

Chocolate City

est. 1975

Chocolate City at MIT
471 Memorial Drive
Cambridge, MA 02139

Cultural House Report

February 5, 2008

I. Introduction to Chocolate City

Chocolate City is a brotherhood of MIT students and alumni who identify with Black culture and share common interests, ethnicities, and/or experiences. By cultivating a tradition of social, intellectual, character, and leadership development, the Brothers of Chocolate City exemplify a high standard of excellence which is founded on continual growth. We seek to enrich the MIT and greater global communities by embodying the principles of our brotherhood.

Since it was founded in 1975, Chocolate City (CC) @ MIT has held a special place within the MIT community and the greater Boston & Cambridge communities at-large. Our existence on MIT's campus has provided a voice and a haven for many students of color, and its influence has extended into the recruitment of many potential students of color to attend the Institute at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Brothers of Chocolate City have been recognized across MIT's campus and this nation as exemplars in education, model citizens, insightful innovators, and powerful individuals in all fields of positive human endeavor. The importance of this legacy of excellence saturates the House still today, as we seek to make better people of ourselves and each other, and better places of our school, our communities, and our world.

Quick Facts About Chocolate City:

- Founded in 1975
- Located in New House Dormitory, House 1, Floors 3-5
- 28 current undergraduate brothers
- 47 leadership positions among the brothers

Major Chocolate City Events:

- Ill Vibes (poetry & spoken word showcase)
- 4-Year Planning Seminar (major-specific advising for first-year MIT undergrads)
- Chocolate City Parties
- Faculty Reception
- Semi-Annual Retreat (promote leadership, cultivate bonds and provide support to one another)
- Comedy Collage

II. Events

Party

Fall 2007: September 7, 2007

Spring '08: February 8, 2008

The first event that Chocolate City hosts at the beginning of each school year is a party. Official Chocolate City parties serve as fundraisers for our living group, but they are also thrown for entertainment purposes. The money earned from parties is used to fund numerous events that we host such as socials with other organizations at MIT and surrounding colleges, to help fund our house retreats, and to cover other miscellaneous house needs that arise throughout the year. Chocolate City usually throws two parties in a school year, one at the beginning of each semester. Our parties are always "dry" events – we do not serve nor do we allow guests to bring alcohol to our parties.

Ill Vibes

Fall 2007: October 20, 2007

Spring '08: April 12, 2008

Ill Vibes is a spoken word event hosted near the middle of each semester where people who choose to perform can read a poem or story, sing, rap, or play an instrument. The event is open for anyone to perform; nevertheless, performers are obligated to have their material pre-screened to ensure the content is suitable. All proceeds from Ill Vibes go to charity. For entrance, we charge people a decided amount or we allow them to donate a canned good instead. The canned goods attained from the event are donated to the Salvation Army, and the money earned goes to a charity selected each semester. Last semester, we donated the money to the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

Four Year Planning Seminar

Fall 2007: September 24, 2007

Spring '08: To be determined

Our four year planning seminar is an event that we host every year near the beginning of the first semester. The event is free and open to the MIT community. We hosted this year's seminar in Walker Memorial, but the location of the event is not constant. The event is intended for freshmen and sophomores, in which the brothers of Chocolate City represent their own major in a sit down with the attendants and help them create a plan and schedule for the rest of their years at MIT. In addition attendees can ask any questions about choosing their major, doing undergraduate research, or anything else they may want to know. Along with the brothers of Chocolate City, we reach out to others on campus who are willing to represent their major at the event. We also had guest speakers from the Careers Office and the Graduate Students Office to speak about grad school and career resources.

Retreat

Fall 2007: October 7-9, 2007

Spring '08: April 20-22, 2008

The Chocolate City retreat is held usually once a semester. The goal of Chocolate retreats is for brothers to plan future events of the house, assess the current state of the house, discuss any issues and possible changes for the improvement of the house, and get a chance to interact, bond and build community with one another. Our retreat was held at the Cody Outdoor Center in Freedom, NH last semester. Whichever location is chosen must have cabins, provide meals, and a nearby mountain or other terrain, which the brothers climb and use as an opportunity to interact with their classmates, reflect on their experiences at MIT, and gain focus for their future endeavors.

