

UNEARTHING YALE'S OLDEST BLACK STUDENT ORGANIZATION: ZETA CHAPTER OF ALPHA PHI ALPHA FRATERNITY

LATIF A. LEGEND

This study examines the criteria for charter membership within Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, during the early 20th century and explores how these qualifications presently impact the organization's historical memory. Using its Zeta Chapter as a case study, my primary objectives are to examine how charter members are chosen, evaluate if any unrecognized individuals qualify as charter members, and formally acknowledge their contributions to the fraternity's legacy. The broader goal of this curated methodology is to provide underrepresented student organizations with the means to reconcile similar inconsistencies and continually strive for accurate depictions of their history for future generations.

Keywords: Zeta Chapter, Alpha Phi Alpha, Content Analysis, Historical Records, 20th Century

Established at Cornell University in 1906, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated (henceforth referred to as the “fraternity” or “organization”) is the oldest intercollegiate Black fraternity in the United States and has 686 chapters that operate globally at the time of publishing this paper (Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, n.d.b) The fraternity, specifically its Zeta Chapter, and its members have made numerous contributions to American culture as part of the influential National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) over the last 117 years. Using the Zeta Chapter as a case study, my primary objectives are to examine how charter members are chosen, evaluate if any unrecognized individuals qualify as charter members, and formally acknowledge their contributions to the fraternity's legacy. The broader goal is to create a methodology that allows underrepresented student organizations to reconcile similar inconsistencies in their archives and continually strive for more accurate depictions of their historical memory.

Historical Context

Officially chartered in 1909, a major catalyst for the Zeta Chapter's formation was a lawsuit filed by Yale student Philip Manuel Thorne Jr. against the Grennon Brothers restaurant for refusing to serve him and Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr. on the basis of race in the prior school year (The Meriden Daily Journal, 1908). The incident gained national attention after appearing in newspapers throughout the country and eventually garnered the support of Yale Law School Professors as well

as Booker T. Washington, one of the leading Black intellectuals at the time (The Meriden Daily Journal, 1908). Throne Jr.'s challenge to the status quo, as well as the fierce backlash that he undoubtedly faced, spurred Black students across the U.S., like his older cousin William Miller Thorne, to organize themselves in response and create their own chapter within the fraternity. With Thorne Jr.'s recommendation, on December 31, 1908, Augustus Alonzo Williams, a student at the University of Michigan, wrote a letter to Roscoe Conkling Giles expressing interest in establishing a Black fraternity at the University of Michigan. (Wesley, 1929, p. 77). The *Mother Chapter*¹ considered expanding the fraternity's presence after receiving a similar letter of interest from another group of Yale students, which required a consensus among the chapters at Howard University and Virginia Union University (Wesley, 1929, p. 78). After receiving approval from their counterparts at both institutions, Jewel² Henry Arthur Callis, as well as Brother Giles, traveled to University of Michigan and Yale University to initiate these members into the organization and charter each respective chapter (Wesley, 2000, pp. 56-57).

Formally chartered on April 10 of 1909, the organization viewed the Zeta Chapter's founding as a pivotal achievement, and then-General President Moses Alvin Morrison went so far as to say that its charter was "this first and important mission" (Wesley, 1929, p. 79). Unfortunately, the chapter became inactive for unknown reasons soon after; a correspondence between the fraternity's top leadership noted that the chapter was inactive by 1912 and required direct intervention (Wesley, 1929, p. 89). One year later, *General President*³ Roscoe Conkling Giles returned to Yale and re-established the Zeta Chapter with the following members: "A. J. Allen, J.W. Anderson, Charles H. Wesley, E. E. Caples, John M. Ross, Beale Elliott, Nimrod Allen, William N. Bishop, Frank Adams, Joseph H. Lewis, Aiken A. Pope and Charles W. Burton" (Wesley, 1929, p. 121).

Fraternity Charter Process

Though such achievements are held in high regard, respect for the initial members of each fraternity chapter is paramount to the organization because none of this would exist without the foundation laid by said individuals. To memorialize these historical figures, the fraternity commissioned fellow member and esteemed historian Dr. Charles Harris Wesley in 1929 to produce an official account of the organization's genesis and depict the Black collegiate experience contemporaneously. As one of the most accomplished Zeta Members, Dr. Wesley served as President of Wilberforce University and Central State University, was the third ever African-American to earn his PhD from Harvard University, and published books for many prominent Black Organizations such as Sigma Pi Phi as well as Prince Hall Masons.

Wesley's *The History of Alpha Phi Alpha: A Development in Negro College Life* detailed the process for establishing new chapters, which included a demonstrated interest from enrolled students, a letter of

intent submitted to the *General Organization*,⁴ and a review of individual applications prior to charter approval (Wesley, 1929). Using this information, the General Organization determined whether or not to establish a new chapter based on the students' institution location, school type, occupational bandwidth, and the relationship of aspiring student applicants to current members. A General Officer or Mother Chapter would later send a confirmation letter to the applicants to notify them of their initiation date and which current members would perform a ceremonial ritual. Finally, the approved institution received a Greek letter to represent an alphabetized and numeric designation; in this instance, Zeta is both the sixth letter in the Greek alphabet and the fraternity's sixth chapter, which was established at Yale.

