



# *Seasons of Sisterhood*

Meditations Inspired by the  
Wit and Wisdom of the Women of  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

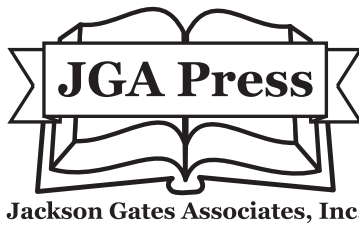
Cynthia F. Reaves

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*Editorial Note:* In this work, inspiration has been drawn from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated members at various stages of their advancement from member to officer within the organization. While a particular quote may have originated either before, during or after a term of service, for reference purposes and out of respect, the member will be referred to by the highest officer ranking held in the organization, despite the fact that the inspirational quotation has been drawn from another period of time in the life of the member. The year following the name of the quoted member is the year from which the quotation is derived.

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For my Mother,

*Dolores LaVerne Reaves*

XI Chapter, 1954

The best Mom in the whole world!

Thank you for introducing me to the women  
of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority –  
my life has been forever enriched!

For ages men have written books and papers on the mysteries, philosophies and vicissitudes of life. I wonder how many of these writers sense the beauty of it, for with all these inevitable and puzzling concurrences there is a real and persistent element of beauty in life. Ah! Life is a part of nature and like nature has its spring, summer, autumn and winter. Nor would we have it different.

RUHAMA E. MOODY  
*Member, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority*  
1933

## *Seasons of Sisterhood*

We are born, we live, we depart and are reborn into life ever after... these are the seasons of life.

The seasons through which sorority sisters move can mirror the seasons of life as well as the seasons of the year. There are comforting and familiar parallels to the cycle of life seasons that can be drawn to the cycle that a sorority moves through during its seasons of service. Upon completing a cycle of seasons, the sorority can experience a rebirth as the members rededicate themselves to commence the next cycle of growth, development and service. The meditations contained in *Seasons of Sisterhood* carry the reader through the parallels which are found in the seasons of life, seasons of the year and seasons of sisterhood.

Spring represents our early years in life and as a new sister. This period is reflected through essays in *New Beginnings and Possibilities*. All is exciting and new to us during this time and our only limits are those we place upon ourselves. With time, we mature into the Summer season of adulthood and, in a parallel to our time developing into established sisters, we stand in the warmth of the *Radiance and Accomplishment* that is characteristic of women in the most productive years of life. As the years pass, we enter the Autumn of our days, a time to strengthen family traditions. For our sisterhood, it is during this season that we focus on *Traditions and Preparations for the Future* through which we memorialize that which is the best in our sisterhood for future generations to follow. In life we typically work to establish and nurture family traditions which serve to connect our family members one to another.

Finally, in the Winter of life, we recall, with fondness, the joys of a life well-spent and embrace the prospect of life everlasting with our Creator. As a sisterhood, we spend this final season in *Reflections and Celebrations* of time spent with sisters and in service. In the end, the sisterhood enjoys a rebirth through rededication as it enters into a new cycle of *Seasons of Sisterhood*.

*Seasons of Sisterhood* draws its inspiration from the wit and wisdom of the women who were the founders and earliest members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the oldest Greek sorority established by African American women. The themes are based upon the life events recounted by these women relating to the activities of home life, life in the sisterhood and world events. I was so proud of the vision of these women that it became my strong desire to share their words as inspiration for others. Indeed, so forward thinking were these women that their thoughts still carry significant meaning with respect to the issues facing our community today. The words are pearls of wisdom which can guide us and inform our family, social and lifestyle decisions today. Their sentiments show us how far we have progressed as a people and how much remains to be accomplished as part of our legacy as a community in preparation for future generations.

The meditations in *Seasons of Sisterhood* are arranged according to the seasons of life and sisterhood and speak to the transitions through which we pass as we grow, evolve and face the challenges set before us. Each season stands as a separate chapter of meditations which can be referenced again and again. As in life, we may find ourselves in circumstances in which the inspiration from one season or another has meaning to us. In this way, the words of our sisters will remain always available to us as inspiration through challenging times.

*Seasons of Sisterhood* celebrates the cycle of new beginnings, growth, rededication and renewal of sisters and their sisterhood. As one season fades into the next, the relationships deepen and the legacy of service continues forward...

