?

- Because they have done their research and feel that it is the right organization for them
- To become more popular
- Because of their parents
- Because their friends are doing it
- Because of stereotypes
- Because of movies like School Daze or Stomp the Yard
- Other

18. Do you feel like black fraternities and sororities have a stronger bond than white fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

19. Do you have any members of your family that are a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

20. Do you think that there are any benefits of joining fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

21. Do you feel that there are any negative aspects of joining a fraternity or sorority?

- Yes
- No
- Depends
- Don't know

22. Describe the scene below in as much detail as possible. Include the who, what, where, and when if possible in your explanation of the scene.



Three members of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity are standing outside of a building with the Que mascot, "the dog." Judging from their attire, this picture is from the 1980s or 90s.

May I contact you for further study? Yes or No

Your Name: Erica Brown Cell Phone Number: Removed for privacy reasons

1. Age?

- Under 18
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-29
- 30 and Up

2. Gender?

- Female
- Male

3. What is your ethnicity/ethnicities?

- African
- African American
- Asian
- Asian American
- European
- European American
- Hispanic
- Hispanic American
- Native American
- Other

4. What year are you in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate School

5. Do you agree with Greek life as a whole?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

6. Rate your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations.

- No knowledge
- A little knowledge
- Average knowledge
- Above average knowledge
- Expert knowledge

7. Where does your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations come from?
(Check all that apply)

- Personal Experience
- Movies (Ex. School Daze)
- Television
- Parents
- Mentors
- Friends
- Other (please list):

8. There are nine historically Black Greek letter organizations called the Divine Nine. Which ones do you know?
(Check all that apply)

- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
- Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.
- Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.
- None of the Above

9. Are you currently a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

10. If so what organization are you affiliated with?

None

11. If you answered question 9 & 10, what semester and year were you initiated?

N/A

12. Check all the movies/media you have seen which depict Black Greek life.

- School Daze
 - Stomp The Yard
 - Secret Sisterhood
 - In The Name of Brotherhood
 - Sprite Step Off (MTV)
 - Sprite Step Off
 - Other (please list):
-

13. If you are not currently in a fraternity or sorority, have you ever thought about pledging or joining one?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Never thought about it

14. Do you feel that there are stereotypes about black fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't Know

15. If you answered yes what are some of the stereotypes that you have heard?

They haze people; They are very separatist;

16. Do you feel that people join fraternities and sororities for the wrong reasons?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

17. What is the main reason(s) why you feel that people join fraternities and sororities?

- Because they have done their research and feel that it is the right organization for them
- To become more popular
- Because of their parents
- Because their friends are doing it
- Because of stereotypes
- Because of movies like School Daze or Stomp the Yard
- Other

18. Do you feel like black fraternities and sororities have a stronger bond than white fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

19. Do you have any members of your family that are a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

20. Do you think that there are any benefits of joining fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

21. Do you feel that there are any negative aspects of joining a fraternity or sorority?

- Yes
- No
- Depends
- Don't know

22. Describe the scene below in as much detail as possible. Include the who, what, where, and when if possible in your explanation of the scene.



Buddy, and a visiting brother take some time out
with the Que dog.

The men of Omega Psi Phi with their mascot dog,
trying to teach him tricks; 1980's, not sure where.

May I contact you for further study? Yes or No

Your Name: Victoria Uwumarogie Cell Phone Number: Removed for privacy reasons

1. Age?

- Under 18
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-29
- 30 and Up

2. Gender?

- Female
- Male

3. What is your ethnicity/ethnicities?

- African
- African American
- Asian
- Asian American
- European
- European American
- Hispanic
- Hispanic American
- Native American
- Other

4. What year are you in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate School

5. Do you agree with Greek life as a whole?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

6. Rate your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations.

- No knowledge
- A little knowledge
- Average knowledge
- Above average knowledge
- Expert knowledge

7. Where does your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations come from?

(Check all that apply)

- Personal Experience
- Movies (Ex. School Daze)
- Television
- Parents
- Mentors
- Friends
- Other (please list):

8. There are nine historically Black Greek letter organizations called the Divine Nine. Which ones do you know?

(Check all that apply)

- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
- Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.
- Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.
- None of the Above

9. Are you currently a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

10. If so what organization are you affiliated with?

11. If you answered question 7 & 8, what semester and year were you initiated?

N/A

12. Check all the movies/media you have seen which depict Black Greek life.

- School Daze
 - Stomp The Yard
 - Secret Sisterhood
 - In The Name of Brotherhood
 - Sprite Step Off (MTV)
 - Sprite Step Off
 - Other (please list):
-

13. If you are not currently in a fraternity or sorority, have you ever thought about pledging or joining one?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Never thought about it

14. Do you feel that there are stereotypes about black fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't Know

15. If you answered yes what are some of the stereotypes that you have heard?

AKAs - light skinned
Ques - man "whores"
Alphas - Really Smart

16. Do you feel that people join fraternities and sororities for the wrong reasons?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

17. What is the main reason(s) why you feel that people join fraternities and sororities?

- Because they have done their research and feel that it is the right organization for them
- To become more popular
- Because of their parents
- Because their friends are doing it
- Because of stereotypes
- Because of movies like School Daze or Stomp the Yard
- Other

18. Do you feel like black fraternities and sororities have a stronger bond than white fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

19. Do you have any members of your family that are a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

20. Do you think that there are any benefits of joining fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

21. Do you feel that there are any negative aspects of joining a fraternity or sorority?

- Yes
- No
- Depends
- Don't know

22. Describe the scene below in as much detail as possible. Include the who, what, where, when, and why if possible in your explanation of the scene.



Spooz, Buddy, and a visiting friend take some time out with a real Que dog.

I see Omega Psi Phi members w/ a dog b/c they're known as "Que dogs" and they regularly make dog sounds

May I contact you for further study? Yes or No

Your Name: Lysaundra Campbell Cell Phone Number Removed for privacy reasons

1. Age?

- Under 18
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-29
- 30 and Up

2. Gender?

- Female
- Male

3. What is your ethnicity/ethnicities?

- African
- African American
- Asian
- Asian American
- European
- European American
- Hispanic
- Hispanic American
- Native American
- Other

4. What year are you in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate School

5. Do you agree with Greek life as a whole?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

6. Rate your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations.

- No knowledge
- A little knowledge
- Average knowledge
- Above average knowledge
- Expert knowledge

7. Where does your knowledge of Black Greek Letter Organizations come from?

(Check all that apply)

- Personal Experience
- Movies (Ex. School Daze)
- Television
- Parents
- Mentors
- Friends
- Other (please list):

8. There are nine historically Black Greek letter organizations called the Divine Nine. Which ones do you know?

(Check all that apply)

- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
- Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.
- Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.
- None of the Above

9. Are you currently a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

10. If so what organization are you affiliated with?

11. If you answered question 9 & 10, what semester and year were you initiated?

12. Check all the movies/media you have seen which depict Black Greek life.

- School Daze
 - Stomp The Yard
 - Secret Sisterhood
 - In The Name of Brotherhood
 - Sprite Step Off (MTV)
 - Sprite Step Off
 - Other (please list):
-

13. If you are not currently in a fraternity or sorority, have you ever thought about pledging or joining one?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Never thought about it

14. Do you feel that there are stereotypes about black fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't Know

15. If you answered yes what are some of the stereotypes that you have heard?

Disconnection b/w greeks
and other blacks on campus

16. Do you feel that people join fraternities and sororities for the wrong reasons?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

17. What is the main reason(s) why you feel that people join fraternities and sororities?

- Because they have done their research and feel that it is the right organization for them
- To become more popular
- Because of their parents
- Because their friends are doing it
- Because of stereotypes
- Because of movies like School Daze or Stomp the Yard
- Other

18. Do you feel like black fraternities and sororities have a stronger bond than white fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

19. Do you have any members of your family that are a part of a Greek organization?

- Yes
- No

20. Do you think that there are any benefits of joining fraternities and sororities?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat
- Don't know

21. Do you feel that there are any negative aspects of joining a fraternity or sorority?

- Yes
- No
- Depends
- Don't know

22. Describe the scene below in as much detail as possible. Include the who, what, where, and when if possible in your explanation of the scene.



Buddy and a friend of the take some time out with Que dog.

This is a group of Omegas - probably in the 70's
or 80's playing of the nickname of their
fraternity with an actual dog

May I contact you for further study? Yes or No

Your Name: Veronica wells Cell Phone Number: Removed for privacy reasons

7

PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS QUERY LETTER

BEYONDTHISPLACE

DOCUMENTING THE VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES ©

April 17, 2013

Jill Waterman
Editor
PDNedu
770 Broadway, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10003

Greetings Ms. Waterman,

When I was 19 years old, my father gave me my first photography book with a note inside that said "Every photographer must have a copy of THIS work." It was a hardback copy of Moneta Sleet Jr.'s "Special Moments: In African American History 1955-1996." Sleet led me to Gordon Parks, who lead me to Roy DeCarava, Richard Avedon, Ansel Adams, and other phenomenal photographers. I was instantly hooked.

I have learned that any chance to practice this craft of photography is a tremendous opportunity and have dedicated a majority of my energy to becoming a better storyteller. I am currently studying at the University of Missouri where I am completing my Master of Art in Journalism degree. Partly motivated by my graduation requirements but sincerely rooted in my desire to help other journalist, I wrote an article dealing with a basic visual challenge that every photographer deals with daily: stereotypes.

In an early introduction to photography research I was asked to examine social and political dimensions of still photography in society. One day in class we discussed visual stereotyping. I have often wondered about the definition of visual stereotypes, where they came from and how to combat them particularly when they involved the Black community. I wondered if they were undeniable or inevitable. How could I photograph aspects of my own culture, one of the most stereotyped in the history of media, in a way that wouldn't be riddled with preconceived notions? How could

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someone completely unfamiliar to my culture photograph an aspect more accurately? As a Black photographer, I needed to find a way to get closer to representation of a visual subject rather than relying on stereotypes to connect with my potential audience. My solution was to use a research method called photo elicitation to help inform my work.