Currently, the fraternity recognizes the following students as Charter Members⁵ for the Zeta Chapter: Frank William Adams Esq., Dr. Nimrod Booker Allen, Bp. Alexander Joseph Allen Sr., Rev. John Wesley Anderson, William Norman Bishop, Dr. Charles Wesley Burton, Earley Emmett Caple Esq., Rev. Robert Beale Elliott, Rev. Dr. John Henry Lewis, Aiken Augustus Pope Esq., Dr. John McLinn Ross, and Dr. Charles Harris Wesley (Wesley, 1929). Even though Wesley's own records indicated that the Zeta Chapter already existed, the organization inducted these 12 individuals at Yale as the "re-establishment" charter members in 1913 (Wesley, 1929, p. 121). Although Wesley's work is still considered a landmark document within the fraternity and Black History, this assessment infers that the fraternity knew that there were charter members for the Zeta Chapter prior to 1913, but they never officially recognized their contributions to its legacy. To be clear, the purpose of this analysis is not to debate the intentions, resources, and information accessible to Dr. Wesley during his initial research of the fraternity's history. Rather, its primary objectives are to examine how charter members are chosen, to evaluate if any unrecognized individuals qualify as charter members, and to formally acknowledge their contributions to the fraternity's legacy.

Research Design

Theoretical Framework

After several failed attempts to identify the unknown members through Yale's archives, Howard University (the location of Dr. Wesley's papers and records), and the fraternity (i.e., newspaper articles, school or student announcements, photos, etc.), it was clear that this study required a different approach. I developed another exploratory design based on research by fraternity members and authoritative historians Donald L. Ross and Dr. Lateef Y. Saffore for identifying systematic relationships among variables and interpretations that rely heavily on elements of grounded theory as a framework (Saffore, 2022, p. 11).

Objectives

There are two objectives of this paper. The first is to use content analysis to identify the earliest unknown members of the Zeta Chapter

and recommend that the fraternity properly recognize any qualifying individuals. The second is to ensure that other student organizations can replicate this method to resolve similar discrepancies in their own historical records as well as those belonging to their respective institutions.

Methodology

The primary methodology for this study is content analysis, a technique that makes inferences based on the systematic analysis of data obtained from archival records and documents (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2000). Predefined codes such as "member of a Black fraternity established in 1909" will narrow the scope of probable individuals to objectively determine Charter Membership status. Fundamental qualities like these are vital indicators that define a subgroup of a student population within a specific period or location. Using Neuman's modern iteration of qualitative content analysis, I employ further characteristics of these original members by analyzing familial records from ancestry.com, books, yearbooks, birth and death certificates, school records, magazines, and official fraternity directories as credible sources to shrink the pool of likely individuals (Neuman, 2003). In summary, the qualities used to determine these individuals are as follows: race, gender identity, academic enrollment status, attendance at Yale from 1908-1909, verification of initiation, and fraternity membership status.

The official fraternity (1916) directory is the bedrock of this methodology since it is the earliest and the only available primary source that contains a collective list of potential original members from the Zeta Chapter between 1909-1916 (Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. [Fraternity], 1916). This is the first published directory in the fraternity's history and commemorates the achievements of its members over its inaugural decade. Furthermore, the directory contains vital information that validates a group of individuals in close proximity to the year that the chapter was established. As seen in Table 1, there are 43 members organized by membership status, which are important contextual inferences to indiscriminately determining these original members. Each membership status describes the purpose or function of a Brother's existence within the fraternity. During this time, most of the fraternity's chapters were established at higher education institutions, and each membership status explains their relationship to the school in connection with the organization.

Table 1
An Axial Coding Database Accordingly 1916 Fraternity's Director

Active (Original)	Active (Revised)	Verified Initiation	Enrolled at Yale 08-09	Fraternity Activities 1909-1912
Bowles, Henry O.	Harry Oscar Bowles	April 1915	No	
Caple, Earley E.	Earley Emmett Caple	March 1913	No	
Williams, John F.	John Francis Williams	April 1915	No	
Honorary (Original)	Honorary		No	
Arnett, B. B.	Benjamin William Arnett	1915	No	
Aowen, J. W. E.	John Wesley Edward Bowen Jr.		No	
Fenderson, F. W.	Ferdinand Wardell Gratz Fenderson		No	
Fleming, Richard S.	Richard Stedman Fleming	1915	No	
Hanes, David	David Hanes		No	
Jones, David D.	David Dallas Jones		No	
Lightfoot, James A.	James Albert Lightfoot	1915	No	
Nutter, Isaac R.	Isaac Henry Nutter	May 1916	No	
Pennington, P. D. G.	Perry Dennis Glenford Pennington		No	
Porter, Isaac N.	Isaac Napoleon Porter		No	
Queenan, J. W.	James Wendall Queenan		No	
Taylor, T. H.	Thomas Jarvis Taylor, Jr.		Yes	
Tolliver, Harry G.	Harry Griffy Tolliver		No	
Alumni (Original)	Alumni (Revised)			
Ashby, William Mobile	William Mobile Ashby	April 1915	No	No
Allen, Numrod Booker	Nimrod Booker Allen*	1908	No	No
Anderson, Wesley John	John Wesley Anderson	March 1913	No	No
Burton, Charles Wesley	Charles Wesley Burton	March 1913	No	No
Elliott, Beale	Robert Beale Elliott*	December 1907	No	Yes
Ish, Jefferson	Jefferson Gatherford Ish, Jr.		Yes	No
Johnson, Arthur	Arthur Edward Johnson		Yes	No
Kingsley, Harold	Harold Merrybright Kingsley		Yes	Yes
Lewis, John	John Henry Lewis	March 1913	No	No
MacNeal, Arthur Clement	Arthur Clement MacNeal	March 1915	No	No
Mason, Ira	Ira McLinn Mason Sr.		Yes	Yes
Morsell, R. Samuel	Samuel Richard Morsell		Yes	No
Pope, Aiken A.	Aiken Augustus Pope	March 1913	No	No
Robinson, James Hathaway	James Hathaway Robinson		No	No
Smith, Emory B.	Emory Byington Smith		No	No
Thorne, Philip	Philip Manual Thorne, Jr.		Yes	Yes
Wesley, Charles	Charles Harris Wesley	March 1913	No	No
Tribbet, Charles Alexander	Charles Alexander Tribbett, Sr.	March 1915	No	No
Ward, Alexander Wayman	Alexander Wayman Ward	March 1915	No	No
Yearwood, Rev.	Christopher Hubert Yearwood		Yes	No
Non-Resident (Original)	Non-Resident (Revised)			
Adams, Frank	Frank William Adams	March 1913	No	No
Allen, Alexander Joseph	Alexander Joseph Allen, Sr.	March 1913	No	No
Bishop, William Norman	William Norman Bishop	March 1913	No	No
Johnson, Perry Theodore	Perry Theodore Johnson, Jr.	April 1915	No	No
Manning, W. E.	William Edward Manning		No	No
Norcum, William Porter	William Porter Norcum		Yes	Yes
Ross, John McLinn	John McLinn Ross	March 1913	No	No

