

Phi Beta Sigma Initiation Ritual

No date

Pre-Initiation Preparations

The Initiation Court and Ceremony should and must be one event of total solemnity, beauty and purpose, for, in it, the investiture of Sigmadom will be bestowed on future brothers.

The organised meetings of duress (physical and mental) are now over. This is the meeting when the Soul, the being, the complete entity of Sigma, along with its secrets, will be infused into new brothers.

The Court, therefore, must have the atmosphere of dignity, peace and great pride. Such an attitude must be borne by all brothers participating in the Initiation Ceremony.

The Blackball

The blackball is a method by which any brother can disapprove of a candidate being made into Sigmadom. It can be done by an "against" vote or casting an object against the person toward whom the negative attitude is directed. It takes three (3) blackballs to deny a candidate membership into Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated. This may be accomplished by either an open or secret ballot.

Because of its nature, the blackball must be cast prior to the Initiation Ceremony, since the acts and words of the ceremony are secret. The casting of a blackball should be done before the probation period (hell or final week), if possible, but the last time for casting the blackball is during the meeting of the chapter immediately preceding the Initiation. The candidate thus blackballed is notified and removed from the "line".

Due to the extreme seriousness of this act, the blackball is not cast for incidental, spurious or petty reasons. Reasoning here is based on the fact that the pledge period must, in some way, influence the character of the man pledging, and though character flaws may have existed in the past, these are no reasons to assume such still is the case, without direct knowledge of the same. However, if it is known a candidate is unworthy, one must bring this to the attention of the fraternity at the earliest possible convenient time, and action be taken accordingly.

Time of the Court

At the time of the Initiation, the chapter meets in the usual manner, and when the time arrives for the Initiation, the meeting dissolves into the Initiation Court . This is done by the chapter president announcing that the hour for the beginning of the Initiation has arrived.

Arrangement of the Court

Physical Necessities

The Initiation Court fundamentally requires two (2) rooms, though more can be utilized for different arrangements of the initiation acts. However, one room must be reserved for the Initiation Court , proper, and the other for an anteroom. A hallway may do for the latter, if that is secluded.

If only one room is available, then it must be arranged so that all activities may well take place.

Placement of the Officers of the Court.

The chief justice and the associate justices shall be seated around the altar (table). The justices shall wear caps and gowns. The scribe and chaplain shall be seated at a table to the right or left of the altar. The sergeant-at-arms shall guard the door. The members shall be seated in such a way as to leave a passage-way from the door to the altar.

The lights shall be turned low, three lighted white candles being placed on the altar.

Initiation Ceremony

Chief Justice, ending the regular meeting: The hour for the beginning of the initiation ceremony has arrived and the officers will take their proper stations and be ready to perform the solemn duties of the court.

The regular meeting dissolves and the court is arranged.

Chief Justice: In accordance with the Constitution of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity and by virtue of the authority vested in me by this body, I declare the Court open for Initiation.

During this time, the candidates, in the charge of an assistant deputy or assistant deputies have both dressed in the following manner: shirt open, trousers rolled up to the knees, blindfolded.

Scribe, arises and addresses the court in the following manner: Most honorable judge, most worthy officers and members of the court, the following named persons ... have been duly pledged and placed on probation by our chapter, and, having met all other

requirements, are waiting in the anteroom to be received into the mysteries of our Fraternity.

Chief Justice, speaking to the Deputy: Bring the candidates forward.

The Deputy retires to the anteroom, and, aided by his assistants, brings the candidates before the court. The room should be partly dark and the Fraternity hymn sung softly.

Chief Justice to the candidates: Cometh thou hither of thy own free will and accord to be initiated into the mysteries and secrets of this fraternity.

Deputy, telling the candidates to answer: Say, I do.

Candidates answer: I do.

Chief Justice to the candidates: Are you willing to take upon yourself the responsibilities, obligations and trusts of this fraternity and be obedient to its laws and regulations?

Deputy, telling the candidates to answer: Say, I am.

Candidates are now led quietly to the Inferno.