CYNTHIA F. REAVES  
*Detroit, Michigan*

# *Seasons of Sisterhood*

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... I believe that we college women ought to have a great deal to say about national affairs as they affect women in general and as they affect colored women in particular.

LUCY DIGGS SLOWE, *Founder, 1933*



*The World*

We do not live in isolation. No matter where we find ourselves, or our sisters on this globe, we are not alone. As citizens of the world, we must take the initiative to develop and strengthen relationships with peoples of other countries and cultures. We must be informed about worldly events because we owe it to ourselves and our community to insure that our leaders act responsibly on behalf of our nation with respect to our relationships to peoples across the globe. We cannot allow the ignorance of a particular culture to divert our country down the wrong path because our children will likely be the first called into service if hostilities erupt. We owe it to them to make sure that their service furthers a cause which is just and a purpose which is honorable. For this reason, we must know as much or more than those who seek to lead us on international issues. We must be satisfied that governmental action is appropriate and, if it is not, as leaders in our communities, we must voice our concerns and move our elected officials onto the correct path. On behalf of the oppressed in other lands, we must speak when they are silenced. We must hold not only their leaders but our leaders accountable for their treatment. We have the means to do so, we have the courage, and so it must be done!

***I will speak when others have been silenced.***

For me there is no sorority but Alpha Kappa Alpha, and I consider it one of the rarest privileges of my life to be a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha.

ZAFELLA R. TURNER, *Member, 1937*



Pride

It is wonderful to be a member of an organization which gives you a great sense of pride. Have you considered that the pride that you have in your affiliation is shared by your sisters because of YOUR participation in our sisterhood? We are a greater sisterhood, we are more effective, we have a greater sense of community because of *you*, dear sister! Remember that you have special value to our sisterhood. Never doubt that! No organization can be greater than the sum of its parts. Our sisterhood is noteworthy because its members engage in activities and services which are admirable. That service reflects upon our organization, but such a reflection would be impossible without the support and work of its members. For this reason, we should be quick to remember that what is great, what is a privilege about our sisterhood is that WE are sisters. Our combination is unstoppable and together we can accomplish much. Share this message with a sister today and remind her of how important she is to our sisterhood's success. Tell her that the privilege of our sisterhood includes your relationship to her.

***Today, dear sister, you need to hear from me that my sisterhood relationship with you is a privilege!***

In all potent characters, there is an intangible, a spiritual quality that is imparted unwittingly to those with whom they come in contact. It permeates conversation, electrifies group gatherings, intensifies consciousness.

GLADYS L. WILSON, *Member, 1934*



## Charisma

From time to time we have an opportunity to join the company of people who, by their acts and words, make us want to be better people, better servants and better sisters. How we react to such people provides insight into our character. Do we gravitate towards these people with the confidence that we will become a better person through our association with them? Do we want to share our talents to help them further their goals on behalf of the sisterhood? Or, do we shy away cursing their spirit and magnetism, secretly hoping for their failure? People who are possessed with an intangible spiritual quality seem immune to such hatred because, at their core, they operate with the highest of intentions and the best of motives. When we realize this, we understand that no act to undermine them will succeed because the truth of their actions cannot be denied or derailed. Indeed, their potency is enhanced because they are transparent in their actions and the path that they lay out is clear. This clarity attracts same-minded individuals and allows the group to rally toward a common goal.

***I am enriched by my association with people  
of high character and spiritual quality  
and they are enriched by me!***

I give them hope – I give them inspiration.

NORMA E. BOYD, *Founder*



Hope

I love you, my dear sisters! I look upon our sisterhood and pride swells within my heart and tears form in my eyes. This is because I love the idea of what we, as a sisterhood, represent to each other and the communities we serve! You may not know this, but I look at you, dear sister, as *my* source of inspiration. The way that you carry yourself with pride, the way that you show compassion for the least of our brothers and sisters, the way that you conduct your affairs and the business of our sisterhood. It makes me want to yell from the highest of mountaintops that we have arrived! We are the dreams of our foremothers! We are the vision of our sisterhood's founders – strong and accomplished college-educated women with care for our communities and service in our hearts. I am honored to find myself in your company my dear sisters, and I am ashamed that I do not tell you of my love and admiration for you more often. As you move through your day, you are probably unaware of the fact that I look to you for inspiration. I note how you chart your course through dangerous waters with grace, style and verve and... I am in awe... and...