Note: This axial coding database contain four columns of members affiliated with Zeta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, Fraternity, Incorporated between 1906-1916. The first column contains the exact replica of the members referenced in the Official Directory of the AΦA Fraternity 1916 in the order of their available last name, first name or initial(s), middle name or initial(s), and sorted by chapter affiliate of active members, honorary members, alumni members, and non-resident members. The second column contains a revised list of names according to public government records resorted in the order of first name(s), middle name(s), last name(s), and relevant suffixes. The third column contains verified notices of initiations according to available published materials from the Sphinx Magazine and fraternity history book. The last column contains proof of school enrollment at Yale University in 1908-1909, the same year the chapter was chartered on April 10, 1909.

* Mr. Robert Beale Elliott was initiated in AΦA by way of Gamme Chapter on December 30, 1907.
* Mr. Nimrod Booker Allen was initiated by AΦA by way of Xi Chapter at an unknown date prior to March 29, 1913.

The first step is to design a table that sorts these Brothers by membership status with a similar organizational structure as seen in Table 1. The second step is to deduce each individual's full legal name based on the information available in public government records, Yale publications, and other biographies. The third step is to verify each member's available initiation into the fraternity and then identify their school enrollment during the same year the chapter was established. The last step in this process is to identify participation in any fraternity activities from 1909-1912 as a strong predictor of early membership; collectively these steps will objectively elucidate the original members of this chapter.

Criteria

Substantiating the existence of these unknown members requires systematic and rigorous criteria for evaluation to limit issues such as bias, distortion, or inaccuracies. There is a consistent pattern in how the fraternity characterized the original members of its earliest chapters according to its historical archives. As a result, I based the following criteria on the same standards that the Constitution of the Mother Chapter defined its members (Alpha Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, 1910):

- Membership in the fraternity
- Affiliation with Zeta Chapter
- Membership Type
- Verification of Initiation
- School Enrollment 1908-1909
- Fraternity activities between the years 1909-1912

As previously mentioned, the first considerations for Zeta Chapter membership are documented evidence of their association with the fraternity and identifying their membership types, such as Alumni⁶ and Non-Resident.⁷ A candidate's presence in Yale's 1916 Directory is a strong indicator for membership given that these individuals likely completed their academic years or enrollment when the university publish this iteration. Next, individuals whose initiations occurred after April 10, 1909⁸ will be removed from consideration since the Zeta Chapter members were all initiated on this date. Further, attending Yale University during the 1908-1909 academic year is another excellent predictor due to their geographic proximity to future Zeta Chapter members while attending classes. Given the current historical account that the Zeta Chapter was essentially "dead" after the chartering with no initiation for three years, evidence of their fraternity activities between 1909-1912 is another effective predictor (Wesley, 1929, pp. 88-89). Altogether, these requirements present substantive criteria that suggest original members of this chapter and align with the current depiction of other early members that established chapters within the fraternity.

Data Analysis

Combining this information, I analyzed each listed individual using the axial coding database in Table 1 and arranged their data using the categories below:

- Original Name
- Revised Full Legal Name
- Membership Status
 - Active Member
 - Alumni Member
 - Honorary Member⁹
- Non-Resident
- Verified Initiation
- School Enrollment
- Fraternity Activities between the years of 1909-1912

Beginning with the verified initiation dates (1914-1916), as shown in Table 1, I removed each individual within this period and calculated that there were 32 total chapter members when divided by Active (1), Alumni (16), Honorary (9), and Non-Resident (6). This estimate closely resembles a chapter membership report from the 1913 Convention that referenced 31 affiliated members from the Zeta Chapter according to their reported membership statuses as seen in Figure 1: Active (14), Alumni (11), Honorary (3), and Non-Resident (1) (Wesley, 1929, p. 129). By excluding the re-established group from 1913, the evidence supports eight members who met the criteria for original chapter membership when accounting for Honorary Members and students not enrolled at Yale University in the 1908-1909 academic year.

Figure 1
1913 Fraternity's Membership Rolls

By the period of this convention, the fraternity had spread its chapters into several fields and had added many new members. The roll of chapters and members was reported as follows:

Chapter	Location	Members			
		Active	Alumni	Hon.	Non-Resident
Alpha	Cornell	10	18	2	9
Beta	Howard	40	54	10	9
Gamma	Virginia Union	19	22	2	
Delta	Toronto, Canada		5		
Epsilon	Michigan	13	22	10	3
Zeta	Yale	14	11	5	1
Eta	Columbia	1	7	3	
Theta	Chicago	16	10		2
Iota	Syracuse	7	2	1	3
Kappa	Ohio State	10	13	4	4
Mu	Minnesota	4	5	2	3
Nu	Lincoln	18	14		1
Xi	Wilberforce	10	3	1	1
Omicron	Pittsburg	6	2		2
Alpha Alumni	New York City	8			7
Alpha Lambda	Louisville, Ky.	12			7
TOTAL		188	188	40	50