Inferno – Examination

Deputy: Seekers of brotherhood, scholarship and service; you have been brought to this historic spot of your own free will. Your moral stability, your fidelity must be tested, and, previous to the journey through death valley and across the dead sea, your body must be subjected to a thorough examination by Dr. Luke; Doctor, take charge of these seekers.

Each candidate is percussed and auscultated. The examiner must use any reasonable method to make it exciting and impressive. But to avoid pain and damage.

Inferno - Crossing the Dead Sea

The candidates are taken one at a time into the place where the inferno has been prepared. The test is started by the deputy or assistant taking the candidate by the arm and gently assisting him on his journey. Walking him around the Inferno as though nothing will happen to him, and in a conversational tone:

Deputy: It was a balmy, clear evening when a weary Greek traveller, such as you started on a

'journey across the Dead Sea;' A Crescent of the Moon, symbolic of the Crescent Club of which you have been a member during the past months *Deputy stops walking here* was hanging lazily in the Eastern sky. The weary Greek stopped to contemplate the task before him. *Now the Deputy becomes harsh and sarcastic.* All Dogs that have traveled across this Sea have chosen what breed of dog they desire to be while on this journey. What breed of

dog are you?

Here the candidate is forced to name the breed of dog he cares to be when the candidate states his decision:

Deputy, loudly: Oh! this is a ... (whatever breed the candidate stated ; other members mock the candidate, repeating the kind of breed named.)

Deputy: All right, "... Dog, no dog walks on his hind legs across the Dead Sea . Get down on your all-fours and start barking like the dog you have chosen to be.

The candidate gets down on hands and knees and is led crawling around the inferno, barking as he goes. Meantime, members are stationed at intervals, and as the "dog" passes, they make loud noises with belts or straps near (but not on) the "dog's" buttocks. After the "dog" passes each member, the deputy leading him says, "bark dog." when he has circled the room once, the "dog" is stopped.

Deputy: Remember, Dog, you don't have to worry about drowning in the Dead Sea because its water contains so much salt and the specific gravity is such that you can't submerge more than half of your body. Let's go, Dog. We must travel .

Bark, Dog!

The dog is led crawling around the inferno again.

Deputy: Stand up , Dog. You have now crossed the Dead Sea .

Inferno – Wandering in Death Valley

Deputy: Seekers, you are now about to descend into the valley of death. You must view the bones of those who were unfit to see the light.

The candidates are carried into a room in which is a table with human bones on it. Chairs, tin cans , etc., should be scattered about the floor in the path of the candidates. The candidates are led around the room a few times, making noises in the meantime. Kneel the candidates before the table. A skull should be on the table so placed that the candidates can see it when the blindfolds are lifted a few seconds. The room should be lighted with a dim red light. Be sure that the candidates see no one when the blindfolds are lifted.

Deputy, behind the skull: Seekers, you are about to behold the bones of the unfit. They knew not the meaning of brotherhood. A poor, weary, persecuted, but worthy brother was in need of assistance, but these dogs passed him by; he was thirsty , he had neither clothes nor shoes to wear, he was hungry and cold, and, yet, these unworthy beings raised not even their voices.

Does such a person deserve to live? Should such a one be called a brother? Would such a man be true to PHI BETA SIGMA everywhere?

All Brothers: No!

Deputy: Their bones crieth out "No!" But you are scholars. You know the meaning of brotherhood and service. Are you willing then to be our brother and serve PHI BETA SIGMA?
The candidates answer.

Deputy: Then, behold!. Behold!, behold!. let not your bones lie on this table.

When the Deputy cries "Behold!", the blindfold should be lifted for a few seconds.

Deputy, test for blood: Are you willing to give a dram of your blood for a serological test as well as a loyalty test for PHI BETA SIGMA?

Your blood and PHI BETA SIGMA's blood must be compatible. Dr. Luke, perform the operation.

During this episode, one draws a dull instrument across the chest of each candidate, while, at the same time, allowing water to trickle down the chest.

Deputy: Doctor, the blood in this is cold. Do you think brotherhood can flow in his veins?