Using photographs to interview people has become a way for researchers and journalist to elicit better detail when trying to find out important aspects of social, political and cultural events. This article addresses issues surrounding stereotyping in media, talks about how I used interviews with photographs to inform my work and talks about my own revelations as a Black photographer during the development of my personal documentary project.

Overall, I hope that we can continue further dialogue about the possibility of this essay running in PDNedu. Please feel free to contact me at your convenience. I look forward to this potential opportunity to serve the greater journalism community while continuing my personal development as a photographer and student.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Jarrad Henderson

M.A. Candidate, Fall 2012

University Of Missouri-Columbia

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DOCUMENTING THE VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES ©

The Images Inside My Head

by Jarrad Henderson

Close your eyes and imagine eating an apple.

What did the apple look like as you were chomping away on it? What representation of 'apple' did you come up with? Was it a Granny Smith? Gala? I bet it was a big shiny apple like the one Snow White bit into in the Disney film. Bright Red. The concept of internal images is not something new. Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (1978) and Chuck Klosterman's book *Eating the Dinosaur* (2009) explore the concept of internal images. Mander wrote about the concept in the pre-Google society of 1978, stating that TV takes away people's freedom to have whatever thoughts they want. Even more relevant to this article was Mander's belief that images influence our thoughts.

Wait. Images? Photographs? Pictures?

Yes. According to Mander, these 'images inside your head' were either out of your own imagination or else they were created from media. This idea of pre-meditated imagination is eerily similar to a journalistic concept that photographers confront every time they photograph a subject: stereotyping.

In my early introduction to photography research I was asked to examine social and political dimensions of still photography in society. One day in class we discussed visual stereotyping. I had often wondered about the definition of visual stereotypes, where they came from and how to combat them particularly when they involved the black community. I wondered if they were undeniable or inevitable. How could I photograph aspects of my own culture, one of the most stereotyped in the history of media, in a way that wouldn't be riddled with preconceived notions? How could

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someone completely unfamiliar to my culture photograph an aspect more accurately? As a black photographer, I needed to find a way to get closer to representation of a visual subject rather than relying on stereotypes to connect with my potential audience.

It is nearly impossible to talk about representation without talking about stereotyping. When you think about stereotypes, you automatically have images that unveil themselves in your head. These types of images are the result of decades of embedding. Unfortunately, what we generally associate with the term stereotypes normally encompass negative characteristics, but they can also be neutral characteristics like the 'redness' of the apple you imagined. Why didn't you think of a green or yellow colored apple?

Klosterman continues by giving one of Mander's examples: "he asks the reader to imagine a basketball game in your head." Do that. Imagine the game in your head now. What do you see? Klosterman concludes "One can assume that virtually everyone in the United States had attended a live basketball game at some point in his or her life, and almost as many have played in a basketball game for real...I played organized basketball for thirteen years. So why is my first mental image of basketball game moment from game four of a Celtics-Lakers championship series I saw on CBS in 1984?" It was clear to me that these powerful associations would not be easy to overcome. How could I approach a story more accurately? My solution was to use a research method called photo elicitation to help better inform my project on a longstanding African American cultural, political and social institution.

Over the last two and a half years I have been exploring the visual history of African American fraternities and sororities. I knew I wanted to complete my master's research project to help inform a long-term project called "Beyond This Place". This photo project will tell stories of members of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs), the historical context of which they were developed and the contemporary challenges faced

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by their leadership. The subject of fraternities and sororities is unfamiliar to most people. Even more unfamiliar is the historical significance and history of black fraternities and sororities. I was extremely familiar with the culture, being an initiated member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., one of the nine organizations that comprises the Divine Nine, but needed a way to explore the topic to go beyond the general, popular perception of these organizations. By using photos to elicit responses during my interviews, I could pull relevant facts, questions and concerns to the forefront of the design of my project.

From the time a visual journalist is given an assignment images instantly flood their heads. As a photojournalist, I have often felt that my job is not to define but to display. Many professionals around the nation are challenged daily with creating artwork that is representative of a situation or person. These images can be viewed thousands or even millions of times. Being in this position is tough. There are numerous considerations when photographing a subject. What angle should I take the photo from? Which lens should I use? What type of light should I use? Photographers who work for publications often have their viewers in mind. So how does one interpret photographic situations accurately without introducing his or her own biases and projected stereotypes onto a visual subject? I had to deal with the same challenge, given the stereotypes that surround Black Greek Letter Organizations.

In my case when most people think about black fraternities and sororities, they think of the media associated with it first, just like in Klostermans's example. For me this means my subjects mention either or both of two movies: Spike Lee's film *School Daze* (1988) or Sylvain White's film *Stomp The Yard* (2007). Essentially I wanted to find out which external media source had the greatest influence on the internal images of my subject, and how those images or beliefs inspired people to behave a particular way.

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I set up interviews with eight college-aged black students, four were members of BGLOs and four were not. During my interviews, I showed a series of images and video clips to participants and had them talk about what they saw and what it meant to them. I found that many people gave me specific examples of events and people they had encountered who essentially introduced them to Black Greek culture. A good number of them had their first interactions with a family member but all agreed that this wasn't where their understanding of black Greek stereotypes came from. In fact, participants thought the movie *School Daze* provided the most iconic images of the culture in popular media, falling in line of the hypothesis of Mander. The images inside their heads were of Dean Big Brother Almighty, the dean of pledges for the fictional Gamma Phi Gamma Fraternity Incorporated, or Half-Pint, a pledge attempting to make it through 'Hell Week', as portrayed by filmmaker Spike Lee.

When it came to identifying the stereotypical traits of the organizations many turned to behavioral traits first. Because of this, many felt that the stereotypes of specific fraternities and sororities were a part of the actual character traits of members of these organizations in real life. For example, Spike Lee's film *School Daze* used the concept of fraternities to show viewers basic, yet effective, group identity traits that are familiar to people who were aware of fraternity men in the culture. His fictional fraternity, Gamma Phi Gamma drives the plot line as the viewer experiences the harsh realities of an early 80's pledge process, the 'dog' like behavior of the G Phi G organization, and the sexual promiscuity of fraternity men.

In my research these group traits were easily identified throughout the interview. One Greek participant, Justin McCain talked about the influence of these traits:

" I think that when you join an organization, there are certain expectations and there are certain stereotypes that you are *expected* to hold. If you are a member of Kappa Alpha Psi, you are expected to become a pretty boy who gets all the

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girls. If you are an Alpha man you are expected to be distinguished. If you're an Omega man, you're expected to be someone who isn't afraid to be loud or rambunctious...Now is that true? In some cases yes. Is it true all of the time? No. Does that stop the stereotype from existing? No, because I have experienced it."

Another non-Greek participant, Bailey Anderson, echoed the previous sentiments stating that "...Black Greeks play a big part in their media representations of themselves, and I think it's important for organizations to put themselves at a higher standard." The assumption of identity then could be likened to the experiences of internal imagery. Overall, the people I interviewed thought that not only did the stereotypes exist but also they stated that the members themselves were subject to the images inside their own heads when learning how to 'act' like a member of a BGLO once initiated.

After conducting my research, I learned that most of the participants quickly responded about lack of 'service', brotherhood/sisterhood and the existence of intergenerational membership images. Where the images simply overlooked? I wasn't so sure. Lee's film didn't include any scene about BGLOs service to the community. By taking time to research what others who were or were not familiar with Black Greek culture, I found a key element that would make my project more holistic in its representation of BGLOs and an answer to combat general stereotypes of the culture.

Just as Klosterman's basketball example, the images conjured by the mind at the mention of Black Greeks came from media representation. Klosterman continued by saying that people can't differentiate between reality and fiction when it comes to internal images, citing that while we can explain the difference between the two stimuli, most times, we cannot manage the internal image any more than Klosterman could

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keep game four of the Celtics-Lakers Championship out of his mind's eye. While these stereotypes may not be realistic, they are what people build their impressions on.

News photographers, who face increasingly shrinking print space and resources, have to communicate messages quickly. If they are faced with the decision to photograph a step show or a community service event, many factors including timing, access and context play a role. While many will associate BGLOs with stepping, it may not have been the best way of communicating the representation of the fraternity or sorority members or of the culture itself. These decisions in the real world affect how people think internally about hundreds of years of historical achievement and significant contributions to the political, social and educational development of black America. For me the challenge was to better represent the culture by bringing emphasis to these little explored concepts.

After gathering all my information I was truly able to inform my work in a way that made it different from anything else currently on the discourse of black fraternities and sororities. This process helped keep the focus on the culture and not myself, allowing me to think less about which lenses I was using and more about the ideas I wanted to convey in the resulting images. I found the results to be satisfactory and was told the work presented a different degree of the culture not often seen. Ultimately, the lesson to journalist is simple: in this digital age, we must be careful what we choose to show and what we choose not to show. The images you present online and in print can very well become the images inside someone else's head...forever.

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ORIGINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

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DOCUMENTING THE VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES.®

Jarrad Henderson

Missouri School of Journalism

J-8098, Project Seminar

Final Draft (Revised)

Committee Members:

Rita Reed, Chair

Dr. Keith Greenwood

Jackie Bell

Special Advisor: Larry Powell

May 3, 2010

Abstract

Very little scholarly material is written about African American Fraternities and Sororities. Since the first Black fraternity's conception in 1906, mystery has always dominated the image of the nine historically Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs). This proposal first draws from the previous study of BGLOs through a review of related research and literature. This proposal will examine the relationship between perceived norms and visual authenticity of BGLOs today to identify visual concepts for future study. After labeling the working definition of stereotyping, representation and perceived norms and formulating an examination of stereotypes of BGLO culture, the result will yield a photographic project with the purpose of showcasing BGLOs void of stereotype and sensationalism. This work will serve as a sample of a larger documentary project about BGLOs called "Beyond This Place".

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Beyond This Place: Documenting the Visual History of African American Fraternities and Sororities

Around the time I was twelve years old, my father took my brother and I into the heart of downtown St. Louis for a Greek Show. He told me he wanted to share some of his college experience, citing some similar events that took place at his Alma Mater Ole Miss. His eyes lit up with enthusiasm as he described the scene. At the time, I had no clue what a “Greek Show” was and I really had no intention of going, but his excitement immediately influenced my own as we pulled up to the concrete amphitheater. The sun was bright, but not quite as bright as the glistening gold boots I saw once I stepped out of the car. I thought I had stepped into some type of live amateur theater production.

