

The 2010 Census Partnership Program

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**For the
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census,
and National Archives**

The Honorable William Lacy Clay, Chairman

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Chairman Clay and other distinguished Members – it is indeed a pleasure to appear before you today to share the thoughts of the members and leaders of the National Pan-Hellenic Council regarding the 2010 Census Partnership Program. I thank you for this opportunity.

The National Pan-Hellenic Council

Let me take a moment to tell you a little about these organizations. They are the sororities and fraternities organized by people of African descent. We are global in nature but our beginnings focused in the United States of America. They include the following nine organizations:

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.
Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

The National Pan-Hellenic Council was founded formed in 1930 on the campus of Howard University here in Washington, D.C. Today our nine member organizations collectively have nearly 2,000,000 members in more than 6,000 chapters. African American leaders are among our members, including Members of the House of Representatives. We have a long and spirited tradition of public service, both in the African American community and beyond. These fraternities and sororities have been around a long time. Indeed, the sorority I head – Alpha Kappa Alpha, Incorporated – is celebrating its centennial this week here in the Capitol where it was founded in 1908 at Howard University.

Review of the Council's 2000 Partnership Activities

It is the National Pan-Hellenic Council's robust tradition of public service that led us to participate in the 2000 Census Partnership Program and to our coming participation in this Program for the 2010 Census. A full and fair Census is in the interest of all Americans. Many of our government's services to the American people are dependent on this to ensure full and fair Federal services to all, as intended by Congress.

Walking toward our participation in strengthening the 2010 Census, let me first share with you our participation in the Partnership Program for the 2000 Census.

The Census 2000 Partnership Program was a highly successful education, outreach, and mobilization campaign. It engaged communities all over the country. Its success is largely attributable to the successful translation of national initiatives and programs into customized grassroots campaigns. This was done by community-based, faith-based and civic organizations, and by educational institutions, the private sector, and state and local governments. The 2000 Census Partnership Program was the community connection for these efforts, and National Pan-Hellenic Council member organizations and their constituents were pivotal to that success. Our member organizations were deeply involved and highly committed at all levels of implementation.

Traditionally, African American communities have been the most challenging to count because of apathy, fear, distrust of the government, and the related uncertainty about how Census data were to be used. Regrettably, today some African American citizens feel that no matter what the results, their needs will not be met. On the other hand, when these persons received positive information about the Census from trusted neighbors, community leaders, and organizations such as the members of National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations and others, they have been far more likely to fully participate. This was the contribution of the National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations in 2000.

Here are a few of the major features of what we did to support the Census in 2000:

- ✓ **Organizations signed National Partnership Agreements.** These were largely ceremonial. National organizations created proclamations that included the 2000 Census as part of their social action agendas and set it in a high place among their programmatic priorities.
- ✓ **Most substantive activities took place at local chapter level.** Local chapters were involved at every level of local Census operations through the Regional Census Centers and the Local Census Offices.
- ✓ **Local chapters of Pan-Hellenic Council member organizations were instrumental in raising Census awareness as part of their ongoing social action efforts.** For example, census booths were a part of their health fairs, founder's day celebrations, regional meetings, and conferences.

- ✓ **Organizations engaged celebrity members to participate in Census awareness activities.** Star athletes and screen, television, and radio celebrities were involved in raising Census awareness and responsiveness in African American communities.
- ✓ **Pan-Hellenic Council member organizations contributed substantial resources to Census 2000.** The actions I have noted were costly, even after the substantial contribution of unpaid volunteer labor. Our willingness to make these sacrifices contributed greatly to Census success.

Best Practices

As is the case with all such efforts, a careful examination of the past can reveal the most effective practices leading to improved performance in the future. Here are some of the **best practices** that we have identified from an examination of our participation in the Partnership Program for the 2000 Census. These aspects of our participation were especially effective.