Note: This figure explains the total number of members affiliated with the fraternity from the information compiled and submitted to the General Organizations for the Sixth General Convention held at Howard University, Washington D.C. on December 29-31, 1913. The significance of this roll affirms the total number of affiliate members to Zeta Chapter of 31 Active (14), Alumni (11), Honorary (3), and Non-Resident (1)

Results

This research posits that the following individuals were the original members of the Zeta Chapter as established on April 10, 1909:

- Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr.
- Rev. Dr. Harold Merrybright Kingsley Sr.
- Dr. Arthur Edward Johnson
- Dr. Ira McLinn Mason Sr.
- Rev. Samuel Richard Morsell
- Dr. William Porter Norcom
- Philip Manual Thorne Jr. Esq.
- Rev. Christopher Hubert Yearwood

These individuals, referred to as the Legendary Eight herein, enrolled at Yale University in the 1908-1909 academic year and were verified members of the Zeta Chapter before its re-establishment on March 29, 1913, predating Dr. Wesley's induction into the fraternity (Wesley, 1929). Table 2, Table 3, and the subsequent excerpts each provide additional evidence of the Legendary Eight's demographic information as well as their academic affiliations at Yale University.

Table 2

Legendary Eight Vital Biographical Information

First Set of Legendary Eight				
First Name	Jefferson	Harold	Arthur	Ira
Middle Name	Gatherford	Merrybright	Edward	McLinn
Last Name	Ish, Jr.	Kingsley, Sr.	Johnson	Mason, Sr.
Date of Birth	4-Jan-1888	01-Mar-1887	07-Apr-1888	21-Nov-1886
Birth Location	Little Rock, AR	Mobile, AL	Ansonia, CT	Birmingham, AL
High School	Little Rock High School, Colored	Emerson School	Unknown	Phillips Academy
High School Location	Little Rock, AR	Mobile, AL	Unknown	Andover, MA
Age at Zeta's Chartering	21	22	21	22
Residence During Chartering	658 West Divinity Hall, New Haven	106 Goffe Street, New Haven	30 Crescent, Ansonia	658 West Divinity Hall, New Haven
Yale's Affiliation	Yale College	Yale Divinity School	Yale School of Medicine	Yale College
Degree	Bachelor of Science	Bachelor of Divinity	Non-Graduate	Bachelor's degree
Other Yale Student Clubs	Unknown	Yale Southern Club	Unknown	Unknown
Year of Graduation at Yale	1909	1911	Not Applicable	1910
Historically Black Colleges and Universities Affiliations	Talladega College, University of Arkansas Pine Bluff	Talladega College	Howard University	Talladega College, Tuskegee University, Howard University
Notable Profession	Business Executive	Reverend	Physician	Physician
Date of Death	18-Sep-1962	04-Aug-1970	28-Mar-1921	28-Sept-1972
Death Location	Chicago, IL	Los Angeles, CA	Cambridge, MA	Chicago, IL

Table 3

Legendary Eight Vital Biographical Information Cont.

Second Set of Legendary Eight				
First Name	Samuel	William	Philip	Christopher
Middle Name	Richard	Porter	Manual	Hubert
Last Name	Morsell	Norcom	Thorne, Jr.	Yearwood
Date of Birth	03-Mar-1874	15-Mar-1885	19-Jul-1885	28-Feb-1878
Birth Location	Baltimore, MD	Portsmouth, VA	Charleston, SC	Georgetown, British Guiana
High School	Baltimore High School	New Haven High School	Boys High School	Unknown
High School Location	Baltimore, MD	New Haven, CT	Brooklyn, NY	Unknown
Age at Zeta's Chartering	35	23	23	31
Residence During Chartering	638 East Divinity Hall, New Haven	396 Berkeley Hall, New Haven	658 West Divinity Hall, New Haven	93 Dixwell Ave, New Haven
Yale's Affiliation	Yale Divinity School	Yale College	Yale Law School	Yale Divinity School
Degree	Bachelor of Divinity	Bachelor of Arts	Bachelor of Laws	Bachelor of Divinity
Other Yale Student Clubs	Yale Southern Club	Unknown	Yale Southern Club	Yale Cosmopolitan
Year of Graduation at Yale	1910	1911	1909	1911
Historically Black Colleges and Universities Affiliations	Unknown	Howard University	Unknown	Wilberforce University
Notable Profession	Executive	Physician	Attorney	Reverend
Date of Death	10-Jul-1955	21-Jan-1948	Unknown	29-Oct-1913
Death Location	Brooklyn, NY	Brooklyn, NY	Unknown	Providence, RI

Note: A summary of vital biographical and demographic information of the Legendary Eight, such as institutional affiliations and activities that link them to Yale University. These individuals are sorted alphabetically according to their last names. The row labeled Historically Black Colleges and Universities Affiliations highlights either individual enrollment as students or relationship as an employee.

Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr.

Brother Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr. was born January 4, 1888, in Little Rock, Arkansas, to Jefferson Gatherford Ish Sr. and Marietta Georgia Kidd. Brother Ish graduated from high school in Little Rock, AR, before earning degrees from Talladega College in 1907 and Yale College in 1909 (Jet, 1962). Ish Jr. was a senior at Yale College and later part of the first-year class at the Medical School with classmate Brother Arthur Edward Johnson (Yale University, 1909). Ish Jr. and Brother Philip Manual Thorne Jr. were college roommates during the Chapter's charter year (The Meriden Daily Journal, 1908, p. 5). Considering Ish Jr. graduated from Yale College in 1909, a few months after the established Chapter, he would have had limited to no significant involvement with Zeta during the subsequent school year as he pursued professional endeavors upon graduation.

On March 11, 1911, he married Florence Kitty Ross. Professionally, he served as the President of the State Agricultural Mechanical and Normal College, currently known as the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, and served on the Board of Trustees of Talladega College (Gonzalez, 2021; University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, n.d.). He was also listed as one of the nation's 100 wealthiest Negroes before his death on September 18, 1962; his burial site is in Cook County, IL (Jet, 1962).