I remember seeing Black people with huge smiles on their faces, their demeanor more appropriate than I had ever seen, wearing a sense of pride on their faces as the men with the sun boots took their places in front of the cold, stone stage. A husky man introduced the group wearing purple t-shirts and army fatigue pants as the brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. at which point some of the adults and young men sitting behind me started barking like insane canines in a dog shelter. My brother and I shared a laugh and looked at each other as if we knew we were in for a treat. The men continued their greetings and then eventually started dancing while singing songs. “I’ve been working on Omega train...rolling, rolling, rolling for Q Psi Phi!” they chanted with animated beats made from their bodies. The experience was flooded with excitement. As if it were yesterday, I could remember as we left the

event, I looked out the window to see the brothers who performed walking together, embracing each other and laughing while on their way to their next event. I had been pleased with the thought of fraternities since my very first experience. It wouldn't be until I enrolled at Arizona State University as a sophomore that I would learn more first hand about these organizations.

It didn't really dawn on me about how important these Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) were until I was completely immersed in the college culture. The fraternity and sorority members who made up these BGLOs were upperclassmen, who willingly offered me assistance and a social platform to become more comfortable and aware of the large campus. Through on-campus forums I learned that historically these organizations had a firm foundation in the progress of the Black American. They had produced some of the most important minds in Black history and American history. People like Martin Luther King, Jr., Jesse Jackson, Rosa Parks, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes all were a part of these BGLOs; Even some of my favorite athletes like Michael Jordan were Greek. I was fascinated with the common thread all these intelligent people shared.

The significance of BGLOs spans across cultural, socio-economic, and continental barriers and has been one of the leading institutions in Black history. Without the establishment of these organizations in the early 1900s, the history of Black people in America would find progressive politics, entertainment, athletics, health, and academia still moving at a Jim Crow's pace. In fact, it was these organizations and its members, along with others, who progressed America up to and through the Jim Crow era. At the higher education level, these organizations continue

to serve the purpose of providing brotherhood and sisterhood to college students facing poor recruitment, retention, and graduation statistics. BGLOs are paramount in the college student experience for the thousands of Black students at colleges and universities across the United States and abroad. To put it frankly, BGLOs are to the Black college student experience as

I came to the decision to pledge a fraternity once I found that many of the men I respected around campus were also members of BGLOs. I had my own personal reasons as well, but there was no denying that I felt the concept of brotherhood had been branded on my heart since I was twelve. I began doing more research and talked to men on campus who were members of these organizations. I even used my photography major as an excuse to be around them more often by photographing step shows and taking pictures at BGLOs events. This exposure to BGLO life got me hooked on the idea of joining and I eventually was initiated into Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. on December 3, 2005. Since then I have been engulfed in the culture arming myself with research about the importance of these organizations to the Black college experience and the experience of Black people in America. My experience in the fraternity has proved to be very fruitful; I have met many people who offer mentorship, earned opportunities that have helped me be successful, and had priceless experiences through my commitment to the concepts of the brotherhood. The fraternity gave me confidence, the fraternity earned me my first job out of college, and the fraternity commits me to service and love for all mankind. I share the same excitement about BGLOs as the day I saw they Ques perform in St. Louis. It is from

this perspective that I began to consider documenting the plight of BGLOs more seriously as a photojournalist.

As a second year Masters student at the University of Missouri, I have been fortunate to learn from some of the best minds in journalism, but out of all of my class work it has been my experience outside of the classroom, which pushed me to this point. I had been photographing BGLOs seriously for about two months when I met Melissa Farlow at the Missouri Photo Workshop in St. James, Missouri. It was here that Melissa dug into me for not pursuing my infatuation with BGLOs. I felt embarrassed when it seemed she pointed out the obvious to me about my photography. She told me I needed to keep shooting and that I was in a very important position in my project. She lit a fire under me that will burn for the next 50 years. The idea of photographing BGLO culture has never been done in the fashion that I am proposing to do it, but I found peace in knowing my opportunity has been especially crafted for me. I am in a very privileged place in my development as a photographer. Formal training in courses like Fundamentals of Photojournalism, Staff Photojournalism at the Columbia Missourian and Picture Story, have allowed me personal growth as a visual storyteller, giving me the skills necessary to tell the stories that are traditionally ignored by popular media. Having this skill set will allow me to work hard at capturing moments the culture of BGLOs and the people who make up their legacies. Admittedly, some may call my personal membership in a BGLO a liability to objectivity of such a project. In fact, more can be said of my experience that lends a discourse of understanding about Black Greeks that a photographer not embraced in the understanding would ever comprehend. Just

because I am a member doesn't necessarily mean I can't bring authenticity and truth to my photographic work. If anything, my experience brings more to the table, similar to how Fredrick Douglass experience as a slave gave him a foundation to fight the institution of slavery in his journalism.

Ultimately, my interactions with professors like David Rees and Rita Reed validated my experience as a photographer and encouraged me to find the stories that needed to be told. The stories found in the Black student experience are as diverse and complicated as the differences between stereotypes and representation, but through my project, I hope to find the commonalities which help to show validity in the human experience while helping to illustrate an important institution of Black America. In the future, I would like to continue documenting the culture of BGLOs and eventually earn a fellowship to publish a book about my findings. This piece of the dream will help demonstrate my drive and ability to complete a successful project.

Beyond This Place: My Project Plan

I plan to document a portion of BGLO culture, visually documenting the events and people who make up these organizations. I plan on having a couple short meetings with my project committee to showcase my progress at dates and times to be determined, but I suggest three works in progress sessions to take place on the first Friday of each month beginning in February. This way, I can ensure I am staying on task and allowing myself time to continue to focus my project. Additionally, I will present field notes every week and send documentation to my committee when I add new field notes to my archives. These will normally be presented by email

correspondence in which I will present text and links to the blog where the work is being posted. Ultimately, my project will consist of three parts: 1) A photo-elicitation study with current students about their experiences with BGLOs, 2) Create at least two multimedia stories with accompanying text which can be submitted for possible publication, 3) Creation of a website to host multimedia about the project.

I want to do a study on how people perceive BGLOs in media and in real life. I will accomplish this task with a series of photo elicitation sessions that pull from both video and still images. In doing so, I hope to find issues that people find relevant when talking about BGLOs. The selection criteria for the elicitation sessions are based on the following factors including: academic class standing, greek or non-greek affiliation, and Black college aged students ranging from 17-22. Ethnicity in this study has been limited to Black college aged students for the purposes of targeting a group of people who have proportionally have been exposed to BGLO culture and who historically have benefited from these organizations. While all BGLOs are in fact, multi-racial, the impact on the Black community is by far more distinct than it is for other cultures. I will meet with a total of 8 students for at least a one-hour session. Four of the eight students will be greek, another four non-greek. My selection criteria for the greek students would be one older (prophyte) and one younger (neophyte) college member of different organizations, as well as having representation from two fraternities and two sororities (four different organizations total). The non-greek students will be selected based off of a convenience sample. The four students will represent freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes as well as be people who have some familiarity with BGLOs. I will help identify people

with these criteria by presenting a questionnaire about their experience with these organizations. The questionnaire will also ask simple biographical information and ask questions using a numerical scale of identification to monitor control. More information on the creation and distribution of this document can be found in the outline of schedule below. A sample questionnaire will be developed in the first week of my official start date but a sample of questions to be asked is attached to this proposal (3.1). The students will consist of two males and two females to vary perspective. The two groups will be shown a variety of media during the elicitation session. Most of the video will come from clips of Spike Lees's popular film on Black college life, *School Daze*. I understand the reservations of using popular media in a journalistic study, but the facts remain that *School Daze* is still the leading popular representation of Black college life. The still images will come from a collection of historical images regarding BGLOs, BGLO members (e.g. Dr. Martin Luther King, Michelle Obama, etc.), documentary, and some of my personal images.

Next, I would like to focus on creating at least two multimedia stories that display the gamut of the BGLO experience. I have a few suggestions on story topics, but the general format will include: stories on campus and stories off of campus. My foremost ideas are to focus on the probate (or the process of introducing new college members), alumni membership (showcasing the lifelong commitment associated with these organizations), and BGLO networks (telling the story of high profile member who can embody the aim of raising the socioeconomic status of Black people in America). I know I can successfully pull off these stories with timeliness and tact and look forward to the possibilities that present themselves. Visually, I would focus on

the relationships of the potential and established members of these organizations. I am more interested in the people of these organizations and how the organizations serve as a supplement to their own personal philosophies. These two stories, coupled with a written component will be what I submit for publication in a magazine like Ebony or Essence. I would love for my work to show up in other publications like the Black Collegian or Black Enterprise and think that I would have a good shot should my stories reflect what entire television series like CNN's Black in America couldn't, the importance of Black institutions.

Finally, I would like to create a website where I could self-publish my materials. More than anything, the website is part of my physical evidence that I am doing the work for the project. It also serves as the connection point for people who may be interested in the topic and who would like to learn more. This site would have story content, a blog for daily progress entries, multimedia samples, and more information about BGLOs. Having a website is a need for photographers in the 21st Century. With the nature of the project, I feel the site will add a level of interactivity with the user to witness the progress of the work and to provide feedback that will be instrumental to the project. Overall, these three tasks will help build a foundation in which I can produce future work. I anticipate completing all three tasks by the start of May.

The project would be on a fifteen-week schedule with another two weeks built into the schedule for travel. The project dates would start on January 3, 2010 and complete after 17-weeks on May 3, 2010. I hope to travel to Howard University during the month of April when they have one of their famous probate shows (the

historical equivalent to tap day, where new members of BGLOs are introduced to the general campus and surrounding community). Probate shows at Howard are intense and a huge deal because of the historical foundation that exist there. I would love to document the probates of large chapters where the organizations started to show the history of the events. More specifically, my schedule will follow a 35-hour a week commitment, which will be scheduled in flexible 7-hour increments from Monday through Friday. The break down of each week's activities will be physically scheduled in calendar format by December 31, pending approval by my committee chair. This calendar will serve as one of the guidelines for all project work and set all appointments. Ideally, my calendar will reflect the following project schedule:

Weeks 1-2: Research- specifically identify and create video clips and still image panels for the photo/video elicitation part of my research. Have questionnaires printed and prepared for distribution at a major event on campus to solicit participation. Send email to Legion of Black Collegians and National Pan-Hellenic Council student groups about setting up times to distribute the questionnaire. Shooting- begin the process of identifying people to photograph for the professional skills part of the project.