Faculty Reception

Fall 2007: November 15, 2007

Spring '08: April 3, 2008

The Faculty Reception is an event that we hold every semester. Last semester's faculty reception took place on November 15th, 2007. For the event, we print out invitations and the brothers of Chocolate City give the invitations to their respective professors, in addition to administrators, staff and other faculty. The event is held in the third floor lounge of Chocolate City. With all the brothers of the house in full business attire, we converse and mingle with the arriving faculty as appetizers are served. The aim of the event is for the brothers to get a chance to build relationships with some of the prominent figures at MIT, especially with professors that they will see in their department.

Holiday Dinner

Fall 2007: December 9, 2007

The Holiday Dinner is an event held once a year at the end of the first semester. This year, it was held on December 9th, 2007. The purpose of the event is for the brothers to come together and to celebrate the holiday before winter break. The event is semi-formal, and takes place in the third floor lounge of Chocolate City, which is set up appropriately. Each brother brings a date with them to the dinner. The food served at the dinner is all cooked by the brothers of Chocolate City. Each brother is required to cook at least one dish, which we have a sign up sheet for in advance to prevent repeated dishes. The ingredients needed for each dish are ordered and then delivered by the Peapod grocery service. Upon receiving the ingredients, each brother prepares their dish prior to the set-up for the event.

Super Bowl Party

Spring 2008: February 3, 2008

For this event, Chocolate City sets up speakers in its third floor lounge, and turns on the biggest football game of the year. The house provides food, and invites guests to come over and watch the Super Bowl. This past Super Bowl, Chocolate city provided soda, chips, salsa, ribs, burgers, chicken wings, and barbequed chicken. This event is free and open to MIT students. This event functions as an opportunity to have a great time watching football with friends before everyone is swamped with work.

Comedy Collage

Spring 2008: February 23, 2007

This annual event, held in Kresge Auditorium, is designed to be not only a fun experience but also to bring together students, faculty, and staff from all over the MIT community and across Boston. Comedy Collage will continue to highlight some of today's funniest comics who will be sure to get the audience laughing, featuring comedians who have appeared on networks like Comedy Central and BET. Comedy Collage will also showcase dance performances by local collegiate groups and should be an evening full of entertainment and excitement. This event is quite large, and we estimate that this year's Comedy Collage will require up to \$8578.

Socials

We hold multiple socials over the course of each semester, in addition to our regular events. We use these socials as an opportunity to meet people from across campus, and from other Boston-area schools as well. Groups we have had socials with this semester, or have currently planned for Spring include the Black Women's Alliance, Spanish House, Kappa Alpha Theta sorority, Alpha Phi Sorority, MEZCLA (a Latina student group at Wellesley), Ethos (a black student group at Wellesley), OLA (a Latina student group at Simmons) and a student group at Mt. Holyoke. These socials help us expand our social networks and build community not just across MIT's campus, but across Boston-area schools.

III. Future Events

There are a number of new events we are considering holding this semester. These events are:

Iron Chef Competition

Multiple groups would be invited to participate in a cooking competition. Each group would enter a team, and they would cook a dish. The cooking would be rated by the general public, who would be charged an entry fee to taste and rate the food. The collected money would be donated to charity

Four Year Planning Seminar

Due to the fact that freshmen declare a major in April of their spring semester, we believe that more freshmen will be considering what to major in and what classes to take in the future semesters. By having a second Seminar, we hope to help a larger number of freshmen with class and major selection.

Diversity Initiative Luncheon and Forum

This would be a revival of an event last held during Spring 2005. This event was created by a group of students in the Martin Luther King Design Seminar, two of whom were members of Chocolate City who have since graduated. The event was held over lunch in the Faculty Club, and faculty, administrators and students were invited to discuss on topics of diversity and race relations.

IV. Community Service

One new initiative we have is a specific community service goal for Chocolate City. Although the house has always participated in community service in some capacity, we have begun to now initiate specific benchmarks. For the coming semester, we hope that house accumulates at least 280 hours of community service activities, not including our charity event Ill Vibes. For the Fall 2007 semester, the house has accumulated about 140 hours of service.