Dr. Luke: It shall be tested.

The Examiner must go thru the process of collecting the blood and treating the wound, using the necessary words and technique.

Deputy, drinking the blood: Seekers, do you drink water? Pause for an answer. Tea?, Coffee?, Wine?, or anything strong as a beverage? In this cup is the blood of the Fraternity. Unless you

partake of their blood , you are not fit to know them. Drink, you seekers.

Gives the vessels of salt water to the candidates.

Deputy: Seekers, are you willing to give your time, energy, thought, and service to PHI BETA SIGMA for the uplift of mankind?

Candidates are told to answer.

Deputy: Then, you must eat worms of the earth as a test of service.

Give spaghetti.

Inferno – Climbing the Mountains

Deputy: Dog , you have come a long journey and have reached the sacred foothills of Mount Olympus in Northeast Greece , where the greater Gods were supposed to live under their ruler, Zeus. It was, in these mountains that one of our founding brothers obtained the bones of an old Greek, brought them back and they have been ground into bone-dust , You have the sacred privilege of now receiving your traditional portion which makes you a Noble Greek of the SIGMA clan. Open your mouth, Dog.

Candidate is given about 1 teaspoonful of epsom salts, or substitute - bone dust.

Inferno – Observing the Wonders of the Mountain

Now each candidate is led to the top of an inclined plane three times; - plank of wood upon chair, or otherwise, -- each time, the candidate is lifted down and carried around the room, and then back up the plank, making it appear that he is climbing. One must be careful not to do any bodily harm; do this about five times. Stop at the top and the chief justice shall state:

Chief Justice: Now, you are about to review the wonders of the mountain.

Deputy: Fellow Greek, with your mind's eye you are privileged to observe the wonder of Mt. Olympus, where Ares, the Greek God of War resided; the titan, Prometheus, stole fire from heaven and taught men its use, for which act, Zeus punished him by chaining him to the very rock on which you stand.

But SIGMA has outlawed the warring Greeks and is now under the protection of Pallas Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, Arts and Industries. Are you willing to give your time, energy, thought and service to PHI BETA SIGMA? What is your answer?

Candidate answers Yes or No.

Each candidate is then unblindfolded. When the candidate views PHI BETA SIGMA in bright letters, either reflected thru a lighted book, or on a banner, or on other lighted fraternity paraphernalia.

The blindfold is then replaced.

Dr. Luke: Take these seekers PHI BETA SIGMAS.

All hum the fraternity hymn. The assistant deputies and Dr. Luke take a piece of ice or dull instrument and go through the process of carving PHI BETA SIGMA on the breast of each of the candidates.

Deputy: Dr. Luke, draw some of this embryo Greek's blood by carving Sigma above his heart.

Since branding is illegal, by force, a piece of ice or any dull instrument is used the greek letter sigma outline on candidate's chest. Then, place a piece of adhesive tape over the spot.

Deputy: Fellow Greek, SIGMA has been written on your breast; would that it could be written on your heart. Ah! It must be! It must be!

Snatch off the adhesive tape.

Deputy: SIGMA did not come off. It can not come off. It is there to stay. It is upon your heart and there it will remain until your heart ceases to throb. Dr. Luke, he has stood the test. Return him to the anteroom to await the bidding of the court .

The candidate is returned to the anteroom, allowed to dress, but remains blindfolded, awaiting the initiation of all the other candidates. Then the Deputy and his assistants take

all candidates before the Court, standing them in front of chairs arranged before the altar.

Deputy: Most worthy Chief Justice and members of the Court: The candidates have stood the test, and are now ready to receive the instructions of the Court.

Chief Justice: Candidate(s), be seated.

The Chief Justice rises and administers the oath of membership to the candidates: the candidates kneel around the altar and place their hands on the Holy Bible and repeat the oath with the Chief Justice:

Chief Justice: Repeat after me: In the Presence of Almighty God and members of the Phi Beta Sigma fraternity, I do solemnly swear and affirm that I will never divulge any secret, betray any trust, or bring reproach upon the name and honor of the Fraternity, by committing any unworthy deed or act, so help me God.