Harold Merrybright Kingsley Sr.

Brother Harold Merrybright Kingsley Sr. was born March 1, 1887, in Mobile, AL, to William Kinglsey Thurber and Mary Evans. After graduating from Emerson School, Kingsley Sr. attended Talladega College, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1908 (Murphy et al., 2013, p. 433). Kingsley Sr. matriculated to Yale Divinity School, where he was a member of Yale's Southern Club student organization and a delegate for the Zeta Chapter at the 4th General Convention in Ann Arbor, MI, along with Brother William Porter Norcom (Wesley, 1929, p. 102; Yale University, 1909). As part of the Junior class in 1909, his classmates were Brother Christopher Hubert Yearwood and Samuel Richard Morsell (Yale University, 1909).

On December 25, 1911, Brother Kinglsey married Mattie Satyra Jackson. He pursued a life of ministry, notably becoming the first pastor of the Good Shepherd Congregational Church (now known as the Church of the Good Shepherd) in Chicago, IL, and later on, becoming the pastor of the Congregational Church of Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles (Murphy et al., 2013, p. 443). Considered one of the leading Black Congregationalists of his time, he pastored one of the largest Black churches in the north (The Eau Claire Leader, 1930). He died at 83 in Los Angeles, CA, on August 4, 1970.

Arthur Edward Johnson

Brother Arthur Edward Johnson was born on April 7, 1888, in Ansonia, CT, to William Johnson and Susan Johnson; there is currently no information about his high school. According to the Directory of De-

ceased American Physicians, Brother Johnson attended the Yale University School of Medicine, the Howard University College of Medicine, and the Temple University School of Medicine (Ancestry.com LLC, n.d.). Arthur Edward Johnson was part of the first-year class at the Medical School with classmate Brother Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr. (Yale University, 1909). Johnson married Estelle May Donathan sometime in the 1910s, and there is no available public information on his involvement with the fraternity beyond his reference in the directory (Fraternity, 1916). He died on March 28, 1921, in Cambridge, MA.

Ira McLinn Mason Sr.

Brother Ira McLinn “Mack” Mason Sr. was born November 21, 1886, in Birmingham, AL, to James W. Elias Mason and Gertrude Emma Mclean. In 1906, Brother Mason Sr. graduated from Phillips Academy in Andover, MA, before enrolling at Yale College (The dedication, 1995). After graduating from Yale in 1910, he taught at Talladega College, the Tuskegee Institute, and Howard University (The dedication, 1995). Mason was part of the Junior Class at Yale College along with Sophomore-Year Mr. William Porter Norcom and Senior-Year Mr. Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr. (Yale University, 1909). Mr. Mason paid the Zeta Chapter Grand Tax on November 1, 1911, for the 1909-1910 fraternal year (Wesley, 1929, p. 272). In 1914, at the Seventh General Convention, Mr. Mason attended the event as a reported Alumni Member (Wesley, 1929, p. 134). In 1916, he enrolled at the Chicago Hospital - College of Medicine, presently known as the Chicago Medical School, and later earned a PhD in Languages at the University of Madrid (The dedication, 1995, p. 4). He died on September 28, 1972, in Chicago, IL.

Samuel Richard Morsell

Brother Samuel Richard Morsell was born March 3, 1874, in Baltimore, MD, to John H. Morsel and Eliza Ann Henson. He graduated from Baltimore High School in Baltimore, MD, and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at Oberlin College in 1907 before pursuing further studies at Yale Divinity School (Yenser, 1942). In his first year at Yale Divinity School, Morsell received the Merisck Prize, an award by Yale Divinity School faculty to recognize students for their effective public address in preaching (“The First Colored Professional,” n.d.; Taylor, 2006). In 1909, Brother Morsell was in his Senior Class at Yale Divinity School with Junior-Classmates Brother Harold Merrybright Kingsley and Brother Christopher Hubert Yearwood (Yale University, 1909). He was also a member of Yale’s Southern Club student organization, which included fellow members, Brothers Harold Merrybright Kingsley Sr. and Philip Manual Thorne Jr. (Yale University, 1909). During the chartering of the Zeta Chapter, Brother Morsell became the first President of the Zeta Chapter and later attended the Eighth General Convention in Pittsburgh, PA, as an alum member in 1915 (Yenser, 1942, pp. 373-374; Wesley, 1929, p. 141).

William Porter Norcom

Brother William Porter Norcom was born on August 15, 1885, in Portsmouth, VA, to Israel Charles Norcom and Mary Elizabeth Elliot. He attended New Haven High School and transitioned to Yale College, where he received a Bachelor of Arts in 1911 (Yale University, 1949, p. 98). Norcom was a sophomore at Yale College and received the Berkeley Premiums prize in Latin Composition; his classmates included Senior-Class Brothers Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr. and Junior-Class Ira McLinn Mason (Yale University, 1909). In the fraternal year 1911-1912, he was a delegate for the Zeta Chapter at the 4th General Convention in Ann Arbor, MI, along with Mr. Harold Merrybright Kingsley (Wesley, 1929, p. 102). At this same convention, he was the first member of the Zeta Chapter elected into a General Office position as Treasurer and the first to hold a national position within the fraternity (Wesley, 1929, p. 266). Norcom continued his studies at the University of Michigan Medical School as part of the Epsilon Chapter and later earned his Medical Degree at Howard University in Washington, D.C., in 1917 (Yale University, 1949, p. 98).

Brother Norcom served as a Captain in the Medical Corps in the New York National Guard for World War II and married Rebecca deGraphin-reid in 1914 (Yale University, 1949, p. 98). He was a member of several professional and fraternal organizations, such as the Society of the County of Kings, the American Medical Association, Sigma Pi Phi, and the Masonic Order. He died on January 21, 1948, and his burial site was in Brooklyn, NY (Yale University, 1909, p. 98).

