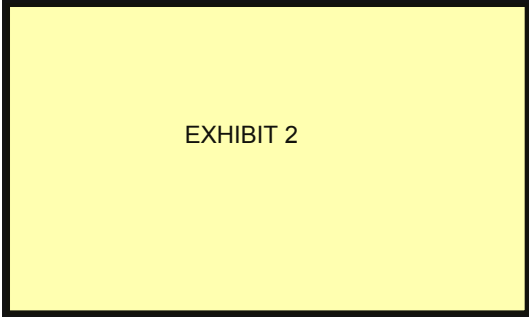


**Black Sorority Project**  
*THE EXODUS*  
*The Story of Delta Sigma Theta*  
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### Frequently Asked Questions

Straight Talk on The Exodus from Derek & Jamar

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### Why Choose Delta first?

Black Sorority Project is a two-part documentary series highlighting the beginnings of the Black Sorority Movement in America. Genesis (Alpha Kappa Alpha) and The Exodus (Delta Sigma Theta) tell the first two stories because you can't honestly tell one story without telling the other. Delta is first because of the significance of their participation in The Women's Suffrage March. This is a little known American History fact that can attract a wider audience to the overall project from the start. Remember, one of our main goals is to invite non-Greek, diverse audiences into a greater appreciation for the contributions of Black Greek life.

Also in 2000 we collaborated on a similar project for Alpha Phi Alpha, our beloved fraternity. We are actually line brothers. The painting and video were very popular among brothers, even though the video was available in an extremely short run. The prints were sold in a limited edition of 2006 copies. It sold out in less than a year and is no longer available. We have made "An Experiment in Brotherhood" available again for your viewing [here](#). As you can see, there were no official fraternity symbols used here either. It was not necessary. If you know your history, you know your founders when you see them. Besides, its nice to finally have something you can hang in your 'grown up' house (after the dorm years) or at work. This project is where it all started for us.

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### Did you go to Delta's national leadership for support?

Yes. Working directly with the national office on this project has always been a top priority for us. We went to headquarters long before we began production. Our first introduction came in 2003 under former President Gwendolyn Boyd. She was gracious and supportive, however, she had only four months remaining in her term at the time. She left office before the plans were finalized.

Two years later, we wrote, resent and hand-delivered an [introductory letter](#) about the project to Dr. Rice over a period of several months. We were unable to generate a response. As a result, we called her directly and she agreed to a meeting. She was courteous, pleasant and kind, despite the fact that our decision to call her directly proved to be highly unpopular among her leadership team.

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### Why didn't Delta authorize this project?

Good Question. We submitted a proposal that asked that we privately present to the leadership upon completion and if they liked it, they would help publicize it to Deltas, with them receiving a percentage from each sale. It was essentially a first rights of refusal proposition. We were [denied](#). And if you're wondering about the money issue, there was none. We were independently financed and profit sharing with Delta was always a documented and negotiable part of our plan. Unfortunately, politics prevented reason in this case, even before the final product was complete.

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### What is your response to the letter posted on Delta's homepage?

The letter only creates a problem for us because it told Deltas what to do, but not why. As a result, people who were unclear looked to us for answers. Unfortunately, the [letter we received](#) in response to our presentation gave us no further

explanation on the denial. Also, at the time the president's letter was written, she had not seen the project.

We understand their vigilance in establishing a disassociation with unapproved representations of Delta. We just hope they do the same for the picture of the child in Delta symbols going to potty and other such images.

The people who have chosen not to support have done so in obedience to their President, understandably. They assumed that the film and painting were presented, considered and denied on merit or lack thereof or that we never bothered to seek permission at all. Neither of those two is true. Obedience to leadership is a good thing. Misinformation is not.

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#### **There must be something wrong with the project for nationals to call for non-support?**

This is logical reasoning and we agree. The two things that are certain to us is that one, we don't know exactly what it was. And two, it was not with the artwork or film itself. The work was never presented. It was incomplete at the time of our meeting. So at the time, they had not seen the piece and have not, to our knowledge seen it yet.

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#### **Why have you remained silent on the controversy issue for so long?**

Out of respect for the leadership of Delta and in hopes of coming to an eventual agreement, we chose not to issue a rebuttal and to stay focused on the project. Unfortunately, our silence gave rise to more confusion among Deltas. We have received countless requests to explain the controversy, hence, this section. It is important to us that Deltas know that we have a healthy respect for protocol and due process, which is why we followed it. However, we would much rather focus on the significant historical legacy of Delta Sigma Theta and let our work speak for us.

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#### **So what now, when was your last contact with the National Office?**

We sent an invitation to the pre-screening reception for our New York screening to the national office and eastern region leaders. We invited the President or her representatives to our Philadelphia screening the morning of the event. To our knowledge, neither she nor the Executive Board members have seen it. We recently sent her and her leadership team a copy of the film and an invitation to revisit the idea of partnership. We are hopeful that seeing the piece will help inform them about exactly where we were coming from and we can clear up the confusion once and for all for history's sake, not ours.

Audiences who see the film are always interested in Delta. We think Delta should be there to answer those questions, not us. We are merely storytellers and filmmakers. We are not representatives for your organization. We represent our integrity and creative brand. We know for sure that you can represent yourselves and that you do it well. That's why partnership is important.