Week 3: Research- Go to meetings to distribute forms as well as identify some other sources for participation (ie. Dorms, student council, etc.). Also find a campus event where I can distribute the questionnaires. Shooting- continue building relationships with the people to photograph. Begin working on website and blog.

Weeks 4-5: Research- Identify students for study from questionnaire and begin the research. Interviews will all be conducted during both weeks, greeks one

week, non greeks the next. I will log all interviews during this time and summarize results from the study during this time. Shooting: Multimedia project 1: Alumni membership project in the form of either a celebrity or continued participation frame. I will have identified some one by now to follow and document their involvement with their Fraternity after a number of years. It is worth noting that if everything goes well with the college story, I will also be working a minority of time on the probate story by this point. Work on website.

Weeks 6-8: Research: Finish research draft 1. Shooting: Continue shooting first week, and doing video interviews. Begin editing process for multimedia project 1. Work on website.

Week 9: Research: Finalize final draft of research. Shooting: Wrap up multimedia project 1. By this point, I may travel to the east coast for a short comparison shooting on the showmanship of the probate at a historically Black campus, the purpose being to show the excitement of these organizations across the States. Work on website.

Weeks 10-12: Research: none. Shooting: Complete multimedia project 1 by week 10. Begin working more intensely on multimedia project 2. By this point, I should have extremely good access to an organization for the probate story. A majority of the time would be spent with a student, taking time to learn about their personal life and family life. More work will be focused on the personal triumphs and challenges of the student's life and their desires to join a fraternity/sorority. It is at this point that I would incorporate weekly video diary sessions with the student to get them on video speaking about their experience. Work on website.

Weeks 13-14: Research: Begin writing article text for the multimedia projects. Shooting: Continue logging interviews of student for Multimedia story 2 and continue shooting on the project looking towards the final few weeks. Work on website.

Week 15: Research: Finalize the article to accompany multimedia projects. Shooting: Photograph the actual probate and begin the editing process for multimedia project 2. Website finishing touches.

Week 16-17: Research: Continue to work on research and articles. Shooting: Wrap up multimedia project 2 and prepare presentations for defense.

Statement of Topic

The relationship between perpetuated media stereotypes and cultivation of cultural reality has long been an issue in the African American community. Dating back to the first representations of actors in black face, the infatuation with imitating and stereotyping Black culture has consumed both Hollywood and mass media for decades according to Rocchio (2000). No aspect of Black culture has been left untouched by the media. Everything from pre-emancipation to the late 1980s crack epidemic has been profiled and classified as part of the African American experience in either the news or Hollywood.

The strained thread that holds the discourse of everything that can be considered authentically Black has often been sheared at the will of corporate executives and the appetite of a dominating attitude of capitalism. This relationship between stereotypes and socio-economic progress is no stranger to the story of Black struggle and success in America. Although this relationship is a great example of

human triumph, it is also an illustration of the profound underlying complexities of the Black experience itself. Unlike any other Americans, people of African descent have had an identity crisis since first being freed from the institution of slavery (Wright, 2002). Far enough removed from their African roots to have held onto any significant culturally relevant rituals and customs, the people who knew nothing but a world that excluded them as privileged citizens, began the process of finding themselves. Wright contends that this process to discover the identity of what it meant to be “African American” has been explored in a way that can be considered organic to the creation of the social, economic, political, and historical development of Black America (p. 2). This original Black culture would, in its worst form, fall subject to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and experience disproportionate effects of socio-economic disparity; In its best form it would give rise to social triumphs through the Black Arts, Black Power, and Civil Rights Movements. One successful organically Black institution would be the organizing of Black fraternities and sororities.

Hardly any studies take time to talk about how the media portrays these organizations or the events that embody them. While most studies solely focus on the hazing incidents, the majority does not mention the perception of these organizations as portrayed in news broadcast, entertainment programs, or film. Often, the most used aspects of BGLO culture come by way of the showmanship and performances of stepping. While some support these images of BGLOs, others feel they have been marginalized to a point where even the culture that gave life to the concept of BGLOs asks if they are still relevant in the 21st century. In an effort to develop theoretical framework on the correlation between perceived norms and ultimate livelihood of

BGLOs, and to discover where some gaps in research may exist, this proposal synthesizes current literature about BGLOs in an attempt to research the following question:

How do visual representations create or perpetuate stereotypes of BGLOs among college aged students?

This research seeks to provide theoretical framework to sustain a study between visual representations and how cultivation develops a sense of authenticity among viewers for future visual study. This relationship suggests that cultivated norms perceived by the general community ultimately dictate the longevity and integrity of BGLOs. In this task, media representation has to take a step back from traditionally held views of the previously held ideas of how to present culture.

Relevancy to Journalism: Defining Representation & Stereotyping

Mass media spans broadly across television, electronic devices, and even entire cultures and can be defined in many different ways. There is much power in this form of communication as it defines the terms of the reality of people, places, and experiences that will be consumed by a variety of viewers who may be unfamiliar with the content. The need to separately define both media representation and media stereotyping is important because both have a profound impact on the understanding of the world. Although representation often times does draw off of stereotypes in order to project a recognizable image it is not limited to stereotyping. The innate distinction between media representation and media stereotyping is often lost through the homogenization of characteristics in both particular concepts. Campbell,

Herskovits, Segall (1966) found in a study of social perspective that often times, the only groups who can decipher these analogous characteristics are the ones who share the habitus and cultural literacy of that particular group. Thus allowing the representations and stereotypes to be decoded based on a persons cultural history and trajectories, which help shape ones orientation to the world. Visual culture researchers Schirato and Webb (2004) likened this distinction to what allows photographers to read more into an image versus the ordinary viewer who is used to ‘seeing naively’ (p. 18). In other words, Black people can watch a film with Black characters and decipher that a particular event or trait is not exclusive to the Black experience, but may be inclusive to the American, capitalistic, or poor experience and so forth. A major issue with mass media is that some cultures will be lost in the mix, that a majority of the content generated by media will be based in stereotype. Further clarification of these terms may help future journalist understand the repercussions to the reinforcement of stereotypes. The opportunity to grow this definition in journalism can best be illustrated with another form of popular media. The origins of the problem with mixing representation and stereotyping have existed since the beginning of film; the two have been imbedded within denoting Black culture visually. Through early and contemporary representations of film many scholars struggle to define Black culture without this blend of discourse that both represents and stereotypes its image.

The first Black character in American film was introduced in 1903. Uncle Tom was not a role played by a Black man, but was instead acted out by a Caucasian man made up in dark makeup called blackface. Early film industry performances

continued the trend using the representations of dark skin to re-enforce stereotypical behavior of Black people. Bogle (1989) studied the character types resulting from the trendsetting film, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which resulted in a short range of personalities. These included the coon, the tragic mulatto, the mammy, and the brutal black buck, which still exist in guises that camouflage these familiar types today (p. 24). His definition of media representation is synonymous with the stereotyping of Black culture.

Inversely, Wallace (2004) suggests that the use of stereotypes is a trend that is inherent in the structure of Hollywood efforts to represent Black culture (p. 131). Journalism also pulls from the same definitions, taking no time to justify the use of framing which elicits readers/viewer reactions.

The majority of definitions on the term *representation* yield statements about presentation of a visual idea that encompasses truth. Definitions of the term *stereotypes* suggest they are a part of media representations, which depict an instant generalization about an entire group of people. It seems that stereotyping cannot exist without a portion of the characteristics having to deal with some type of truthful recognizable quality. This need to identify with said attributes is supported by researchers like Coleman (2002). In Say It Loud, Coleman clearly states that consumers of media turn to these representations in order to respond appropriately (p. 263). The idea of media consumer recognition drives the use of stereotypes in the image based viewing Coleman explains through Lembo's philosophy. Further study on the clarity of media representation and media stereotypes is needed to better understand and portray aspects of Black culture, but in the case of this proposal the

definitions and model as described above work well. In other words media representation is the umbrella in which media stereotypes are allowed to exist. These stereotypes and representations help consumers of media identify specific groups who otherwise might not be identifiable. Such is the case for BGLOs. On the surface one could not discern who is a member of a BGLO and who is not. Therefore, the visual cues that exist rarely go beyond a set of representations true to a certain degree, and stereotypes that generally falsify the organizations intended purpose. Journalism needs to be able to define media based on specific characteristics of a situation and not generalizations. A interesting showcase of lack of definition of these two concepts can be found in the “Nappy headed hoes” remark by media personality Don Imus.

Imus’s remarks caused uproar in the Black community and called for his temporary removal. In fact, Imus’s construction of reality wasn’t as far removed as one could argue. During his commentary of a women’s Tennessee vs. Rutgers basketball game, Imus expressed his own blending of representation/stereotyping lines when he called the women of the Rutgers basketball program nappy headed hoes. He then cited his understandings as coming from Spike Lee, who used the color debate within the Black community through satirical conflict between the jigaboos (dark completion with natural hair) versus the wannabees (light skinned with processed hair) in his film *School Daze*. Imus’s example serves as a rallying point for all of journalism. The woman of Rutgers weren’t ‘like’ the nappy head jigaboos from *School Daze*, they were nappy head hoes despite their own personal accomplishments simply because of how they looked. Many implications come from how media

portrays a certain group of people. Unfortunately, the Black community has suffered at disproportionate amounts because of it. If journalism should be “tolerant but never careless, self-controlled, patient, always respectful of its readers but always unafraid, is quickly indignant at injustice;...” (Williams) then we must take the time to acknowledge the power of misrepresentation of other cultural groups and how it affects peoples’ perceptions.