Philip Manual Thorne Jr.

Brother Philip Manual Thorne Jr. was born on July 19, 1885, in Charleston, S.C., to Philip Manuel Thorne Sr. and Susan E. Massey. He graduated from the Avery Institute in Charleston, S.C., before moving to Brooklyn, NY, to attend Boys High School, where he became a talented debater (The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 1905, p. 8). In 1908, Thorne roomed with Brother Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr. during his time at Yale Law School when they encountered a restaurant owner who refused to serve them food due to their race, which garnered the attention of Dr. Booker T. Washington and the Yale Law School faculty's interest (The Meriden Daily Journal, 1908, p. 5). Thorne was a Southern Club student organization member with Brothers Harold Merrybright Kingsley Sr. and Samuel Richard Morsell (Yale University, 1909). He initiated the chartering of the Zeta Chapter and facilitated the chartering of the Epsilon Chapter at the University of Michigan. He became a recognized Honorary Member of the Eta Chapter on June 3, 1910 (Wesley, 1929, pp. 77-92). In 1909, Thorne graduated from Yale Law School with a Bachelor of Laws and worked at several law offices before opening his practice. He served on the Legal Redress and Legislative Committee for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and was a Charter Member of Alpha Alumni Chapter in New York City with fellow notable member Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois (NAACP, 1915, p. 308; Wesley, 1929, p. 110). There are no public records of marriage or death.

Christopher Hubert Yearwood

Lastly, Brother Christopher Hubert Yearwood was born on February 28, 1878, in Georgetown, British Guiana, presently in Guyana, to Thomas Richard Yearwood and Louisa Prescod Isley (Yale University, 1915, p. 710). While in Georgetown, he attended Queens College and studied Methodist ministries, eventually becoming an ordained minister. After migrating to America in the early 1900s, he pursued further studies in medicine at the Boston College of Physicians and Surgeons and at Harvard Medical School (Yale University, 1915). Brother Yearwood's heart was still in ministry when he pursued further studies at Yale Divinity School while preaching at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in New Haven. In 1909, he was an enrolled junior at Yale Divinity School along with Brother Harold Merrybright Kingsley and with fellow senior classmate Brother Samuel Richard Morsell (Yale University, 1909). After graduating from Yale in 1911, he pastored at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal in New Bedford, MA, and served on the Board of Trustees for Wilberforce University (Yale University, 1915). Brother Yearwood never married and died in Providence, Rhode Island, on October 29, 1913.

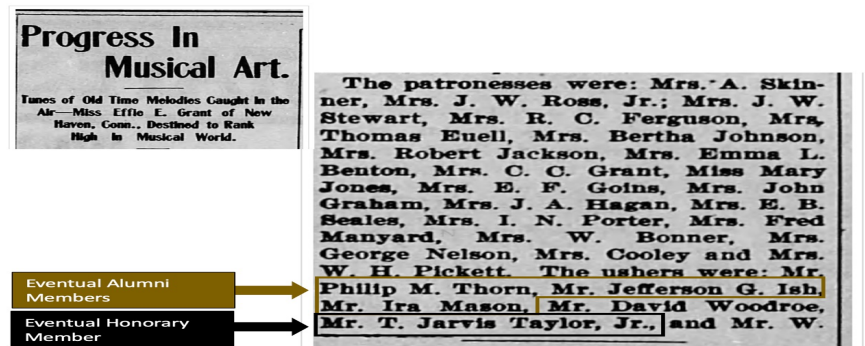
Further Evidence

Based on this methodology and available research, Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr., Rev. Dr. Harold Merrybright Kingsley Sr., Dr. Arthur Edward Johnson, Dr. Ira McLinn Mason Sr., Rev. Samuel Richard Morsell, Dr. William Porter Norcom, Philip Manual Thorne Jr. Esq., and Rev. Christopher Hubert Yearwood meet the qualifications as the original members of the Zeta Chapter. Due to the unavailability of the original April 10, 1909 fraternity's charter for Yale, there is very little evidence that supports the existence of these initial members contemporaneously except for a newspaper article published one week prior to the chapter's founding. Headlined by the first known Black woman to enroll at Yale University, Figure 2 contains an excerpt about Effie Grant Hardy's performance where Philip Manuel Thorne Jr., Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr., Ira McLinn Mason Sr., and Thomas Jarvis Taylor, Jr. all served as ushers (Franklin's Paper the Statesman Archive, 1909, p. 2). Each excerpt describes an original member's connection to the fraternity and Yale, and provides brief details about their lives.

Discussion

There are four core rationales to support the adoption of this resolution: it rectifies inconsistencies in the fraternity's historical records, encourages greater scholarship, provides closure for the descendants of these members, and invests in future recruitment efforts. Presently, within the historical records of the fraternity, there are missing accounts that impact our understanding of the organization's early development. When Dr. Wesley produced the official archive in 1929, his goal was to accurately document a comprehensive experience of Black student college life, which he proclaimed as the first literary piece of its kind (Wesley, 1929, p. vii). Scholars within the fraternity have revised the organization's archives with new evidence such as early meeting min-

Figure 2
1909 Newspaper Article



Note: This figure shows clippings from a newspaper article published on April 3, 1909, when Effie Grand Hardy, an acclaimed soprano, performed a music recital in New Haven, CT. Evidence suggests three of the cited ushers highlighted in gold, Philip Manuel Thorne Jr., Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr., and Ira Mc-Linn Mason Sr., who would become Zeta Chapter members seven days later on April 10, 1909. Thomas Jarvis Taylor Jr. would later become an Honorary Member of the same chapter.

utes and reports over the decades (Wesley, 2000, pp. viii). Immediately after the publication of the organization’s initial history book, Dr. Wesley acknowledged some of the errors that were corrected due to the introduction of new evidence or members’ corroboration of available facts (Wesley, 2000, p. vii). These actions set a precedent for members to add or adjust how we remember these historical moments based on verifiable documentation in the name of academic excellence. My research materials include official documents from fraternity history books or magazines, ancestral research on public records, and Yale’s school records, all of which fall within the parameters of adequate sources to address said inconsistencies.