... I am not alone!

***You inspire me!***

Prayer begins where human capacity ends.

MARIAN ANDERSON, *Honorary Member*



The power of prayer is that undefined variable that fills the space between your goal and your work towards obtaining that goal. Prayer fills and occupies the divide, expanding or contracting as necessary to fill the void. You have an obligation to develop your skills and continually progress. In doing this, you will be able to undertake greater and more ambitious projects. You will be able to transcend to greater heights. However, underpinning any endeavor is your prayer for support, strength and insight to succeed. Whether stated or not, prayer is the subtext to our lives, often the unstated thought that peacefully insinuates itself into our daily activities. Prayer is an undercurrent which is made manifest after we have done all that we can do, borne all that we can bear, and consciously surrendered our fate to the Creator for deliverance. Prayer extends our figurative grasp toward our goal and reenergizes our spirit so that we can complete our tasks. Prayer carries us across the finish line when everything else would have us surrender in defeat.

*Prayer*

***With the power of prayer,  
my capacity is without limit!***

Faith couples one with the Infinite.

MILLIE E. HALE, II, *Member, 1927*



When you have faith, you harness your good intentions, desires and hopes to a force which is greater than you. This force has been brought forward from years gone by and passes through you into the future. It is this foundation, built on faith, that helps us to succeed in everyday challenges. It is faith that keeps us strong in defeat with the knowledge that where we struggle, others who follow us will succeed. Our ancestors had faith that the conditions that they lived in would soon be replaced with better opportunities for us. We have faith that the seeds we plant today will bring forth a robust harvest for those who follow us. Faith feeds the garden in which we plant our dreams for the future as did those who came before us. As in any garden, we know its full beauty will take many seasons to develop, and while we may enjoy the benefits of the garden as it grows over the years, we know that we are only temporary caretakers for others who follow – others we hope will see the garden in its full beauty. Some of the buds of our dreams bloom and are fulfilled during our lifetime, but other dreams require tending and nourishment by those who follow in our footsteps. Our faith tells us that our seeds will be well tended by those yet to come, and it is this faith in what the future holds that propels us forward and couples our being with the infinite beyond.

*Faith*

*My faith joins me with the past,  
present and future.*

As you look at her nose, your mind goes back to Egyptian civilization with its art and superior culture. With such an inheritance, she must appreciate the artistic and the beautiful.

PAULINE REDMOND, *Member, 1939*



Sisters, no one needs to tell us how beautiful we are! The skin which envelopes us, in deepening shades of brown, radiates warmth and comfort. From head to toe we exude grace, and timeless beauty. Our soulful eyes, in multiple hues, express generations of emotion spanning back to the very beginning of humankind. What we have known about our beauty has only recently been celebrated by society. Magazines now hail our sisters as “the most beautiful” people in the world. Modern culture now “values” women who inject their bodies with poisons as they mimic the beauty which is ours naturally by divine right. In the meantime, while they have embraced our beauty, we have grown strong. We have bided our time, educating our youth, making strides in the advancement of our community, and doing that which was required to uplift the social stature of our race. We have preached, upon seemingly deaf ears, that a person should be measured, not by external factors, but by the content of their character. Others have tried to brainwash us to believe, under the cruel lash of history, that we are the “darker” brothers and sisters, unworthy of respect, love or admiration. Langston Hughes saw our beauty, we saw our beauty, and today, as we sit at the table of America, they see how beautiful we are...

*Beauty*

***We, too, are America... and we are beautiful!***

Definitions belong to the definers, not the defined.