- ✓ **Access to community leadership.** Engagement of National Pan-Hellenic Council member organizations ensured access to nearly 2 million enormously credible college-educated professionals and other community leaders in the effort to increase the accuracy of the enumeration of African American communities.
- ✓ **Administrative clarity.** Agreements outlined services and assistance to be provided by the headquarters of our organizations and their local chapters, including:
 - Incorporating census awareness messages in communications networks – for example, in websites, newsletters, quarterly journals, and chapter mailings.
 - Helping to recruit individuals from local chapters and communities for census jobs.
 - Participation of Census Bureau staff at national and regional conventions of member organizations of the National Pan-Hellenic Council, including
 - Exhibit booths
 - Workshop or plenary presentations
 - recruitment & job fair participation

- Using sorority and fraternity houses for testing, training, and meetings
 - Using sorority and fraternity houses and members in Questionnaire Assistance Centers and Be Counted Centers – where individuals received assistance to complete census questionnaires, and where they could obtain blank questionnaires, if they had not received them.
- ✓ **Networking.** National Pan-Hellenic Council members used their influence, networks, and positions in state and local government, and in education and religious communities, to promote Census operations. They used their links to other influential African American personalities in this way, as well.

Remaining Issues

This retrospective look at the 2000 experience is helpful in identifying the best practices. And that is good. But looking at present developments as illuminated by the 2000 experience is also helpful in identifying apparent remaining issues in the preparations for the 2010 Partnership Program. And that is also important, as it can help to improve current and future performance. Here are some of the issues that the National Pan-Hellenic Council has identified with the 2010 Census Partnership Program as it is evolving:

- ✓ **Overall timing.** The overall timing of the 2010 effort raises concerns about the projected effectiveness of outreach and engagement in hard to count communities. We are late, and this is quite likely to hurt the effort, if not corrected. There are two very specific points.
 - **Timely provision of promotional and awareness materials.** These materials have not been provided to the partners soon enough.
 - **Timely engagement of the National Pan-Hellenic Council.** Our organizations should be engaged sooner to assure its success in supporting the accurate counting of African Americans.
- ✓ **Resources.** The Census Bureau has not provided adequate resources to ensure partnership success and the success of partner-sponsored Census activities. This has been partly a function of flawed national partnership agreements. In the past, they have not been as effective as they could have been.

- ✓ **Overlap of organizational efforts.** Certain efforts of individual organizations to support the Census were almost identical, and in some cases local efforts were duplicated. Such overlaps should be identified and minimized.
- ✓ **More complete community involvement.** There should be more complete involvement of National Pan-Hellenic Council member organizations in outreach, education, and motivation efforts within African American communities. The influence and networks of Council organizations touches every aspect of life in African American communities.
- ✓ **The use of modern information technology.** The controversial use handheld devices in the Census may – unfortunately – have raised serious questions about the substantial utilization of other features of modern information technology in the 2010 Census. We should not to turn away from this technological realm entirely, but collaborate in considering ways that we can enhance the 2010 Census by the application of proven information technologies, such as large-scale and small-scale conference calls, web-based meetings, text messaging, and the redesign of relevant websites.

It is notable that the Government Accountability Office reviewed the Program in its *2000 Census – Review of Partnership Program Highlights – Best Practices for Future Operations* (August 2001). Many of its findings resonate with ours. In particular, GAO suggested that the Bureau of the Census and its partners should:

- ✓ Provide adequate and timely information on how partners can support the Census.
- ✓ Maintain open channels of communications with local partners.
- ✓ Encourage partners to initiate Census planning activities early.

Apparent Direction of the 2010 Census

As we have begun work on the 2010 Census, there are a number of features of the emergent effort that are important to the potential success of the Partnership Program.

- ✓ According to the 2010 Census, Integrated Communication Campaign (ICC):

“The ICC will cultivate a large and diverse group of trusted voices within the Black community and act through specific outreach efforts. These efforts will educate, motivate and instill a sense of urgency among the Black audience to complete and return their Census forms. This will increase mail response,

improve overall accuracy, reduce the differential undercount and increase cooperation with enumerators during the non-response follow-up period.”