Cultivation & Perceived Norms: Theoretical Framework

The relationship between cultivation theory and perceived norms seem to naturally go hand in hand. The developing attitudes that long-term media exposure creates have been very well documented in media studies. Morgan and Shanahan (1999) describe the George Gerbner theory well by stating, “watching a great deal of television will be associated with a tendency to hold specific and distinct conceptions of reality (p. 3).” Particularly Matabane (1988) says when media deals with Black culture; some of the same attitudes that are reflected in media representations and stereotyping are inherently carried over into the cultivation model that shape social perceptions (p. 64). What this means for a culture that is as young and unfamiliar as BGLOs is that repeated exposure to limited content begins to become accepted as reality. This theoretical frame of cultivation is slightly adjusted to recognize the importance of television and novelty of images versus the amount of images presented.

Real & Rimal (2005) describe this perceived norm as being a combination of descriptive norms- an individual’s belief in the prevalence of a behavior, and

injunctive norms- the belief that sanctions will follow if certain behavior is not followed (p. 390). From the non-BGLO member perspective the descriptive norm can only be formed through an exterior source. General knowledge that would influence a belief in the prevalence of a specific behavior (e.g. hazing) would have to come from another source, other than the BGLOs themselves, to rationalize the speculation. Since some non-members would not be privileged to the details of the BGLO initiation process the general information predominately comes from media in forms of movies and news reports. It is important to acknowledge that even through the media exposure, some will still have personal experiences that shape their own belief system. These media and personal experiences are what I hope to organize through my research. Knowing this is an unavoidable fact, I know my results may blend the two perspectives in the answers from my subjects. I will do my best to separate these ideas through my presentation of media by presenting two different orientations to the subject (reality vs popular media based) that are described in my method. The only facts about the initiation process that are shown on television news programs are about the tragedies and court cases from hazing incidents.

It seems no writing on BGLOs can be fully comprehensive without mention of pledging and hazing. Out of all the current scholarly and non-scholarly material about BGLOs, very few overlook this primary source of controversy. Some authors have dedicated whole books on the topic (Jones, 2004). Although hazing is not specific to BGLOs the weight pledging and hazing hold in the image of BGLOs is unparalleled to any other cultural artifact; it is to a point where entire groups of

fraternity and sorority members are perceived as being likened to a gang member mentality (Hughey, 2008; Jones, 2004; Studentlife.ou.edu; Eisenberg, 2009).

While it is hard to disagree that most of the negative media attention is warranted, scholars like Jones (2004) understand the key role media plays. He contends that important media coverage is often misused; identifying symptoms but never is it exploited as a tool to mend the true problem thus missing the mark in generating true change (p. 17). This can best be seen in generalizations about Greek Life in its entirety. A majority of peoples perceptions are that Greeks involved being hazed. The difference is that it is almost commonly understood that traditionally non-Black fraternities haze with alcohol, and Black fraternities haze through physical violence (Kimbrough, 1995). Therefore, the cultivation of seeing pledging and hazing as a fundamental right of passage (often times gone wrong) becomes a reality for BGLO perception across the board. Meaning regardless of which organization is guilty of hazing, all nine organizations take a little bit of the heat and are impacted by the event. This can be seen most recently in early October, when the Houston Chronicle reported that 20 year-old Donnie Wade II, of historically Black Prairie View A&M University in Texas, passed while pledging Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. (Chronicle). Wade's death has re-fueled the fire on the topic of hazing, culminating in his family suit of both the university and Phi Beta Sigma in the total sum of \$97 million dollars.

The correlation between cultivation and perceive norms seems to be an endless sequence of the continuation of stereotypes. Hutchinson (1997) offers a proactive look into the normalized subject cycle that Schirato and Webb refer to that

can be implemented by all people wanting to combat perceived norms cultivated through media. The solution offered to Black men includes being conscious of what one says and does, actively become an anti-stereotype and role model, and also get involved with organizations, such as church and BGLOs, to set a positive example of achievement (p. 169). Hutchinson's theory, although simple, could be extremely effective if a portion of Jones' suggested dialogue took place to actively identify the steps that could be taken to solidify Hutchinson's hypothesis. Unfortunately, the majority of mass audiences do not have the visibility of easily accessible figures of which Hutchinson speaks. If they do, often their accomplishments are overshadowed by the girth of media messages. Only after understanding the role stereotypes play in cultivating a perceived norm, can one then ask questions about the affects cultivation has on the audience and how it affects issues concerning future representations of BGLOs.

Visually Identifying Black Greek Lettered Organizations: Literature Review

Black fraternalism has existed since the 18th century and began in American with the establishment of Freemasonry among liberated Blacks. Trotter's (2004) research suggest that these original secret societies served multiple functions including shaping African American identity through rituals as well as supporting movements for social change (p. 356). Because these fraternal orders were indeed secret, a majority of the secret identifying practices were also undisclosed; they are known only to the initiated members of that particular order. For these purposes, without the easily identifiable symbol or marking, one would not be able to visually

identify a member of these types of orders. The establishment of BGLOs however, would pioneer a new visual identity.

It is necessary to acknowledge that prior to the creation of the contemporary definition of BGLOs there existed similar college fraternal societies. Kimbrough (2003) is one of the foremost researchers on BGLOs and suggest that even as early as 1905 there were Black fraternal organizations on college campuses. Specifically, an organization called Gamma Phi was created at Wilberforce University in Dayton, Ohio and existed for three decades (p. 29). While the achievements of Gamma Phi should not be overlooked, this research will focus purposely on nine organizations classified as historically African American fraternities and sororities. These include:

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. -Founded December 4, 1906 at Cornell University

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. –Founded January 15, 1908 at Howard University

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. –Founded January 5, 1911 at Indiana University

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. –Founded November 17, 1911 at Howard University

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. –Founded January 13, 1913 at Howard University

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. –Founded January 9, 1914 at Howard University

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. –Founded January 16, 1920 at Howard University

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. –Founded November 12, 1922 at Butler University

Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. –Founded September 19, 1963 at Morgan State

University

Ross (2000) refers to this collection of BGLOs as the “Divine Nine” (p. xii). Each of the nine organizations were founded under different circumstances and by a diverse group of people, but the one thing that connects all of them is the necessity to support the Black college student and the Black community.

There are now over 6,500 individual fraternity and sorority chapters of the Divine Nine spread out over the United States and abroad. Kimbrough writes that the same creative culture that gave life to Jazz, the reclaiming of spirituality in the Black church, and re-creation of sports, also transformed the way of life for college students on campus (p. 111). The most visual of the transformations included plots of land decorated to honor the spirit of different BGLOs, hand signs, clothing, and call-and-response chants. Although many of the visual cues used in contemporary media and by the members have little to no official standing within the organizations, they provide an inventive sense of originality building on previous traditions and aims.

Each BGLO also has official fraternity or sorority colors that were at one point decided on by the founders of that organization to represent them. Visually the color combinations, consisting of two colors, indicate which person belongs to their respective organization. The colors, although sometimes used alone, are often times coupled with the official organization shield and letters. For example Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. bears the official colors of salmon pink and apple green. Additionally, the manufacturing of t-shirts, jackets, and other paraphernalia was visually rich in design and an indicator of the members whose clothing reflected their organizations color combinations.

While most of the visual identifiers in BGLOs come from the creative expression of the 80s and 90s, there are other visually identifying elements that are specific to actions. These usually come in the form of secret handshakes, the probate/presentation show and stepping. Many of these visual cues alone are not exclusively inherent in identifying a person being in a BGLO, but in combination, they often generate a visual description, which embody the spirit of fraternities or sororities. In media these combinations of cues are imperative and are the only visual discourse media representation has to draw from. Out of all the visual indicators, one in particular has become a staple of BGLOs: stepping.

Stepping is a complex dance/performance unique to BGLOs that Nelson (1990) best described:

Stepping is tap dancing without tap shoes, James Brown without the music of the JB's, Cab Calloway sans piano, a marching band without John Philip Sousa. It is jazz, funk, rhythm and blues, and rap without instruments.

Stepping is lean and mean. The music comes from the synchronized interplay of hands and feet. From chants and hollers. It is a way to make music using the body as instrument.

Stepping is well suited for the media and has the potential to draw more attention to BGLOs. So much so that across the nation there are competitions that generate huge crowds and large monetary prizes. Most recently, the Coke-A-Cola subsidiary Sprite has organized a national step show competition, leveraging over one million dollars in prize money to attract viewers to the events. Stepping encompasses high energy, dramatic performances, and an unapologetic unique style. The media are drawn to

this one of a kind show and it dominates the visual norm of BGLOs. While many of the performances are done on college campuses, some have been widely seen on television shows such as *A Different World*, *The Parkers*, and on networks like ESPN who broadcast the *Stomping on the Yard: National Step Championship*. The precursor to all the media attention can be accredited to a director who, in his second major film, made BGLOs the subject of a motion picture. Spike Lee's 1988 film *School Daze* set the standard for media representations/stereotypes of BGLO's and stood alone as the sole media content of the genre for decades. Although it would seem this film would be suitable enough to describe BGLOs another level of consistent representation cultivated the opportunities for stereotypes.

The collegiate population has helped to develop stereotypes that include both individual organization characteristics and entire BGLOs characteristics. The individual personalities of BGLOs are often only perpetuated on college campuses but have recently been the subject of films such as *School Daze*. This can be seen through the "common knowledge" of the attitudes and behaviors of different fraternities and sororities. For example, in Lee's (1988) book, *Uplift the Race: the construction of School Daze*, actress Tisha Campbell describes the stereotypical visual image of a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. as a young woman who has a dark complexion, natural hair and pronounced African features (p. 95). The holistic views of BGLOs yield more detrimental stereotypes. The widely publicized hazing and pledging discourse that surrounds BGLOs are a consistent media factor. Both the individual and group stereotypes based partly on urban legend and on fact are causes that change the public perception of normal BGLO activity. To find out

what people think about these and other aspects of BGLO culture, I will use a method that has proved to work well with photographic projects.

