



## Muslim women embrace sorority

Gamma Gamma Chi is first in country for followers of Islam. Members bond, hold fast to their beliefs.

By [Laura Diamond](#)

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The women who belong to Atlanta's Gamma Gamma Chi sorority volunteer and participate in fund-raising activities across the metro area. They hang out and go to restaurants, movies, museums and cultural exhibits in town.

But the sisters won't participate in some stereotypical components of Greek life — no drinking, partying or hooking up with men.

That's because Gamma Gamma Chi Sorority Inc. is the country's first Islamic-based sorority.

The sorority allows Muslim women to participate in a widespread college tradition without abandoning their faith and values. Many Muslim women do belong to sororities on college campuses across Georgia and the country, but leaders with Gamma Gamma Chi said it provides another option.

"As Muslims, certain things that go on in sororities and fraternities are not allowed," said Wakilat Kasumu, president of the Atlanta chapter and a Spelman graduate. "We still do volunteer work and socialize with one another. Yes, we are Muslim, but we still have fun."

The sorority started in 2005 and has five chapters in the areas surrounding Chicago, Philadelphia and Washington, and the national headquarters in Alexandria, Va. Each chapter is regional rather than school-based and pulls from multiple colleges. Atlanta's members have attended Spelman, Clark Atlanta University, Georgia Perimeter College and other institutions.

The Atlanta chapter has seven members — two are students at Clark Atlanta; the others are graduate students and professional adults.

College students have long found different ways to have a piece of Greek life. Fraternities and sororities have been formed around different groups, including students who are Hispanic, African-American or Jewish. Like most others, Gamma Gamma Chi is open to all women, including non-Muslims.

The sorority originated with a mother-daughter team after the daughter struggled to find a sorority where the practices didn't go against her faith. They merged a sorority's traditional values of volunteering, leadership and friendship with a way to promote and improve the image of Islam and Muslim women. They also wanted Muslim women to have the opportunity to build the lifelong bonds that develop among sorority sisters.

Chapters observe Islam's holy days and other practices. The emphasis on volunteering and leadership makes Muslim women visible in the community, said Rasheeda Salaam, vice president of the Atlanta chapter and a board member for the national association.

"We want people to know who we are and that we are an active part of the Atlanta community," Salaam said.

Photos from chapters show women wearing jeans and sweat shirts bearing the sorority's Greek letters. Some women wear their hair loose; others wrap scarves around their heads. The group's motto

explains that members will honor Allah through “sisterhood, scholarship, leadership and community service.”

The sorority’s colors are lavender (meaning peace), green (Muhammad’s favorite color) and gold (representing true treasure), Kasumu said. Their flower is the lily because of its ability to grow and bloom no matter how challenging its surroundings, she said.

The sorority is working to increase public awareness and add chapters across the country. Salaam said people often stop her when they see her wearing a sweat shirt with the group’s Greek letters, wanting to get more information.

Kasumu, who is from Nigeria, said her family didn’t understand at first why she joined a sorority.

“I explained that I’m hanging out with people who allow me to be myself,” she said.

She remembered one night when they all went roller skating — something she had never tried before.

“I fell down, but they were there to pick me back up,” Kasumu said. “That’s what is so special. We support one another and have fun.”

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