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In Search of Sisterhood

Paula J. Giddings

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This history of the largest block 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 block 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 some 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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