



Before The Divine 9

*Generations of Black
Fellowship,
Leadership, and
Service*



A VISUAL ESSAY

SLIDE 01



& D. of T. June 21st 1914 L.A. Cal.



Why Black Communities Organized

Slavery and racial discrimination limited Black people's access to education, employment, and financial support. In response, Black men and women established organizations that pooled resources, cared for sick members, and helped families cover burial expenses.

These groups also brought people together for friendship, celebrations, and community service. Members elected leaders and managed the organizations themselves. Through this work, Black communities created places to belong and systems of support that families could turn to during difficult times.





Prince Hall Freemasonry

Roots in 1775 | Boston, Massachusetts

In 1775, Prince Hall and fourteen other Black men joined Freemasonry through a British military lodge. A few years later, they started African Lodge, which received its official charter from the Grand Lodge of England in 1784.

These men helped lay the foundation for a growing network of Black Masonic lodges. Members came together, chose their own leaders, and supported people in their communities. At a time when slavery and racism limited Black people's opportunities, these lodges gave Black men a place to build, lead, and serve.



SLIDE 03



BROTHER PRINCE HALL
WARRANTEE WORSHIPFUL MASTER, AFRICAN LODGE 459 A. L. 5784, A. D. 1784
FOUNDER OF COLORED FRATERNITY OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS.



Grand United Order of Odd Fellows

1843 | New York City

Black members of New York's Philomathean Institute were turned away by the American Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Peter Ogden, a Black mariner, helped them get a charter from the Grand United Order in England. The first American lodge opened in 1843.

As the organization grew, members collected money to help one another, supported families in need, and chose their own leaders. Women also formed the Households of Ruth. Together, these groups gave members a way to build friendships and help each other through sickness, hardship, and loss.





1912



United Brothers Of Friendship

1861 | Louisville, Kentucky

In 1861, Marshall Taylor, William N. Hazelton, and other Black organizers started the United Brothers of Friendship in Louisville. The organization began during the Civil War and grew into a larger network of Black members and local chapters.

Black women also formed the Sisters of the Mysterious Ten, which became part of the order. Members came together to support one another, help families in need, and take on leadership roles. Both organizations played an important part in strengthening Black communities.



SLIDE 05



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The Order of St. Luke

Origins in 1867 | Baltimore, Maryland

Mary Prout, a formerly enslaved woman, founded the United Order of St. Luke to provide burial assistance for Black women. Men could also join.

In 1899, Maggie Lena Walker became a leader in the organization. She used her position to help create more economic opportunities for Black people. Mary Prout and Maggie Lena Walker show us how Black women helped build organizations that cared for their communities and opened doors for others.





Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World

1898 | Cincinnati, Ohio

Arthur James Riggs, a Pullman porter, and Benjamin Franklin Howard started the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World in 1898. The organization gave Black men a place to come together, serve others, and support their communities.

In 1902, Emma Virginia Kelley started the Daughters of the Elks in Norfolk, Virginia. The women's organization later became officially connected to the order. Together, the Black Elks and Daughters of the Elks built community, supported families, and created opportunities for leadership.

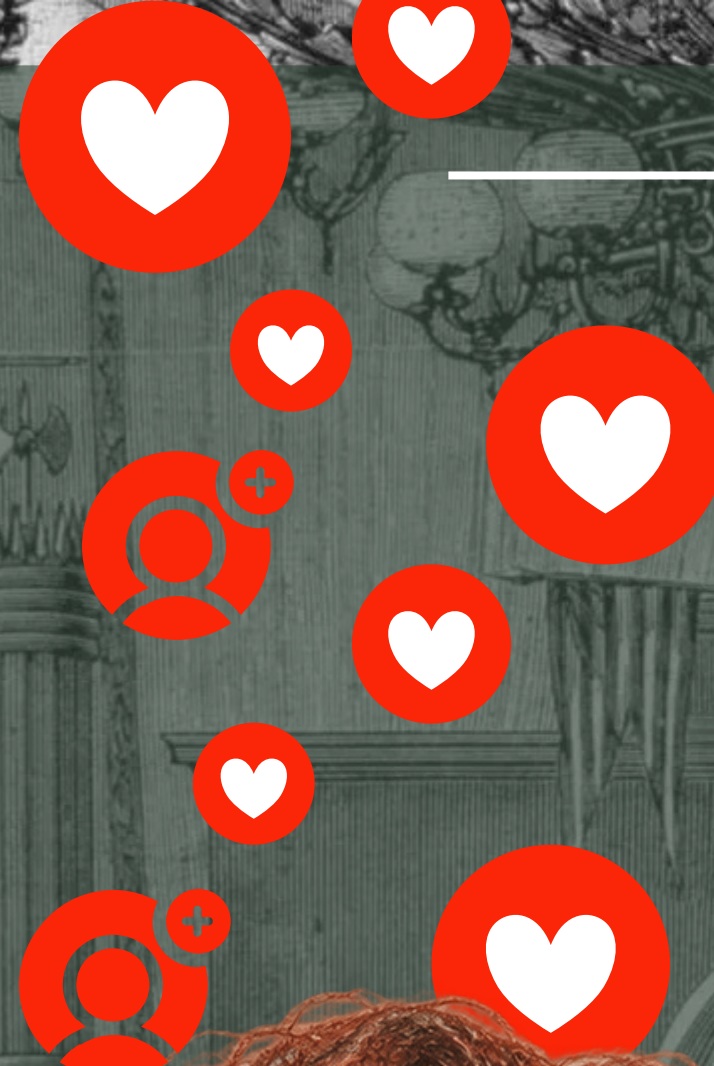


Black Organizing Did Not Begin on Campus

Black men and women have built organizations that bring people together through fellowship, leadership, and service. Before the founding of the Divine Nine, fraternal orders were raising money, caring for sick members, supporting families, and creating opportunities to lead.

Recognizing these earlier organizations alongside the Divine Nine gives us a fuller understanding of Black community life. Each organization has its own history and contributions. Together, these histories reflect generations of commitment to supporting Black communities and creating opportunities for others.





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