Methodology: Visual Elicitation

Video elicitation hasn't been well explored as a research method. I realize there may be concerns incorporating moving pictures with photo elicitation, but the benefits outweigh the possible negatives of the method by allowing for presentations of topics which may not be accessible otherwise. The little bit of literature that exists on using video in research has helped me develop a method that will add validity to the project. This coupled with the well-established method of photo elicitation has influenced me to accommodate a study called visual elicitation. By conducting visual elicitation sessions (both images and video) the data will reveal which visual concepts people perceive as being most applicable to the BGLO experience. I will be using both still images and video as part of my visual elicitation model.

Harper (2002) cites that photo elicitation first grew out of practicality when John Collier decided to use photographs in his interviewing (p.14). The success of the method was so great that Collier decided to continue using the method in his own visual anthropology studies. Collier noted, "The pictures elicited longer and more comprehensive interviews but at the same time helped subjects overcome the fatigue and repetition of conventional interviews." (1957:858, in Harper) This qualitative method was instrumental in helping develop studies in psychology, education, and other field research. Harper suggests that simply put, photo elicitation pulls from a deep sense of the human consciousness. Similarly, Swartz (1989) suggest that previous documentation of the subject allows "personal narratives which illuminate

viewers' lives and experiences... Instead of responding to an encoded message, most viewers responses reflect their own social realities." It is in this way, that my research will help show the persons reality versus a constructed view of BGLO culture. Swartz started by taking photographs of the community herself, conducting formal interviews along the way, and then taking time to show different families the images she had made from the previous year. Her structure for photo interviews consisted of asking questions about the importance of the photographs shown. This is a similar method in which I hope my photo portion follows. Granted, I haven't the time to follow someone for an entire year, I will use images that I have photographed from the previous year as well as some images that I have pulled from another BGLO member's personal archives. These images would help make up about 70% of the elicitation materials.

Using photo elicitation in this study will help to show the issues within the BGLO experience from both greek and non-greek research participants. It will provide a common ground, which all participants can pull from. By using popular media and photographs from 'reality' the viewer can make judgments on what is accurate representations of the subject matter. It allows both greek and non-greek participants to pull from their own personal experiences. It also gives them a chance to talk about what is not in the representation. This method is extremely popular among photography students due it the method's unique opportunity to work with images and has even been the subject of much research at the University of Missouri.

University Of Missouri Professor Emerita C. Zoe Smith cited plenty of reasons to use photo elicitation. Smith and Whitney (2002) studied Donna Feratto's

documented the photo elicitation method well while photographing domestic violence in the early 1990s in her project Living With the Enemy (p. 4). Feratto's method of showing the images to women who had been domestically abused and asking them to talk about their experiences is the exact model this study would emulate. Smith even required her students at the University of Missouri to explore the possibilities of the method (Smith & Woodward, 1999). Ultimately the method allowed the students to get further insight of the topic of interest and allowed better understanding of the experience. In one-example, Smith's student and co-author Anne-Marie Woodward, used the method to research drug addiction (32). Woodward used the images from Larry Clark's 'Tulsa' to interview three recovering drug addicts from Atlanta, Georgia. Similar to Woodward's study, my study would pull from previous depictions of BGLOs to gather information about the viewer's own personal experiences. Woodward's experience was highlighted by her subject's discussion of a book published about the same topic over a quarter of a century ago. These discussions gave Woodward a better understanding of what to look for in her own photography. "This experience has absolutely made me a better photographer. I am more likely now to go back to subjects and show them the pictures and talk to them about it." (p. 40).

Another University of Missouri student Sally Morrow, studied representations of Hispanic and immigrant communities by showing subjects photo stories which dealt with the topic in order to inform her own shooting. This idea of research to inform shooting is what my project will benefit from during the elicitation sessions. Instead of interviewing to continue negative or pre-existing assumptions, I would use

the method to frame my own projects. By showing the images to people who can identify with them I hope to pull out a few concepts for possible project topics. Video elicitation is rare in any research method. It is normally reserved for the research in film studies, but in this instance, it plays a major role in the development of BGLOs representations. The precursor to all the media attention can be accredited to a director who, in his second major film, made BGLOs the subject of a motion picture. Spike Lee's 1988 film *School Daze* set the standard for media representations/stereotypes of BGLO's and stood alone as the sole media content of the genre for decades. Although it would seem this film would be suitable enough to describe BGLOs another level of consistent representation cultivated the opportunities for stereotypes.

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A study by G Broll, H Hussmann, E Rukzio, R Wimmer (2007) used video clips to elicit focus group discussions. The videos were created by students to represent core ideas of the project and were then used to introduce the project to focus groups. Their decisions to use video were based primarily on what they called *realistic representation*. They found it important to choose very concrete scenarios that mapped out their ideas. They self-produced these videos in order to bring up dialogue about what the focus group saw. These types of method not only work well with including video stimulus, but they also confirm that proper use of video, no matter how journalistic or manufactured in nature, can allow the viewers to guide valuable dialogue. This production used to create the video the authors used for their study, is no different than Lee's presentation of Black college life in *School Daze*. Using these methods, I can justify a use of visual elicitation in my organization of the project.

The idea to use images from a specific topic about the same topic is something inspired by Feratto. Through the elicitation this study hopes to find which visual elements of BGLOs representation are perceived as accurate in hopes to authenticate my two-multimedia projects produced in association with this proposal. Some of the main concepts that will be introduced via still images will fall under two of my four concepts: *service* and *performance*. The other two concepts: *hazing*, *elitism*, and a little of *performance* are all better represented through the video portion of the research.

The hope is that the overall elicitation method allows people to talk about their experiences personally and otherwise to identify which concepts may have the

most stereotypes associated with them. I acknowledge that using video holds a lot of information that Lee personally frames through his lens; there are certain aspects of BGLO culture that I cannot show images of without incriminating people. This is one of the main reasons using *School Daze* warrants serious consideration.

Particularly, there are several scenes I would choose based off the following criteria: the scene describes one of my four criteria for examination: *service, performance, hazing or elitism*, that the video clip adds to the visual representation to give the viewer a feel of what is going on, and that the clip helps explain relationships between characters. All clips should not exceed 4 minutes in total length. In general, both images and video will have to be clear representations of my criteria and have to be reflective of activates the viewer will identify with (ie. Using a picture of someone getting a paddle swung on him as opposed to seeing someone who looks like they are pledging). Additionally, clips may also come from journalistic sources to provide another stimuli, which the participant can find similar experiences that may mimic their own.

This method will help encourage discussion about the specifics of visual representation and authenticity of BGLOs. To find a better way to represent these groups is the goal of my research method and through the participation of the community, one would find more information about this rare area of research. It is the hope of this project to find the types of visual perceptions of BGLOs, to find limitations and also discover more questions to be answered in future research. The interpretation of films like *School Daze* significantly alters audience perception. Rocchio (2000) recognizes that the film's potential for misreading is important

because without proper study, “the film itself can function to reinforce the very system of representation it is trying to dismantle” (p. 151). How the audience interprets these messages are important when looking at the potential affects. In essence, since cultivation suggests representations become perceived norms, the attitudes and behaviors towards these norms can be manifested in everything from participation to financial reinforcement.

A large portion of the response has to deal with the current media portrayal of these organizations and how people react based on those images. With this in mind, the reaction dictates the plausibility that more content will support the current discourse as long as it falls in line with current reinforced media portrayal. This alliance subjects itself to a dangerous legacy-ending theoretical question: does the current media portrayal of BGLOs become the exemplar for future content thus generating a homogenous pool leading to mis-interpretation of the basic BGLOs purpose? Depending on how the audience perceives these organizations dictates what affect the image of BGLOs relevancy will have to confront in coming years.

Presenting My Research

As stated above, I would love for this project to be published in a trade magazine such as Photo District News. It is also possible that my research component of this project could be published in an academic journal such as the Journal of Black Studies or the African American Review. Additional opportunities exist in online publication in Diverse: Issues in Higher Education magazine.

Conclusion

As this project progresses, I expect to find that the main concepts that the viewers identify with are the power relationships of the pledges (based on historical knowledge of the pledge process), the concept of class within a specific racial system (light skin women vs dark skin women or as Spike presents them, the Jigaboos vs. Wannabees), and the concept of homophobia in the Black community among males. Through this type of study I hope the responses to these concepts evolve into photographic projects to be executed during my Spring 2010 academic semester. The limitations in this type of research are the inability to collect a total representative sample of BGLOs and their members. Since BGLOs are located all around the world, the study may only touch on specific ideas of the Midwest region due to convenience sampling. Additionally, there is another level of limitation due to the fact my sample comes from the Midwest. Most of the BGLOs were founded on the East coast of America at Historically Black Colleges/Universities. Since the study will take place at predominately White Institutions in the Midwest, there may be a huge cultural difference of the interpretation of the *School Daze* phenomena. Eventually, the study will progress to gathering information at these institutions as well. *School Daze* itself presents a challenge in that while the study focuses on one artifact it is inevitable that another film, *Stomp The Yard*, will be brought up in comparison. While this may not be a bad thing, because it will bring up visual concepts for the project, it is not the focus of this research. Hopefully, I can identify some people in advance who can represent the student body well. Overall, this proposal should articulate some important concepts regarding BGLOs and their relevance in the 21st century.

BEYONDTHISPLACE

DOCUMENTING THE VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES.

Sample Questionnaire Questions

Answer the following questions on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being no experience and 10 being much experience.

1. **Rate your exposure to Black Greek Letter Organization culture.**
2. **Do you consider yourself very knowledgeable about BGLOs?**
3. **How much time do you spend looking at movies/media about BGLO?**
4. **You have done a lot of research on BGLOs history.**
5. **You have personal experience with friends who are greek.**

Other questions to be asked are more open ended:

1. **What was your first experience with BGLOs?**
2. **Have you considered going Greek?**
3. **What is the best thing about BGLOs?**
4. **What is the worst thing about BGLOs?**
5. **Do you have family members who are greek?**
6. **With the following words, write down your first thought that comes to mind.**
 - a. **Colors**
 - b. **Service**
 - c. **Initiation**
 - d. **History**
 - e. **Fun**
7. **What stereotypes do you find in BGLOs members?**
8. **Describe a time you heard about BGLOs in the news?**
9. **Describe a time you heard about BGLOs in entertainment?**

BEYONDTHISPLACE

DOCUMENTING THE VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES.