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#### **Are you guys just trying to get rich off of Delta history?**

You don't have to look far to see the vendors who are trying to get rich 'off' of Delta. For us, there are much easier ways to seek fortune. We have been artists long enough to understand that financial success in our field is the exception, not the rule. As producers, we decide to tell stories that we believe in. That way, whether they pay off or not, we rest easy knowing that we used our talents to put something good in the world. We also believe that the market is fair. People will buy good things.

There are countless images out there that are mass-produced, made by non-Greeks that make blatant and often distasteful use of Delta (and other BGLO) symbols solely for profit, not profit sharing. These people do not seek permission to create their crafts and often become approved vendors.

We find it extremely compelling that Delta Sigma Theta is probably the single surviving organization of black women that participated in the Women's Suffrage March and they are rarely, if ever mentioned in books and film chronicling the Suffrage Movement. That's far more important to us than getting rich on this project. However it is also true that if no one buys, we go home.

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#### **How can I support this project?**

Watch the film and see the painting if you can. Form your own opinion. Then, contact your national office and encourage them to do the same. We can only make so many attempts without being a bother.

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#### What is the future plan for this project?

Well, the film is traveling the globe on the international festival circuit. We'll know late 2007 how we fared. We are also in the market for the right television outlet. That's all we're allowed to say on that...stay tuned!

As for the painting, it would be a shame for it to find a home anywhere other than Washington. (It was also in our plan to donate the original to National Headquarters) However, there has been some interest in acquisition by both public and private institutions. We're going to hold out as long as we can.

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#### How did you research your material?

We worked from a variety of stories and were extremely limited taking creative license with historical facts in order to preserve the integrity of the story, as we know it today. We consulted a variety of sources from the collections of Moreland Spingarn Research Center, New York Public Library Collection, Schomburg Center for Research and Culture, Widener Library at Harvard College and the Library of Congress. In addition, we referenced Paula Gidding's *In Search of Sisterhood*, Mary E. Vroman's *Shaped to its Purpose*, Floris Barnett Cash's *African American Women and Social Action: The Clubwomen and Volunteerism from Jim Crow to the New Deal* and doctoral dissertations. We also worked with several authors, historians and Delta consultants. Research was one of the more enjoyable aspects of our process.

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#### What's so important about this piece?

Think for a moment about the last time you walked into a fine arts museum among the historical paintings and saw African-American women who weren't serving, cooking, singing, dancing, eroticized or bound in submission. If you have, please share it, because we haven't. We're proud to have created an historical image of black women at the turn of the century engaged in a monumental, collaborative, socio-political, intellectual endeavor.

Now think for a moment about documentary film. Where African-American women are concerned, you can count on one hand the number of historical films you've seen that deal solely with the experience of African-American women outside of slavery. This piece is also significant because it tells a largely untold story through the medium of film. These days it is unfortunate that non-Greeks often associate the black Greek experience with hazing. They probably also know our history is important, but they don't know why. This piece can explain the founding experience in less than 1 hour.

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#### Will you be coming to Regional or National Conventions?

We applied for a vendor's license and booth space at nationals. We were again denied in writing and threatened that "If you agree not to sell that print (Oriented to Serve) and we allow you to participate in the Exhibit Trade Show and you do sell that print, despite agreeing to not sell it, we will have you removed by security and we will not refund your fees" The letter went on to suggest that we were unreachable by phone. Needless to say, we found the entire ordeal rather disturbing.

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#### Did you comply with the wishes of the national office?

Yes. They wished us success with the project at the conclusion of the denial letter. They never once asked us not to proceed. They asked that we not misrepresent the support of notable Deltas and that we include a disclaimer. We did them both. All of our communication, the conclusion of the credits in the film and every page of our website contains the following disclaimer:

" The Black Sorority Project is an independent historical initiative and is in no way funded, supported, endorsed or promoted by the present day organization Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. The views expressed herein are objective, unbiased and based solely on scholarship and historical record."

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#### Will you do a series on all Black sororities?

Probably not, it was always our plan to tell the beginning of the black sorority movement. It just so happens that one

cannot in fairness tell the story of Delta Sigma Theta and not tell the story of Alpha Kappa Alpha because the stories are too closely intertwined. Some have argued that it is essentially one story told over a period of years from two differing perspectives. We also find this difference to represent a larger philosophical distinction between African-American women and how racial progress is best achieved.

Our interests as creative professionals go beyond Black Greek subject matter. There are many great stories to tell, historical and otherwise. We are committed to create high-quality productions of significant entertainment value for a variety of audiences.

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#### **What was the most difficult part of the process for you?**

The graphic effects were extremely tedious. For each minute of animation you see in the film, it required approximately 3-6 hours of design and rendering. Jamar was the lead effects designer and handled a tremendous workload for this film. As a result, he shaved a few years off of his life expectancy.

The entire project was a creative decathlon. We wrote, designed, filmed, cast, painted, researched and more. It was a wonderful challenge. We are happy to know that so many people have been pleased with the end result. We are also quite happy to be done.

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#### **Was the fact that you are men a challenge in telling this story?**

No, it was actually an insightful lesson. We both have great respect for African-American women. We are both husbands and sons to wonderful women and fathers to girls. African American women are no wilting flowers in our communities. As a matter of fact, they are often leaders in our homes, churches and families.

In addition, the Delta story was well preserved including a wonderful collection of colorful quotes directly from Delta Founders. We knew that building these characters was an achievable task for all of these reasons. In the end all of our characters and narrators were women. They ultimately brought the story to life.

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