Reflections on a Penn Powerhouse:
Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, ED’18, GR’21, L’27
By Patrice R. Green, C’05, G’08

As A of A turns 100, it has made me reflect on the intellectual powerhouse and social justice trailblazer that made it possible for me to attend, survive, and thrive at Penn. Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander entered the University of Pennsylvania in 1916 to study Education. Much like the A of A founders had, she found the University less than supportive of her as a young woman, and even less so as an African-American woman.

As she sat behind a screen isolated from her classmates, Sadie was not dismayed. She went on to garner a total of four degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, making her the first African American to earn a PhD in Economics, and the first African American woman to graduate from the Penn School of Law.

Sadie T.M. Alexander, 1921.
Of all of Sadie T.M. Alexander’s accomplishments, the most near and dear to my heart is her role as a charter member of the Gamma Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., which was the first historically Black Greek letter organization established at the University of Pennsylvania. As the sorority turned 100 years old on January 13, 2013, Sorors representing the past 10 years of the chapter’s legacy gathered to not only remember the courageous 22 women who founded the organization, but also to relish the legacy of Penn Alumna Sadie Alexander in whose footsteps we do follow. You can find a Gamma Soror always asking herself “what would Sadie do?”

Above: Members at 1921 Delta Sigma Theta (DST) national Convention, hosted by Gamma Chapter at the University of Pennsylvania.

Below: Gamma Chapter 2003-2013 celebrating DST 100th Anniversary in January.