Chief Justice: Brother Chaplain, will you lead us in prayer?

Let the candidates remain in the same kneeling position.

Chaplain: O Almighty and Eternal God,

Chief Justice: Brother Deputy, will you and your assistants help the neophytes to rise in SIGMA and remove the blindfolds. We advise the brothers to look down at the floor for a few minutes until their eyes become accustomed to the lights.

Chief Justice rises, and in a speech explains the Basic principles of the fraternity:

Brotherhood Service and Scholarship: Sirs, you have been chosen from the multitude for honor in the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity. Your activities, your personal conduct, your Scholarship have been under observation of the Sigma Men, who have judged you worthy to walk in our midst.

The ideals of our fraternity have been crystallized into three principles:

Brotherhood , Service and Scholarship and these are summed up and expressed in our motto: "Culture For Service and Service For Humanity". Ours is a real Brotherhood with tested abiding friendship, a brotherhood that calls for and gladly gives its best in the hour of need.

It is a spiritual fellowship that binds us in all activities along life's narrow pathway. Upon it rests the social welfare of each and every brother.

Service is the keystone of all activities, the source of all joy, the basis of all happiness, and the foundation of love from which all mankind may drink. We wish to impress upon all that the fruitful life is one which is spent for the blessing of others. You begin to serve each other in the confines of the court, and as you go forth into the world, you are to be constantly on the alert for such opportunities as will bring you into helpful relationship with your fellow men. And, thus breathing the atmosphere of mutual consideration, you will soon begin yourself to pass on to others the ideals of service.

As an association of progressive men seeking to realize the higher ideals of life, Scholarship is esteemed most highly among us as a necessary factor in the development of a keen

precept and its sound judgment. Scholarship expresses itself not merely into acquirement of superior character. The ideal of scholarship should ever be kept uppermost in your mind so that you may be a beacon light among men, pointing out to them the truth, the light, the way.

These exercises which you are passing through were not provided for the entertainment of those who are to be your brothers, but to impress upon you the seriousness of your new relationship. You must keep ever burning on your heart the Essence of this Initiation and ever remember that we are bound together by a triple cord of love in Brotherhood, Service and Scholarship.

Chief Justice to First Associate Justice: Brother, interpret to our newly formed brothers the nature of the Fraternity Flower - The Carnation.

1st Associate Justice: Flowers fill unconsciously an important place in the world of man, their beauty, their fragrance and brightness, have borne many a message of consolation and cheer. Also, it must be remembered that flowers have been responsible for many a kinder thought, a lightened heart and renewed courage.

The carnation, the most popular flower because of its long life, its fragrance and beauty, its continued blossoming, has been chosen the flower of the Phi Beta Sigma fraternity. This flower was very timely chosen, in that, this flower depicts the very atmosphere of this fraternity; first, it is a January flower, indeed very significant, in that the fraternity was organized in January. The carnation's significance is "fellowship". This organization was founded with the great ideals of linking us together in our great unbreakable bond of fellowship that we may feel the common pulsation of our motto, "Culture for Service and Service for Humanity".

The flower harmonizes greatly with the idea of our fraternity: first its long life which signifies brotherhood. Ever keep before your mind's eye, "Am I my brother's keeper?".

Second, its fragrance and beauty signify scholarship.

Truly, the world can say: "glory all around us shine." What greater beauty hath man being in harmony with the world?

Third, its long continuing blossoming vividly portraying the meaning of service for humanity.

Chief Justice to Scribe: Brother, interpret for our neophytes the nature of the fellowship grip.

Scribe: Come forward, brother ... (or brothers, if there are more than one).

All members of the chapter and visiting brothers join in exercising the fellowship grip with the neophytes.

Chief Justice to 2nd Associate Justice: Brother, explain to our brothers the meaning of the Name of the Fraternity.

2nd Associate Justice: The Greek letters making up the name of the fraternity have the following meaning: PHI is for Brotherhood; BETA is for service; and SIGMA is for

Scholarship. These words, Brotherhood, Service and Scholarship express the three ideals or principles at the Fraternity and they are further, also, summed up and expressed again in the

Motto: "Culture for Service and Service for Humanity." The true words are Phile, Boule , and Schole.