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WORKING DOCUMENTS (VOX AND WEBSITE)

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THE VOICE OF COLUMBIA

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BLACK AND GREEK

Dek goes here and here



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BLACK AND GREEK

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and here and here and here and here and here



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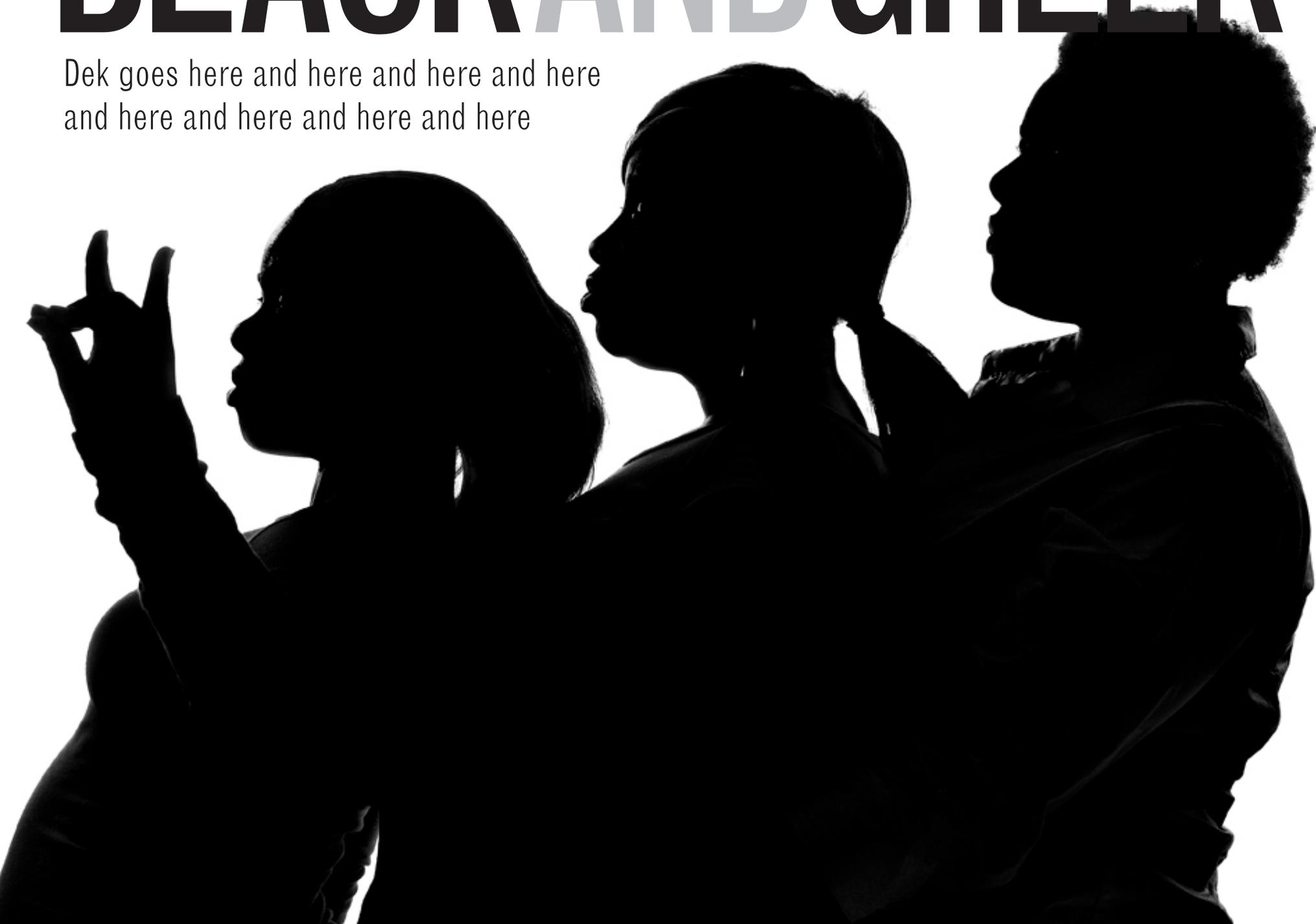
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what their culture is like goes
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Name of department: Feature

Issue date: 12/02

Department editor: Kyle Schettler

Assignment from: *Vox*

Section: Feature

Title/Dek: Young, Black, and Greek: A look at membership within this exclusive community

Byline: Jarrad Henderson

Pull quotes: N/A

Sidebar: Seperate

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Designer: Aaron or Theresa

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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 really had no intention of going. But his excitement immediately influenced my own as we pulled up to the concrete amphitheater. The sun was bright, but not as much as the glistening 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 dark-skinned, husky man introduced the group wearing the “sun” boots and purple T-shirts as the brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., at which point some of the adults and young men sitting behind me started barking like insane canines in a dog shelter. My brother and I shared a laugh and looked at each other and knew we were in for a treat.

I've never forgotten that day.

[Stepping is a complex dance/performance unique to BGLOs that Jill Nelson \(1990\) best described:](#)

[Stepping is tap dancing without tap shoes, James Brown without the music of the JB's, Cab Calloway sans piano, a marching band without John Philip Sousa. It is jazz, funk, rhythm and blues, and rap without instruments. Stepping is lean and mean. The music comes from the synchronized interplay of hands and feet. From chants and hollers. It is a way to make music using the body as instrument.](#)

As I watched the ‘Ques’ step, it is fair to say, I was infatuated with the idea of a fraternity.

Black Greek Letter Organizations such as the men of Omega Psi Phi, are one of Black culture's most organic institutions. The first Black intercollegiate fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. was established by a group of men at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York in 1906. What started off as a way to address the issue of retention among Black males in higher education — a problem that still exists today across the U.S. — quickly expanded to include community involvement and service. It also molded most of Black culture's greatest political and social change including the Black Arts, Black Power and Civil Rights movements.

The importance of these organizations to their members is the subject of my long-term project, "Beyond This Place: Documenting the Visual History of African American Fraternities and Sororities."

Eight of the Divine Nine organizations have active, but small membership at MU. The council operates through the Office of Greek Life as the National Pan Hellenic Council, which is the umbrella organization for the five fraternities and four sororities. With Black student enrollment making up less than 7% of MU total enrollment, less than 3% of Black students are initiated into one of the eight chapters (keeping in mind that organizations are not only made up of Black students). New member classes at other campuses like Howard University have as many as 70 initiates. But despite their size, these chapters fulfill the original values and goals behind Black Greek Letter Organizations.

At MU, they are social, professional and political networks for students as well as some faculty and staff. For example, the Arvarh E. Strickland building is named after MU's first Black faculty member to receive tenure track appointment, and he was also a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. As a member of Alpha Phi Alpha myself, I know that the remnants of past member's motivations of the Black Greek Letter Organizations are embedded in campus culture, Black history, and American history. What lies beyond the colorful themes, energy and historical significance of these organizations far outweighs the clap of hands or stomp of feet.

These images, showing brotherhood, sisterhood, service, tribulations and triumph are a snapshot of the Black Greek experience at MU. If you would like to experience the energy, passion, and history first hand, the ladies of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Chi Kappa Chapter invites you to experience their Fall 2010 Neophyte presentation happening this Friday, December 3rd, 2010 at 7:30PM in Conservation Auditorium.

And no. It isn't all about stepping.

Source:

Nelson, Jill. "Stepping Lively: At Black Frats and Sororities, the Dance That Unites." Washington Post 29 May 1990: C1,C8.

MU NAACP: The Minority Report

NAACP's Official Publication

Jarrad Henderson is Beyond This Place

Posted on [December 6, 2010](#) | [Leave a comment](#)



You may have seen him or you may not have, but if you look deep into a camera lens you would see his face. Jarrad Henderson, his use of a camera defines photography and his “art through lens” style takes you *beyond this place*. Pictures tell stories and Jarrad Henderson’s photography allows you to interpret those stories. Coming out of St. Louis, MO, starting with photography as only an elective in junior high, Henderson was soon on his way to becoming what MU’s campus knows him best to be—a phenomenal photographer. Starting out at Virginia Commonwealth University, Jarrad entered an art bootcamp with graphic design as his first choice. But, when one door closes another always opens, he moved on to photography and pursued this degree at Arizona State University while beginning his sophomore year. This journey soon led him here, at the University of Missouri-Columbia to pursue his Masters degree in photojournalism which leads to the birth of *Beyond This Place*. “It didn’t start until I came to Mizzou,” says Jarrad, “...it started from a rough draft.” Beyond This Place is Henderson’s final project, he described it as a visual representation on NPHC (National Pan Hellenic Council/Divine 9) . Jarrad tells me, “I was always interested in greek life and I always took pictures of greek stuff.” As a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. that statement is proven true.

“...I saw a need for more visual representation of black culture...***a need for things that are authentically black,***” Jarrad explained, “...it’s interesting what we have left, with hip-hop slowly slipping away.” The legacy of black greeks has lasted for almost 100 years yet underrepresented and highly fictionalized according to Henderson. However, Beyond This Place is deeper than representing black culture, it is to address the stereotypes, interpretations, and opinions already put out into society. Henderson recounts the morals and values of greek life within his project. “Most people forget that these organizations were founded off education,” Jarrad expressed, “...work doesn’t stop once you become greek.” Henderson’s project also addresses more personal subjects such as identity issues within these groups, ***“...being greek is an enhancement to a lifestyle.”***



Members of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Jarrad Henderson as well as his *Beyond This Place* project are very well-known around campus and he manages to create some kind of buzz every semester. Even as a recipient of the 2010 NAACP Image Award for Creative Arts and with a recent spread in VOX magazine released December 2nd, there is still more to come from Jarrad. He’s looking into sponsorship and also expressed that this is something that he wouldn’t mind doing for the next 15 years. “I want something to own,” says Jarrad, “... to create a book with stories and images about



greek life, maybe later producing a documentary or short film.” Those are plans only so far within reach with Jarrad’s current success. For more information about this inspiring person and this poetic yet artistic project, check out his new website at <http://beyondthisplace.com/wordpress/> or at <http://jarradhenderson.wordpress.com>. As stated before, Henderson also has a spread in VOX Magazine that was released December 2nd. So pick up a copy or check it out online at

<http://www.voxmagazine.com/media/multimedia/2010/Flash/flash/Main.html> and get taken *Beyond This Place*. (Kawaii Brown, Dec 2010)

Photos taken by Jarrad Henderson



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"If a race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated."

