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## ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA RETURNS TO ATLANTA WHERE SORORITY MADE HISTORIC PURCHASE OF KING'S BIRTH HOME

Purchase marked largest contribution made by African-American organization

Chicago, Illinois – May 16, 2011 – When Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority returns to Atlanta for its Leadership Conference from July 13-17, the visit will provide an opportunity for the Sorority to reflect on one of its historic decisions: the purchase of Dr. Martin Luther King's birth home.

According to international president, Attorney Carolyn House Stewart, the home was purchased for \$20,000 by the Sorority in 1972, and donated to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, of which his widow, Coretta Scott King was president. The purchase mirrored AKA's resolve to preserve the memory of her husband and his work in the Civil Rights movement. It was also a way of paying tribute to Mrs. King, who was also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

At the time, the gift marked the largest donation made by an African-American organization.

Mattelia B. Grays, who was AKA's international president at the time of the purchase said, "Alpha Kappa Alpha bought the home because we knew the birthplace for a man of his stature and humanity would have to be memorialized. Alpha Kappa Alpha wanted to play a lead in honoring and preserving his legacy."

Grays said that no other group had introduced the idea – nor thought about it – until Alpha Kappa Alpha did. She said the Sorority was inspired by the bigger mission to champion one of the first memorials to Dr. King. "Against the historic symbolism that the home represented, it was something we had to do," said Grays.

The presentation of the check was made at the Sorority's 45<sup>th</sup> international conference that was held in Denver during the summer of 1972. According to Alpha Kappa Alpha's records, the gift was "earmarked to purchase the King birth home...and allowed for the home to be restored and refurbished to reflect the time when the King family lived there."

In an August 28, 1972 letter to the Sorority -- and speaking on behalf of the board and trustees of the King Center -- Mrs. King expressed her "heartfelt gratitude."

She hailed the gift as “the largest one that we have received from any Black, or predominantly Black organization.”

While the home has undergone ownership changes, Alpha Kappa Alpha’s historic contribution remains an indelible part of the King Family’s history. The Sorority’s name is prominently inscribed on a plaque at the home for the world to see.

Said President Stewart, “Alpha Kappa Alpha exhibited vision and leadership in purchasing Dr. King’s home. It represents the Sorority’s ultimate commitment to preserving this home through time immemorial.”

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