Chief Justice to First Associate Justice: Brother, give to our new brothers the meaning of the figures on the Great Seal.

1st Associate Justice: The symbolism of the figures on the face of the Seal is as follows: the handclasp represents the ideal of Brotherhood; the axe with the binding helms represents the ideal of Service; the book represents the ideal of Scholarship; the star represents the three founders; the dove represents the fraternity as a messenger of peace and goodwill to all mankind. The Seal was designed by brother W.E. Tibbs in 1914.

Chief Justice to 2nd Associate Justice: Brother explain to our neophytes the correct method of displaying the fraternity badge or fraternity pin.

2nd Associate Justice: The Fraternity Badge, which is commonly called the 'Frat Pin' is held as a sacred emblem of the Fraternity and should never be worn improperly. It should be worn on the shirt, vest or sweater. It should never be worn improperly as on the lapel of the coat or other outer garment unless it is a sweater. Brother Scribe: You will now pin the Fraternity

Badge on the neophyte Brother(s).

Note: the badge is worn over the apex of the heart.

Chief Justice to Deputy: Brother, Please give to our neophytes the Fraternity Knock, and tell them how they can well remember it. Also, if there has been given without the Password, otherwise known as the Distress Signal, enlighten them on its nature, also.

Deputy:

Chief Justice to First Associate Justice: Brother. Please explain the Fraternity Motto to Our newly formed Brothers.

1st Associate Justice: Our motto is "Culture for Service and Service for Humanity" this explains Sigma's desire for a high scholastic plane since we acquire knowledge to help others as well as ourselves.

Chief Justice to 2nd Associate Justice: Brother. Explain to our new Brothers the Fraternity Colors and their meanings.

2nd Associate Justice: The Fraternity Colors are Blue and White. Blue for truth and White for purity; signifying a loyal SIGMA will always remain true to the Fraternity's Ideals and maintain purity of character in order not to bring reproach upon its name and honor, by committing any unworthy deed or act.

Chief Justice: Brothers. We now review a brief design of Phi Beta Sigma and its method of operation. On Saturday, October 8, 1913,

A. Langston Taylor presented to Leonard F. Morse the proposition of establishing a new fraternity at Howard University .

Charles T. Brown, another student at the University, was invited to aid in the movement. Conferences leading to the actual forming of the new fraternity were held on the campus. These three men wanted to plan well for this new organization in order to insure its long life.

Finally, after much deliberation, the permanent organization was formed on January 9, 1914. This date is considered the "founders' Day" of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity. These men, along with nine others chose the name PHI BETA SIGMA for established the Mother Chapter, Alpha Chapter, of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity.

The Board of Deans, Howard University , recognized the new Fraternity on april 15, 1914 , and the following week, the student publication, The University Reporter, announced the organization of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity.

A Fraternity may well be described and viewed as the bringing together of men for t he uplift, betterment, execution and continuance of manly ideas ,which will enhance the character, motives and outlook of the persons involved, the community and society which they serve, and the nation of which they are a Part.

The Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity is a social Fraternity which has a proud, virile and honest past, and a reputation for acquiring and having the best of men. Its form is buttressed upon the tenets of Brotherhood, Service and Scholarship, those everlasting principles of manhood and reverence which promote the human being and provide the essential justification for life. We believe in all that Phi Beta represents and will herald her throughout the world.

The Fraternity has the following hierarchy of structure, National Office, Regional Offices, State Offices and Local Offices.

By your membership, you are obliged to obey the rules and regulations of the Fraternity and chapter, to work for its betterment and continuance, and to support it with your all.

We wish to congratulate you on your achievement and sincerely and fraternally welcome you to Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

The Court will be formally closed after the distribution of materials, remarks by the neophytes and/or chapter members, and the singing of the Fraternity Hymn.

Chief Justice: I now declare this Initiation Court adjourned.

[Home](#)