KEY NOTE SPEECH

Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, also known as OPBSI, is a national sorority committed to the development of collegiate and professional women through sisterhood, diversity, leadership, service and academic excellence. OPBSI has dedicated itself to advocating for awareness of violence against women… Recognizing that violence against women hinders progression, our National Philanthropy includes ALL forms of violence affecting our gender, including but not limited to: Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Mutilation, Mental and Financial Abuse, Stalking and Human Trafficking. Before I dive into the purpose of me standing here today, I’d like to ask--- did you know that violent behavior often begins between 6th and 12th grade? This means that out of the 75% of 13 and 14-year-olds that are “dating,” about half are experiencing violence in their relationships. Today, as the President of the Alumnae chair, I am here to propose and shine light on a new initiative that will bring our organization to whole-another level as community activists!! We *need* to develop a focus, as an organization, on Teenage Girls and the overlooked domestic abuse they may be facing. Brining Domestic Violence awareness at an earlier age is very important and can prevent any future domestic cases. Many young girls do not know what to expect when they transition from high school to college. Over 13% of college women report they have been stalked. Of these, 42% were stalked by a boyfriend or ex-boyfriend. This is when *we* do our part, *for them*. We can prevent violence from occurring if we teach and educate younger girls ahead of time. In fact, we can even save someone’s life by reaching out to them early. Many teenage girls experience abuse during High School, and the majority of time are too scared to speak up. They may feel threatened by their abuser or they may be too ashamed to bring light to their situation. Actually, teenage girls especially between the ages 13 and 16 are not even aware that they are in a domestic relationship – they simply just do not know the signs. In most cases, Teenage girls do not have the necessary knowledge and understanding of how serious Domestic violence is. Also, the lack of resources that are provided to domestic violence victims in high schools are minimum. We, OPBSI, can become that missing resource for Teenage Girls. Studies show that --- In the U.S., 25% of high school girls have been abused physically or sexually. Teen girls who are abused this way are 6 times more likely to become pregnant or contract a sexually transmitted infection. Let’s get together and do what we do best! As our former national president, Monserrat Cabral once said, OMEGA PHI BETA BELIEVES THAT EVERY WOMAN AND GIRL DESERVES TO LIVE IN A WORLD FREE OF VIOLENCE AND OPPRESSION, WHERE HER THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ARE VALUED AND SHE IS ABLE TO ASSERT CONTROL OVER HER OWN BODY AND LIFE. Sisters, let’s take her words and put them into action! Through our National Philanthropy, which is… Raising Awareness of Violence Against Women, we shall continue to dedicate ourselves to our community while making a profound commitment to teenaged girls rights. The purpose of OPBSI is to Serve and Educate people of diverse backgrounds through sisterhood, leadership, and guidance. As positive role models, we promote unity of all cultures, focus on the empowerment of our gender and raise the standards of excellence in our academic, social, and personal endeavors. OPBSI envisions a world without oppression, where empowered women celebrate the essence of womanhood and act as resources in the advancement of their communities. Sisters, let’s apply our Mission & Vision into focus for Teenage Girls. Let’s be the role models we are set out to be! --- Females between the ages of 16 and 24 are roughly 3 times more likely than the rest of the population to be abused by an intimate partner. The chances are high sisters and now it’s time we put in work for what we all stand for… Currently we have 63 chapters and collectives across the entire USA- I propose that every chapter and collective adopts a High School in their community. The main purpose of this is to implement the mission and vision of OPBSI within these schools; this will be our entrance point. Every chapter and collective will be responsible for creating a program in their corresponding/and chosen High School, which will be named OPBSI Teen Outreach. It will serve as an after-school program, once a week, for high schoolers. It will be interactive, fun and informative. Although our main goal is to educate, we want to make sure the students feel comfortable, we want to open up to them as sisters just as much as we want them to open up to us. In order to help sister’s carry out the initiative, OPBSI Teen Outreach will be outlined as detailed as possible once implemented. OPBSI Teen Outreach will be great! I’d also like share light on how this new initiative can bring exposure to our organization in an extremely positive way; … we can become big influencers in the high school community. Instead of influencing young adult women into considering OPBSI while they’re already in college, with this initiative we can start appealing to them before they get to college! We can apply our values and beliefs as an organization into these teenage girl’s minds, by the time they reach college- they will know all about OBSI and will be more likely to join --- this can just be considered as a PLUS! Our focus is not to seek more women to join, our focus is to look out for those girls! I’d like to take a moment to share with you Karen’s story, my sole inspiration for OPBSI Teen Outreach: Karen is 14-years-old- yes, the age when young women begin to feel emotional, begin to grow, and the era of mixed feeling! Karen had been dating Anthony for about 7 months… and at that age 7 months is considered to be a big deal. Their relationship got very serious, and Anthony sort of became abusive without even noticing. It all started with the small things: telling her what she can or can’t wear, telling her when he feels she looks ugly, and even lightly shoving her around. Anthony’s behavior worsened as time went by, but Karen was convinced it was just *LOVE*. Even though she began feeling uncomfortable, love is what she says made her ignore all the signs. In fact, the majority of time this is how it starts. Domestic Abuse is gradual, as the level of comfortability grows in a relationship, the abuser becomes more comfortable in abusing and getting away with it… especially when the victim isn’t aware of what is actually happening. Karen is one of my closest friends little sister, and she came to me. She knew about OPBSI, our values, our philanthropy and what we stand for because she has heard me rant about how much I love my organization hundreds of times… and out of everyone, she came to ME. In part, I will forever be grateful to our organization because without trying, only because I am a sister, someone came to me. Karen’s situation is not the worst I’ve heard, but it was clear to me that she wasn’t aware of how serious her situation even was… I chose that opportunity to get closer to her and to give her all the knowledge and advise that I could as a sister. It wasn’t easy, and it definitely wasn’t fast, but because of ME, Karen made a wiser decision to stir away from the danger she was facing. I am only sharing this because, although I have heard of many horrible domestic violence stories, as I am sure many of you have too, this one hit close to home for me. Seeing how much of an influence I can be, and how much of a positive difference I can bring to someone like Karen, especially with her situation, made me think… *what if we do this as a movement?* I am only 1 of the thousands of sisters in our organization, and I made a difference to someone. Imagine all the thousands of lives we can touch together! I’d like for you to take a second and think of *why* you joined this organization in the first place. Karen’s situation could have gotten far worse, life threatening even. It has happened before ladies. I was there to stop it, and now I want to influence you to help prevent situations like these. OPBSI Teen Outreach will be the next exciting era of our organization! It will be our new motivation, our new movement… it will be ours and it will be great. Let’s put forth what our 17 radiant founders envisioned. On that note, I’d like to remind you of one word… Ujima: one of the 7 principles of Kwanza which means working together. Together we can do this, this is it manitas!