TONI MORRISON, *Member*



Leadership

My sister, *we* define that which is to be loved and cherished among women! Others look to us with our education, confidence and style and they want to be us. They imitate us, hoping to grasp some of the dazzle that naturally permeates from our being. We know this because we refuse to be defined by the standards and stereotypes of others. We define the standard by which we choose to live our lives. In doing this, we hold ourselves and everything we do to a greater standard of excellence than our definers could ever imagine. My sisters, do not subscribe to the stereotypes that others seek to burden you with as you move through your life. When someone tries to define us, they seek to tell us how to behave, what we should or should not do and how we should act. In a sense, they are putting us in a box. They are trying to clip our wings so that we cannot fly. We cannot allow this to happen. Each of us deserves to act and behave in a way that makes us happy and allows us to accomplish the things that are important to us in life. Moreover, we know that we left that box behind long ago. We moved beyond the limitations that others imposed upon us in favor of a standard of excellence that we define and to which others hold themselves accountable. Remember this – we set the standard – always!

***I set the standard which others follow!***



The 350 years of indoctrination which Negroes have received in the American culture has built up very strong beliefs that the goal toward which we should reach is the ability to perform exactly like the majority group, and that the real sign of success for a Negro is acceptance by that group.... Though thoroughly understandable, such beliefs are nevertheless, in my opinion, regrettable.

MARJORIE H. PARKER,  
*15<sup>th</sup> International President, 1961*



We cannot live our lives to the fullest and we cannot maximize the gifts given to us by the grace of our Father if we spend our time working to fulfill the dreams and expectations of others. We must be willing to gather the courage and strength of character which is necessary to step out ON faith and IN faith to identify who we are and what we have to offer the world. Clearly, as citizens of the world, we can share with other groups in a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas which leave both groups enlightened. However, we cannot spend our time and talents in pursuit of acceptance by groups who, in the end, may never be willing or able to fully accept what we have to offer this world as a community. So, we must build upon our own accomplishments, creating a foundation based upon our genius and strengths with an appreciation for the contributions of other peoples, but with the knowledge that their acceptance of us does not define our success.

*Faith*

***I am not defined by the approval of others.  
I am enough.***

The fortunes of the Negro and other minorities will go up or down in proportion to the fortunes of people in India and China, in Africa and the South Pacific are wrought. We can never again live in a vacuum, or develop a democratic way of life in isolation.

BEULAH T. WHITBY,  
*11<sup>th</sup> International President, 1944*



As we progress with the advent of new technologies and engineering innovations which make our lives easier, we look to other countries moving into the next stages of their socio-economic development. Surveying the globe, we see peasants become farmers, farmers become factory workers and factory workers yearning for new opportunities. In some cases, these people live in countries which do not respect the integrity of the individual; in essence, where to speak one's mind could be a death sentence. Can you imagine this? As leaders in a country which leads the world, we must not forget that there are others, brothers and sisters all, who seek freedom. These people yearn for the rights which we take for granted. We must assume the obligation to strive for change not only within our country, but outside of our country for those sisters and brothers we regard as part of our extended family. Others spoke for us; it is our turn to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves in safety. Their freedom is our freedom!

*The World*

***Count your blessings – for they are many!***

Americans cannot truly prosper unless every American is permitted to share in the prosperity. We cannot be content... if some fraction of our people... is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure.

JULIA BROGDON PURNELL,  
*16<sup>th</sup> International President, 1963*



During an economic recession, there are some who will preach a philosophy of “rationalized selfishness” proclaiming that those who have achieved great financial success owe nothing to those who are struggling. Those who follow this philosophy declare that programs which support the poor and weak have no place in a society which rewards individual accomplishment. Do not be deluded by these beliefs so as to cloud your vision of what is true and what is right. What is true is that not one of us can advance with success without the efforts and contributions of the entire community. We all depend upon the common good of our collective effort to progress, as manifest through the establishment of services through our centralized government. In the same way, pooling our resources through our government by way of tax payments and assisting those of us in need of support can be no less patriotic. What is right is that we must all prosper for our country to survive. We must recognize that we are dependent upon each other for the success of the whole, this includes caring for our homeless, our hungry and our sick. Until we all feel a sense of security about our future, none of us is secure.

Community

***We prosper or perish together –  
not alone, but together.***

This woman has met life squarely. She has no fear. She is mellowed with living.