- ✓ The ICC has identified three unique insights about the Black audience that will be targeted in the 2010 campaign:
 - Insight #1: Community Focused
 - Insight #2: Highly Spiritual
 - Insight #3: Highly influenced by word of mouth
- ✓ The Partnership Program recommends:

“Partner organizations have the unique ability to serve as advocates and influencers that can ignite conversations with their credibility and passion about Census participation.”

Recommended Actions for the 2010 Census

Thinking about our participation in the 2000 Census Partnership, the National Pan-Hellenic Council has identified the apparent best practices and the some of the persistent issues. Looking toward the development of plans for the 2010 Census, this review leads to the following programmatic recommendations for 2010:

- ✓ **A more structured national engagement strategy.** We need to better coordinate the efforts of all Partnership organizations to enhance our effectiveness. Many individual organizational efforts were almost identical and in some cases local efforts were duplicated.
- ✓ **Support for a national 2010 Census Engagement Project for National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations.** Such a project would greatly increase our effectiveness in assuring an accurate count of African Americans. It would support:
 - More structured National Pan-Hellenic Council involvement in 2010 Census efforts.
 - More concentrated efforts to ensure a complete and accurate count of African Americans.
 - More efficient and effective resource management for organizations and the Bureau.

- More effective assistance with other 2010 initiatives, such as non-response follow-up, recruitment of Census staff, access to minority, small businesses, work with elementary and secondary schools, involvement of minority-oriented advertising agencies.
 - More intense utilization of National Pan-Hellenic Council networks and resources.
 - Expand the capacity in both the National Pan-Hellenic Council and the Bureau of the Census to establish and monitor success metrics for their strategies to maximize the enumeration of African Americans.
 - Build a central platform for launching ICC's African American campaign initiatives.
- ✓ **Funding.** The National Pan-Hellenic Council member organizations are more than willing to accept their part of the responsibility to educate and motivate African American communities to be fully counted. However, to assure our success we must be provided the necessary materials and resources. Please be clear that we are not suggesting full funding. Our member organizations are voluntary associations, and much volunteer labor will be brought to this task, as it was in 2000. But a more substantial funding core has to be present to enable us to be fully productive.

Beyond this, with the challenges and concerns our communities have with government and the broken promises of Census 2000, the Bureau must more broadly and deeply involve community-based organizations and leaders to be successful in the 2010. In particular, it must:

- ✓ **Renew certain advertising themes.** In Census 2000, the advertising campaign and theme was "What's in it for me?" This highlighted the benefits of participating in the census, and was a great "hook," in addressing significant issues for our community, such as overcrowded schools and access to better public services.
- ✓ **Intensify the use of credible voices to legitimize the Census.** Today, most hard to count persons living in African American communities do not see any advantage in participating fully in the Census. Their lives have not changed in any noticeable positive way since they were counted in 2000. As a result, the challenge to engage, convince, and motivate them to participate in the 2010 Census will be even greater. The intensification of "trusted, influential, credible voices" is even more important than in 2000.

- ✓ **Create closer relationship between the Pan-Hellenic Council and the Bureau of the Census.** Our member organizations want to be more involved in the strategies and efforts that we are being asked to promote and support. This will assure that our support of the effort to fully enumerate African Americans is successful.

At the end of the day, the Census Bureau, and their contractors will move on and the temporary offices will close but we will still be here in our communities working, and making a difference. We are not willing to trade our human and social capital for a “one and a half year campaign.”

Conclusion

It is our strong feeling that we need to work together on these issues to insure a successful Census in 2010. In particular, Mr. Chairman, we the members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council look forward to working with you, the Bureau of the Census, and other concerned persons and officials to assure a full and fair 2010 Census.

As in all generations since their founding, member organizations of the Pan-Hellenic Council represent every aspect of African American leadership. Whether in business, the professions, government, education, religion, or other endeavors, these trusted leaders will again be invaluable Census assets in 2010.

It is a pleasure to be with you today to share these thoughts. I look forward to the questions and discussion that will follow, and the National Pan-Hellenic Council and its member organizations stand ready to support a successful 2010 Census.