



## In Search of Sisterhood: Delta Sigma Theta and the Challenge of the Black Sorority Movement

By Paula J. Giddings

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This history of the largest black women's organization in the United States is not only the story of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (DST), but also tells of the increasing involvement of black women in the political, social, and economic affairs of America. Founded at a time when liberal arts education was widely seen as either futile, dangerous, or impractical for blacks, especially women, DST is, in Giddings's words, a "compelling reflection of black women's aspirations for themselves and for society."

Giddings notes that unlike other organizations with racial goals, Delta Sigma Theta was created to change and benefit individuals rather than society. As a sorority, it was formed to bring women together as sisters, but at the same time to address the divisive, often class-related issues confronting black women in our society. There is, in Giddings's eyes, a tension between these goals that makes Delta Sigma Theta a fascinating microcosm of the struggles of black women and their organizations.

DST members have included Mary McLeod Bethune, Mary Church Terrell, Margaret Murray Washington, Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, and, on the cultural side, Leontyne Price, Lena Horne, Ruby Dee, Judith Jamison, and Roberta Flack. *In Search of Sisterhood* is full of compelling, fascinating anecdotes told by the Deltas themselves, and illustrated with rare early photographs of the Delta women.

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### **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Marking the 75th anniversary of the largest black women's organization in the United States, this history of the college-based movement is an account filled with incidents of the emergence of the Deltas as a force in our national life. Giddings ( *When and Where I Enter* ), a graduate of Howard University, the birthplace of the movement, acknowledges the ambivalence that membership causes some, but focuses on the strengths of the sorority whose members typically remain active after college years. A sense of racial obligation permeates the sorority, which comprises women who are largely professional and upper-class, and who see their role as agents of change in a variety of social and political issues. Included among recent luminaries are Barbara Jordan, congresswoman from Texas, and, from the arts, Lena Horne, Leontyne Price and Ruby Dee. Photos not seen by PW.

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### **About the Author**

Paula J. Giddings is the Elizabeth A. Woodson 1922 Professor in Afro-American Studies at Smith College and the author of *When and Where I Enter* and *In Search of Sisterhood*.

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#### **Laurie Riley:**

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