PAULINE REDMOND, *Member, 1939*



Death is a silent traveler that we all carry with us. For some, death is the beginning of a new and wonderful adventure to return to the loving arms of our Creator and to those lost long ago. For others, death is an end onto itself, the final chapter of a life well-lived. Death can be a release from pain and sorrow, a friend stepping forth mercifully to deliver us to the next stop on our journey. A common theme in all of these visions is that of transformation. Death transforms us and those around us are transformed by death. If one sees death as an end and an opportunity to transcend and move on, then we can see how death infiltrates all aspects of our lives. The fragrant flowers that bloom for us in the summer, die in the fall, only to be buried under a winter blanket and reborn in spring. Our sadness at their departure, is lessened by the knowledge that we will see them again. Because of its transitional nature, we should not fear Death. Indeed, we have a chance to grow accustomed to its inevitability as we move through our daily lives. If we think of Death as transformative, we can begin to embrace the transcendent opportunity that it presents for those we love who have gone before us, allowing us to focus on sweet memories rather than our despair in loss.

*Transitions!*

***Transform your thoughts about Death  
and lose your fear.***

Success to you, Sorors, and happy days.

LAURA KNIGHT TURNER, *Member, 1932*



At the end of the day, I have a simple wish for my sisters. I wish you success in all of your endeavors. I hope that your challenges are few and that the ones that our Father places in your path will be accompanied by the tools to meet them and the humility to learn from them. I hope my sisters have happy lives filled with a loving family, smiling babies, fulfilling work, faithful friends and a serenity that comes from the peace of our Creator. I want for you all that I would desire for myself. In remembering this, I am able to diffuse any differences that I may have with my sisters. No disagreement is so great as to cause me to sever my ties with you, my sister. For what is sisterhood if we cannot recognize that we all struggle, from time to time, to be our best for each other and that we all crave the compassion that forgiveness allows us to offer each other when we fail to do so. If we remember this, we strengthen our sisterhood. We create opportunities to heal, forgive and move on knowing that what may have seemed like a major rift, in the larger context, is merely a passing, trivial disagreement. So when we approach each other, dear sister, know that, through it all, I pray for your success and happiness, and I hope that you will do the same for me. May the coming years bring you all that you desire! *Cheers!*

Hope

***I hope only for the best for you!***

## *About the Author*

**Cynthia F. Reaves** is an nationally recognized tax-exempt organization and health law attorney in private practice in the Detroit, Michigan. She is the President and CEO of Jackson Gates Associates, Inc. (JGA), a private consulting firm focusing on strategic planning, diversity, leadership and development issues. Recently, Ms. Reaves established a small imprint publishing firm, JGA Press, which is devoted to publishing works celebrating African American culture and history. Ms. Reaves has worked on behalf of several U.S. Presidents and has an interest in urban renewal and revitalization. She is a motivational speaker who works with corporate and philanthropic boards and senior executives on employee and volunteer motivation and participation strategies. As an attorney, Ms. Reaves has represented clients before a variety of state and federal agencies, including the Internal Revenue Service. She has served on numerous corporate and editorial boards and spoken before national groups on health law, tax-exempt organization, motivational and urban revitalization issues. She has written several books, numerous articles and spoken extensively on legal issues relating to her fields of specialization. In her spare time, Ms. Reaves enjoys gourmet cooking, current events, spirited cocktail discussion and historic home restoration. Her grandfather's participation on the Detroit Stars, a Negro Leagues baseball team, fuels her interest in professional sports. Her dream job would be to work as a current events commentator on a nationally televised news magazine.

Meditation ♦ African American ♦ History

***Seasons of Sisterhood*** provides meditations for daily living inspired by the words of the women of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Founded in 1908 on the campus of Howard University in Washington, D.C., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is the oldest Greek-lettered organization established by African American college-educated women. Since its founding, the women of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority have pursued a mission of service designed to promote unity among women and enhance the social stature of African Americans. The words of these women are powerful and inspiring—especially given the context of the social and political times in which they lived. Moreover, the messages that these women sought to convey have as much meaning and impact for today’s reader as they did when they were first shared. Celebrate the history and contributions of the women of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority through meditations inspired by their words.

***Cynthia F. Reaves*** is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority who lives and works in Detroit, Michigan. Ms. Reaves is an attorney whose practice focuses on corporate transactions and tax-exempt organization law. She advises corporations on strategic planning, development and leadership issues. Ms. Reaves has a passion for history and culture, the knowledge of which she views as a pathway to personal and economic empowerment. She has authored numerous books and is a frequent lecturer and motivational speaker.



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