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### Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Souvenir

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#### Recommended Citation

"Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Souvenir" (1925). *Notes*. 1.  
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# Souvenir

## Xi Omega Chapter

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority



December 29, 1925

Washington, D. C.

Anna Julia Cooper  
University of Paris

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NO NATION, no race, no individual, in any clime or at any time can lay claim to civilization as its own creation, or invention, or exclusive personal possession. The impulse of humanity toward social progress is like the movement in the currents of a great water system, from myriad sources and under myriad circumstances and conditions, beating onward, ever onward toward its eternity, the Ocean. And though at one time or another there may be little pools or eddies of stagnant "shut ins" or "shut outs" that have lost by the accident of separation the onward sweep of the mighty torrent, these segregated *arriérés*, these units less instructed than their age demands, cannot, must not be disinherited or denied their birthright to civilization, the *de facto* right to claim and appropriate to capacity, as part of the human family, all and several the attainments of human progress. This RIGHT TO GROW is sacred and inviolable, based on the solidarity and undeniable value of humanity itself and linked with the universal value and inalienable rights of all individuals.

Civilization has been likened to a divine torch that passes with the alphabet of self-expression from age to age and from race to race. Phoenicians passed it to Greeks, Greeks to Romans, and Romans to the barbarian forebears of the modern world. But who gave it to the Phoenicians, and who to him and who to him? No one knows. The beginning of things is always shrouded in mystery, and the guess of one is as good as another. The Greek myth has it that Prometheus in the service of men stole the spark from Heaven, paying the penalty for his audacity by deathless torture in an immortality of suffering and pain. The myth does not intimate, however, that Prometheus ever repented of his daring deed. Suffering is not seldom the reward for service:—even so, the privilege of having helped the car of humanity along its toil-



some journey, ever so slightly, is too precious to heed its cost in pain.

Of all the nations that have been torch-bearers in the vanguard of human enlightenment, none, it seems to me, can claim a more liberal spirit, a more cosmopolitan good-will in the *realness* of its fraternity, equality and true liberty, than the one to whom we offer a tribute of gratitude tonight, splendid, great-hearted, suffering, glorious France! In no land or country whether of the past or present time, is the marvelous culture of the nation, so fully and so freely broadcast for the enlightenment and the enjoyment of all peoples and tribes and kindreds that on earth do dwell.

I sat not long since in the *Salle des Etrangers* at the Hotel de Ville, waiting with others to secure the *carte d'identité* required of all foreigners who intend to spend an extended time in Paris. I was struck by the concourse, a motley crowd from Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, South America and the isles of the sea; and as this stream of humanity filed past the different clerks charged with examining their passports, photographs, pedigrees and references, I was amazed when my own number was called to find the individual cost of it all was just 10 francs—a little less than half a dollar! Here truly it may be said:

*"Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur."*

Whosoever will, let him come; let him that is athirst, come! Yea, let him come and partake freely of the knowledge, the inspiration, the achievements and the glory of French civilization and French unparalleled culture and refinement.

And now, if I may be pardoned a personal word on an occasion so provocative of pride and vainglory, I may say honestly and truthfully that my one aim is and has always been, so far as I may, to hold a torch for the children of a group too long exploited and too frequently disparaged in its struggling for the light. I have not made capital of my race, have paid my own way and have never asked a concession or claimed a gratuity. Nor on

the other hand have I ever denied full identification in every handicap and every limitation that the checkered history of our native land imposes. In the simple words of the Master, spoken for another nameless one, my humble career may be summed up to date:—

“She hath done what she could.”

And surely no deeper joy can come to anyone, no richer reward than the pure pleasure of this moment from the expressions of appreciation in this assembly on the part of the community in which the best service of my life has been spent. In the language of our beloved Cicero: Nothing dumb can delight me. I ask no medal in bronze or gold. There is nothing in life really worth striving for but the esteem of just men that follows a sincere effort to serve to the best of one's powers in the advancement of one's generation.

I take at your hands, therefore, this diploma, not as a symbol of cold intellectual success in my achievement at the Sorbonne, but with the warm pulsing heart throbs of a people's satisfaction in my humble endeavors to serve them.

With all my heart, I thank you.