One popular community service program among members of Chocolate City is Real Men Read – a reading, literacy and mentoring program targeting underprivileged black and Latino students in middle school. This program is held at the Roxbury Preparatory Charter School on weekends. On Saturday, January 19, 2008, we invited the students in the program over to Chocolate City, so they could interact with other members of the house, and learn a little about being in college.

V. How You Can Help Chocolate City

In the past, all Chocolate City members on campus participated in CityDays as a *group* during freshmen orientation. However, this past year, we were not able to participate as a group as we had done in the past and are currently looking into an arrangement to allow a cohesive contribution. If there are specific people we should contact about this, we would appreciate the information.

On the topic of a faculty and/or departmental link, we would like to work on leadership with the Sloan School of Management. However, we are unsure of how to go about contacting Sloan and asking for resources. We would appreciate assistance with drafting a proposal for interaction with Sloan's faculty and/or leadership resources.

Also related to leadership, our retreats are a central part of our efforts to promote leadership amongst ourselves. This past semester, we received \$1,700 in funding from the Office of the Dean of Student Life, and \$1,000 in funding from the Office of the Chancellor. Securing funding for our spring retreat will be a goal for this semester, and we would appreciate information about where to look and who to contact.

VI. List of Leadership Positions

As mentioned earlier, advancing the leadership skills of our members is a key goal of ours. For your reference, below is a list of members and leadership positions they currently hold.

Class of 2008

Chris Chapman

- President of Caribbean Club
- New House Desk Captain

Mikel Graham

Brennan Hopson

- President of the Rho Nu Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc

Doug Slaughter

- Vice President of the Rho Nu Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc
- Treasurer of the Rho Nu Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc
- Counselor for Freshman Leadership Program

Hamidou Soumare

Serginio Sylvain

Alex Vasquez

- President of La Unión Chicana por Aztlán (LUChA)

Class of 2009

Ryan Bonaparte

- Facilities Chair of New House
- Pulse Logistics Coordinator

Ricky Burgess

- Associate Advisor for Chancellor Clay

Jason Conage-Pough

- President of the Black Students Union (BSU)

Jason Forte

- Senior Co-Chair of Chocolate City
- Vice Chair of the Undergraduate Association Senate
- UA Representative to the MIT Committee on Dormitory Security

Terrence Green

- Treasurer of Chocolate City
- Treasurer of Impact Movement

David Hill

- Junior Co-Chair of Chocolate City
- Treasurer of New House
- Attorney General of the BSU

Jarrell Johnson

- Resident Associate Advisor of Chocolate City
- President of New House
- Vice-Chair of MIT chapter of NSBE (National Society of Black Engineers)
- Coordinator of Pulse Planning Committee

Class of 2010

Lorenzo Brown

- President of the Latino Cultural Center
- LUCHA Representative to the East Coast Chicano Student Forum

Corey Harris

- Programs Chair of NSBE
- Community Service Chair of Chocolate City
- Social Chair of Caribbean Club

Howard Liles

- Academic Chair of Chocolate City
- Service Chair Impact Movement

Dominic McDonald

- Treasurer of the Caribbean Club

Stephen Morton

Clinton Scroggins

- Arts Representative of Chocolate City
- Co-Chair of the Impact Movement
- Box Office Manager of Dramashop
- Vice President of MIT Gospel Choir
- Member of Institute Committee for Race and Diversity (formerly CCRR and MLK Committee)

Adam Smith

- Publicity Chair of New House
- Senator for NSBE

Class of 2011

Awet Afework

- Secretary of Chocolate City

Cameron Allen

- Historian of Chocolate City
- I3 Chair of New House

Ruben Alonzo

- Social Chair of Chocolate City

Andrew Bailey

- Facilities Chair of Chocolate City

Kamil Gedeon

- Chocolate City Representative

Ben Mensah

- Athletics Chair of Chocolate City
- Alumni Liaison for the Undergraduate Economics Association

Dylon Rockwell

- Social Chair of Chocolate City