Another argument for the accuracy of this model is the total number of original members from the earliest chapters established in the fraternity based on the official history and membership report of 1913. The range of original members for the first seven chapters of the organization falls between seven and eight, except for Howard University’s Beta Chapter, which had 18 members; the Legendary Eight fall within this range and qualify as Charter Members according to the standards set forth by Dr. Wesley (Wesley, 1929). Further, applying the proposed methodology corroborates with the 1913 Membership Roll Report highlighted according to Wesley (1929). Comparing both the 1913 Membership Report and the proposed criteria confirms the precision of this methodology.

This methodology enhances the fraternity’s depiction of the Black student experience and could persuade Yale University, as well as other institutions, to review their understanding of Black student-led organizations. In the case of the Zeta Chapter, published scholarship on Black student enrollment or organizations of this identity currently promotes

questionable estimates or depictions in contrast to the information detailed in this paper. In fact, Yale's research on the Zeta Chapter's history between 1909 and the establishment of the Black Student Alliance at Yale in 1967 is either limited or entirely unknown (Afro-American Cultural Center at Yale, n.d.). Below, I have listed statements from several authors who have conducted their own studies on Black students at Yale and have provided their assessment of the university's knowledge of this population:

- "only seven blacks graduated from Yale between 1924 and the end of the Second World War..." (1945) (Kabaservice, 1999, p. 351).
- "...blacks did not enjoy the benefits of adequate secondary schooling and tended to be ill-prepared academically.." (Karabel, 2005, p. 213).
- "It appears that no more than 10 students matriculated during the 1850-to-1950 period" at Yale Law School (Reeder, 1999, p.125).
- "But from 1900 to 1945, medical school records show that no black students enrolled" (Reeder, 1999, p.125).
- Began in the mid-1960s "...the first assertion of racial identity among black students at Yale" (Kabaservice, 1999, p. 369).

However, my research uncovered these 43 members between 1909-1916 and most of them were, in fact, Black alumni members from Yale University. The extensive accomplishments of the Legendary Eight also counter the racist narrative that Black students did not have the academic fortitude to attend and thrive at an institution of Yale's caliber. Kabaservice noted (1999) that "the first assertion of racial identity among black students at Yale" began in the mid-1960s with the Black Student Alliance at Yale. However, Zeta Chapter predates this organization by more than 55 years, which makes Zeta the oldest known and actively documented Black Student Organization established at Yale University (p. 369). Recognition of these original members could motivate Yale to expand further research in understanding their earliest Black student population in more detail to not only recognize these students but also understand their contributions to the student experience that has endured for over a century.

The fraternity states that its purpose is to develop leaders, promote brotherhood with academic excellence, provide service, and advocate for their communities Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated. (n.d.a). The inclusion of the Legendary Eight would not only affirm the organization's aforementioned values but also honor a forgotten legacy denied to their descendants for more than a century as of 2013. In Sep-

tember 2021, Yale held an event called Descendants of early Black Yale graduates tell their stories, where relatives of their Black alumni discussed their family's history at the university (Gonzalez, 2021). I attended the engagement and had the opportunity to pose a question to the descendants of Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr.; I simply asked if they were aware of Jefferson's involvement with the fraternity (The Gilder Lehrman Center, 2021, 1:19:10). With little information themselves, they described being aware of his involvement to a degree and showed interest in learning more if new evidence presented itself. While this interaction is purely anecdotal, there is a significant possibility that there are many families with similar interests, which highlights the impact that denying our history has on the present.

If the fraternity's Historical Commission¹⁰ considers recognizing these members, it would create new opportunities for enhanced academic scholarship and increase engagement with colleges and universities in reconciling their records. The Legendary Eight's induction would show that our organization is willing to improve our historical understanding of early membership and raise Yale University's Black history profile in the public sphere. Such renewed interest would then translate to greater recruitment efforts, generate funds for the chapter to continue the rest of its legacy, and further secure the chapter's future. By doing so, we would continue to strengthen the fraternity's prestigious international brand and accurately depict our brotherhood's impact within collegiate spaces. It is critical that our past be told in its entirety so that our future members can see that we lead by example and value those who have paved the way forward.

Implications and Recommendations

The Legendary Eight's exclusion as original members of Zeta have profound implications for the organization, Yale University, and similar fraternal organizations and associations as a whole. For the fraternity, this research presents a further examination of early membership records to ensure they are fully reconciled in improving our understanding of the fraternity's rich legacy. Such a discovery can be uncomfortable and create fissures between current members who have differing opinions; however, it is still an opportunity for the organization to create a more inclusive and accurate narrative for future and current members. My recommendation for the fraternity and similar organizations is to consider this aforementioned methodology to not only identify all original members but also expand the scope as an approach to bolstering all of our early membership records.