-Carter G. Woodson
Author, Scholar, Member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Information

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Beyond This Place Happy Birthday MC Lyte!!! Member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52mjbXD03Js>



MC Lyte - Lyte As A Rock
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Happy Birthday MC Lyte!!! Member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52mjbXD03Js>

<http://fb.me/wS3IT8JW>

about 2 hours ago via Facebook

Happy birthday MC Lyte!!! Member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

about 2 hours ago via web

Name Jarrad Henderson

Bio Documenting the Visual History of African American fraternities and Sororities

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BEYOND THIS PLACE

DOCUMENTING VISUAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

Mission Statement-

African American Fraternities and Sororities have played an important role in the development of Black identity for over one hundred years. Beyond This Place is a project that seeks to validate the important past and contemporary history of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) in a never before seen collection of images. A documentary style of photography explores the depth of past organizational traditions, contemporary challenges, and future aspirations for the collection of nine historically Black Fraternities & Sororities.

Project Proposal-

Beyond This Place exist to document the important history of BGLOs, the role these organization play in shaping the African American college experience, and the challenges faced by these organizations when facing the question "Are BGLOs still relevant today?" The project consist of two parts: the creation of a visual archive of BGLOs images from the first 100 years of existence (1906-2006) and the creation of a collection of my images documenting the BGLOs experience today.

The visual archive would be an ongoing project that would include images from all nine historically BGLOs: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc., Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc., and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity Inc. The purpose of creating such an archive would be to centralize all the visual history these organizations offer. It is in part a response to entertainment that I'm passionate about the idea of creating a non-sensationalized approach to showcasing BGLOs.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- * Share this information with your organizations.
- * Contact me once you find some old images that you would like to submit to the project.
- * Contact your relatives and let them know about the project.
- * Keep me informed about your various events.

CONTACT ME

Jarrad Henderson
University of Missouri
Masters Student
Photojournalism

Jarrad.Henderson@gmail.com

blog-Jarradhenderson.wordpress.com

DEDICATED TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF:



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PHOTO CONSENT FORM

I, _____ (print Model's name), do hereby give Jarrad Henderson (the Photographer), his or her assigns, licensees, successors in interest, legal representatives, and heirs the irrevocable right to use my name (or any fictional name), picture, portrait, or photograph in all forms and media and in all manners, including composite or distorted representations, for advertising, trade, third party sale, or any other lawful purposes, and I waive any right to inspect or approve the finished version(s), including written copy that may be created and appear in connection therewith. My signature below indicates that I have read this release and am fully familiar with its contents.

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- Facebook logo
- Image of hands forming a pyramid
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How The Ragbirds took flight | page 7



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Ties That Bond

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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. [Click here for more of the story.](#) [...]

WELCOME TO BEYONDTHISPLACE.COM!!!

I am excited to present the first draft of my new Master project website. Here you will find information pertaining to my Black Greek Letter Organization (BGLO) project dedicated solely to the visual history and representation of BGLOs. Check out my recent work, more about this project, and leave comments on the post. More stories, blog post, and discussion boards will be coming soon. In the meantime follow my social contact links below and check back for frequent updates! Be sure to comment on post!

DIVINE 9 LINKS

- **1: ALPHA PHI ALPHA FRATERNITY, INC.**
- **2: ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INC.**
- **3: KAPPA ALPHA PSI, FRATERNITY INC.**
- **4: OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY, INC.**
- **5: DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.**
- **6: PHI BETA SIGMA FRATERNITY, INC.**
- **7: ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC.**
- **8: SIGMA GAMMA RHO SORORITY, INC.**
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About Beyond This Place ©



Unlike any other Americans, people of African descent have had an ongoing cultural identity crisis since being freed from the institution

Unlike any other Americans, people of African descent have had an ongoing cultural identity crisis since being freed from the institution of slavery. Too far removed from their African roots to have held onto any significant culturally relevant rituals and customs, the people who knew only a world that excluded them as first class citizens began the process of finding themselves. This process to discover the identity of what it meant to be "African American" has been explored in a way that can be considered organic to the shaping of a new culture. This original Black culture would, in its worst form, fall subject to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and experience disproportionate effects of social-economic disparity; In its best form it would give rise to social triumphs through the Black Arts, Black Power, and Civil Rights Movements. One of these successful institutions would be the development of Black fraternities and sororities.

Beyond This Place exists to document the important history of BGLOs, the role these organization play in shaping the African American college experience, and the challenges faced by these organizations in the 21st Century. My passion and dedication to this project provide a unique opportunity to explore an untapped field that is ripe for more research. It is my goal to have a foundation of two chapters ready to submit when I complete my graduate level work in the spring of 2010. This will serve as the beginning of, what I hope to be, a life-long project. I believe that the visual realm is one of the key concepts in answering the age old question: Are Black Greek Letter Organizations still relevant in the 21st Century?"

The Project consist of both documentation of past BGLO history as well as the contemporary exploration of the cultue of BGLOs. The title "Beyond This Place" comes from a line in the poem *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley. The poem serves for inspiration among all 9 historically Black Fraternities and Sororities. It is a common ground in which all BGLO find important words on struggle, faith, and triumph. As an element that connects all Black Greeks to the relevant communities from which they come, I choose Beyond This Place to symbolize the need to go past the surface and into deeper interpretations on how the visual representations of BGLO affect the perception of thier usefulness.

This project is not solely about line jackets and throwing parties, but more about defining the humanistic traits that make up these oprganizations. The story of BGLOs is an important one to tell. It serves as one of the only truly organic institutions that have helped to shape Black culture. The incredible people and collective achievements of these organizations are worthy of a serious investment in the preservation of their history.

Beyond This Place is an inclusive project. Please contact us with your own stories, thoughts, ideas that you would like to see included in the project. Feel free to contact us at info@beyondthisplace.com

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I Won't Complain

When Reginald Wilson, 19, stepped foot at the University of Missouri, he was still finding himself as a man, consciously trying to set a good example for his younger brother. He found some peace in the brotherhood of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. and was initiated in the Fall of 2009. Reggie's experiences challenged him to become a better person and man after losing his father in 2004 "I'll never say anything is impossible again." Click the image or title to enter this post for more.

[..]

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You have an interesting story!!! Beyond This Place © is an inclusive project and we want to hear about your experiences. Email us at info@beyondthisplace.com and tell us about it your ideas or own personal story. Topics are completely open so hit us up if you would like to share! Check back here often for additional stories about interracial membership, probate, famous alumni and more!

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There are so many good stories that will come out of this project. Every time I travel, I meet great people from various backgrounds. It is one of the best things about being a photographer. My camera gives me an excuse to speak to people. I love it. In Reggie's case, I had approached some of the Prophytes of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Delta Omega chapter shortly after I realized they had an upcoming Neophyte presentation or probate show on December 12, 2009.

The chapter President at the time, Derrick Christian, and I had a pretty good relationship since I arrived at Mizzou in 2008. I explained to Derrick that I wanted to do a project on the Neophytes but that I wanted to focus on one particular person out of the group. The Fall

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The chapter President at the time, Derrick Christian, and I had a pretty good relationship since I arrived at Mizzou in 2008. I explained to Derrick that I wanted to do a project on the Neophytes but that I wanted to focus on one particular person out of the group. The Fall 2009 'ΔΩ' initiation class featured six new initiates, of which, one of my mentees Justin McCain was a part of. Before I even picked up my camera, I knew my choice of character would have been easy.

I met up with the New Nupes December 10, 2010 with the permission of the chapter. At this point, only the chapter brothers knew the identity of their new initiates until they were unveiled to the community during the probate show. Many people ask me who do I gain access to these types of situations and honestly, I feel it's my niche to be able to do so. Through my interactions with individuals and the Mizzou community, I had earned enough respect to gain access to a normally restricted level of the brotherhood. It is always interesting to see the relationship between new members and older ones. Of course, my access also is a by product of my own experiences as a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

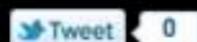
After being introduced to the former pledges by their membership intake coordinator (or Dean, a conversation we will have at a later date) I explained openly my intentions. Photography is so funny. People may 'act' in front of the lens for a while, but sooner than later, they forget about themselves, and 'give' themselves to the camera. I just knew I was going to photograph my homeboy Justin, but after talking to all of them, I wasn't sure. Greg Green came from a historically rough part of St. Louis, Charles Ukatu, Jr.'s story of his ongoing struggle with Sickle Cell Anemia, Justin was Legacy (another convo for later), it was just too much content to be shot. I went home after shooting the probate practice and loading my images on screen.

Photography is so funny. Often times your strongest images fly by the screen without thought. Sometimes amongst the clutter, your answer is revealed right in front of you. In this case, it wasn't Justin or Charles that I saw in my frames. It was Reggie. The soft-spoken giant of a young adult, armed with a beautiful singing voice and a story that made his decision to join, relatable. I spoke with Reggie the next day. My journey with him led me from his youth to his fathers untimely death to his decision to come to college. It would be accurate to say, I was/am still impressed by Reggie.

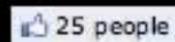
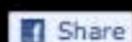
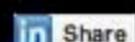
While interviewing him one day, I asked if he knew of any songs that were sung at his fathers funeral. He told me he knew one verse of a song and began to sing it. Beautiful. Simply Beautiful. I had to incorporate it into the final piece.

I will try to write something about the process of creating these profiles/stories as new ones are posted. Hopefully it will help other photographers as well as open up discussions for things people think I could have done better. This entire project is built on progression and I want as many people to add input as possible. Bookmark us! Visit us often, the conversations will keep going!!!

I hope you enjoy the story above. Please feel free to leave comments in the box below.



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1 Comment

Regina Wilson

December 2, 2010 at 7:44 PM

I am so honored you chose my son for this piece. He truly has a story to tell. It brought about tears of joy when I read and viewed this. The "gift of song" is the legacy his dad left him, and he would be very proud of Reggie! God Bless You...

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Name*

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