

The Power and Privilege of Protocol

By: Archon Loren Douglass,
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Sire Archon, Zeta Boulé

As Archons, we share a fundamental set of values and ideals that are transmitted through our rituals and protocols. For an Archon to truly be immersed in being an Archon, he must be fluent in these traditions and practice them in the form and manner in which they have existed for our 118-year history.

Archons pay homage to our forbearers when we observe dress codes, memorize the test oath and address each other properly during meetings and when making introductions. It is this enduring reverence for our history and values that bound our fraternity as we got to know the best of one another during some of our most daunting challenges in our history.

How does the one attain a deeper understanding of our privacy and the symbolism that are so important to our fellowship? At Zeta Boulé where I also serve as Sire Archon, we are undertaking the following:

1. Thoughtful study of our history and traditions

Each of the three volumes highlights a different period in our history. Thoughtful study reveals greater insights into the context and reasoning behind our traditions and provides an overview of our organizational development. How does one understand where one is going without understanding where one has already been?

2. Strict adherence to our protocols and rituals

Practice makes perfect, as the adage goes. Our protocols and rituals are symbolic and have been designed with a specific intent. Without understanding that intent, these are empty gestures. Enhanced knowledge of Boulé history along with “consistent practice” of our rituals and protocols will make better Archons that are equipped to carry on those traditions in the future

3. Compliance with our dress codes and other fraternal values

Honoring our past is a treasured Boulé virtue. Wearing a suit and tie to business meetings, and properly and appropriately wearing our fraternity pin are means by which we call attention to the long line of Archons before us who mastered and practiced our values. We show reverence for the shoulders upon which we stand when we, in today’s more casual world, go to the “inconvenience” of wearing a business suit. If Archon Martin Luther King could wear a business suit when faced with life threatening circumstances, we can surely shoulder the inconvenience of putting on a suit one evening a month. If this is onerous or an imposition, it may be the first of a few core questions one should ask themselves to determine if they are compatible with membership in Sigma Pi Phi.

4. Prioritize Grand Boulé attendance to enable greater integration and understanding of our fraternity

Attendance at Regional Boulés and the Grand Boulé is absolutely the best way to access the treasures and benefits of our illustrious fellowship. Meeting and building relationships with Archons and Archousai from all five regions is its own reward. Participating in and witnessing the governance of our fraternity affirms your stake in its present and future. You

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pay dues, so you should have a say in what happens. If one chooses not to actively participate, then one has no right to complain when things do not conform to his wishes. We are leaders and leaders step up. I invite you to be a part of our present and to help chart our future.

Consistent focus on these recommendations will not only bind us closer together in our shared fellowship but will also enhance the “quality” of Archons in our midst. As a Grand Sire Archon-Elect candidate, I frequently heard concerns that our traditional standards are not being rigorously applied when evaluating candidates prior to and after intake. There are anecdotes about Archons becoming less involved out of frustration for what they perceive is a weakening of our standards. Whether weakening of our standards is fact or fiction, we must all recommit to emphasizing those things that make us unique and special.

While those who are also members of “Divine 9” and other fraternal organizations can be proud of such affiliations, their practices, terminologies, and references have no place in Sigma Pi Phi. They are divisive and weaken the rock-solid foundation that we’ve built for almost 119 years.

Should there be any questions about this topic or should your member Boulé seek further discussions about these important matters, I encourage you to consult the fraternity’s protocol manual (<https://www.sigmapiphi.org/home/assets/files/2018-Boule-Protocol-Manual-v12.pdf>). Questions can be directed to your member Boulé’s Grammateus, who will consult Regional Grammateus, as appropriate. The below history books can be obtained by your Grammateus in consultation with the Office of the Grand Boulé

A Grand Journey: The History of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity 1904–2010

by Rodney J. Reed (Author)

The History of Sigma Pi Phi first of the African-American Greek-Letter Fraternities, Volume Two

by Hobart Sidney Jarrett (Author)

History of Sigma Pi Phi: First of the Negro-American Greek-Letter Fraternities

by Charles H. Wesley

Zeta and Epsilon Xi Boulés (London) are rededicating ourselves to deeper learning and practice by focusing our efforts on our newly and most recently inducted Archons. Under Regional Sire Archon Al Spencer’s leadership, other member Boulés in the Northeast Region are likely to follow suit. Let’s work together across the regions to increase our individual and collective investment in our fellowship. Sharing best practices with each other creates a sense of shared interest while strengthening our fraternal bonds, enhancing our knowledge of Boulé history, and encouraging adherence to our protocols. Such collective action facilitates upholding of our highest standards by which we’ve been accustomed for almost 119 years. Achieving the above will take some focused effort; however, we will all be better for it.

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