The implications for Yale University are a reminder of its past challenges with racism towards its Students of Color, which requires a greater commitment to addressing its history. As shown in Figure 3, during the same school year in which the Zeta Chapter was initially established, these were the types of courses some of the members from Legendary Eight would have taken (Yale University, 1909). As Yale continues to diversify, it is critical that the institution publicly demonstrates

Figure 3
Course Offerings at Yale University 1908-1909

Figure 3 <i>Course Offerings at Yale University 1908-1909</i>		
*C 15	<i>Ethnology.</i>	2 hrs.
Professor KELLER.		<u>Yale College</u> Professor Albert Galloway Keller in Sociology
Primarily a course of investigation into the life of selected groups of <u>uncivilized peoples</u> ; in 1908-09, the <u>Negroid races</u> . Ability to read <u>easy French</u> or German is required.		
B 9	<i>American Social Conditions and Municipal Problems.</i>	3 hrs.
Assistant Professor BAILEY.		Professor William Bacon Bailey in Political Economy
A study of immigration; the growth and concentration of population in cities, with the <u>attendant dangers</u> ; the <u>liquor question</u> ; the <u>criminal</u> ; the <u>negro</u> ; and the government of American cities.		
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR BAILEY		
MIDDLE YEAR		
38	<i>Practical Sociology</i> (required in Course C).	2 hrs.
The problems connected with the negro, the concentration of population in cities with the <u>attendant dangers</u> , <u>crime</u> , <u>immigration</u> , the <u>liquor question</u> , and other important American questions will be studied.		<u>Yale Divinity School</u> Professor William Bacon Bailey in Political Economy

Note: This figure illustrates some of Yale University's courses and their descriptions during the school year of 1908-1909. Words underlined in red highlight the malevolent terms in connection to Black people, explaining the course objective.

its willingness to acknowledge difficult moments and apply these lessons to how it currently interacts with its Black student populations. This involves improved funding opportunities with members of the NPHC, the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations, the National Multicultural Greek Council, the National APIDA Panhellenic Association, and other similar associations. Additionally, having community members, like faculty or student volunteers, assist in such preservation and research at places like Yale, along with its peer institutions, furthers our collective goal of depicting an accurate and holistic memory for future generations.

Finally, the adoption of the methodology used to uncover the Legendary Eight would imply that the NPHC must update how it defines original membership based on its broader relationship to Black culture and American history. This systematic approach could not only improve efforts to locate unknown members but also emphasize the relationship between the Ivy League and HBCUs, given that many of these members had strong ties to the latter before or after their academic tenures. These connections undoubtedly carry a rich history that should be explored to a greater extent and could reveal other unknown narratives or events should both sides choose to form a partnership. Additionally, cultivating partnerships between the senior leadership of NPHCs and elite schools like Yale is another opportunity to collaborate academically in terms of research as well as demonstrate their mutual commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Conclusion

Using the Zeta Chapter as a case study, my primary objectives were to examine how the fraternity selected the original members of a

chapter, evaluate if any unrecognized individuals qualify as Charter Members, and formally acknowledge their contributions to the fraternity's legacy. While Wesley's criteria were the basis for my research, reconstructing the Legendary Eight's history required a contemporary approach and diligent review of primary sources to ensure that these men received the designation of charter member after more than a century of exclusion. The available evidence, including the organization's 1916 Directory as well as other public records, supports their membership within the fraternity and their enrollment at Yale University during the 1908-1909 academic year. Jefferson Gatherford Ish Jr., Rev. Dr. Harold Merrybright Kingsley Sr., Dr. Arthur Edward Johnson, Dr. Ira McLinn Mason Sr., Rev. Samuel Richard Morsell, Dr. William Porter Norcom, Philip Manual Thorne Jr. Esq., and Rev. Christopher Hubert Yearwood were the original initiates who established the Zeta Chapter and should be recognized as such. Given the precedent for amending fraternity records, the organization's Historical Commission should review this research at length, officially acknowledge these individuals in their records, and consider similar initiatives at other chapters to maintain the spirit of brotherhood that is at the core of their mission. In the great wisdom of Walker, "We are a people. A people do not throw their geniuses away. If they do, it is our duty as witnesses for the future to collect them again for the sake of our children. If necessary, bone by bone" (Hemenway, 1977, p. viii). Below is a collection of available photos that contemporaneously depict the Legendary Eight.

Figure 4
The Legendary Eight



Note: This figure is a reproduction of available images depicting the likeness of the Legendary Eight.

Notes

1. The Mother Chapter signifies members from Alpha Chapter at Cornell University during the early development stages of the fraternity, and many of the founders or earliest members notified candidates of the chapter's approval.
2. The term and title Jewel affectionately designated to members identified as founders of the fraternity from the Mother Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha.
3. In the infancy stage of the organization, national elected officers were the General President, General Vice-President, and General Secretary, and later expanded to the Editor of the Sphinx by 1916. When a chapter is approved, a General Officer could perform the initiation of a newly chartered chapter.
4. The General Organization is mainly composed of national committees and officers with authority to sanction the operational structures and culture that still define the Fraternity presently.
5. Charter Members are recognized as the first individual(s) to establish a sanctioned chapter or as a local founder of a branch within Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated. Due to their contributions to expanding this organization's reach within a school or locale, these are revered members.
6. In the context of the early development of the fraternity, an Active Member generally refers to a student who successfully completed one semester or quarter of work at an institution of higher learning and has undergone the prescribed initiation while maintaining a student status at their institution.
7. In the context of the early development of the fraternity, a Non-Resident pertains to a membership type that has undergone the prescribed initiation at an undergraduate chapter and graduated from their school's program. However, there are no explicit definitions. According to the earliest versions of the fraternity constitutions or The Sphinx Magazines, there are contextual clues that connote this undefined membership type at the earliest stages of the fraternity.
8. Although not essential for this criteria, there was no available evidence that any of the likely original members joined the fraternity before the organization established the chapter.
9. An Honorary Member in 1909-1910 was a student not registered to a particular higher education institution.
10. The Historical Commission for Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity is the governing body that assists the General Historian in describing significant events and members with recommendations in depicting the official history.

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Author Biography:

Latif A. Legend is a graduate student in higher education administration at Louisiana State University, aspiring to pursue doctoral studies in Black History. Initiated into the Zeta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity at Yale, his research interests are on Black History in North America, Education History, and College Access. As a former practitioner, he has 16 years of leadership experience in admissions and financial aid at institutions like Columbia and Stanford University.