
Spotlight on Que: Elzia Jawara Hanif Sekou

By Jeffrey T. Smith

Brother Elzia Sekou is first and foremost a man of God followed closely by his commitment to family. He is astute, encouraging, gifted, and amusing. Brother Sekou understands the importance of service to all mankind and he knows the fraternity can make a substantial impact locally, nationally, and globally. An Omega man of action, Sekou has attended chapter meetings, worked service projects and shared his perspective and knowledge on a variety of initiatives and tasks. In the community, Brother Sekou utilizes his vast skills, business acumen, and God given talents to help others regardless of their station in life.

Brother Sekou and I met during the year of Chi Phi's 75th chapter anniversary celebration in 2003. My best friend and college roommate Brother Sylvester Palmer informed me of Sekou's presence in Denver; they were chapter members while living in New York City. Two years early in November 2001, Brother Sekou met Brother Daoud Hadee just after arriving from New York when the two lived in Lakewood. They both clicked, in part, because of their sharp minds and love of listening to music. I had an engaging time talking with Brother Sekou about this article; I will use the four cardinal principles to share briefly his life's journey.



Manhood: Brother Sekou is a father, grandfather and great grandfather. His wife's name is Lynne Winfrey-Sekou and they have been married for 25 years. Sekou has three children (Amakeda (43), Zene (22) & Elzia (21)), three grandchildren (Hasan (24), Akilah (11) & Amir (7)), and one great grandchild (Hasan Jr. (3)). Brother Sekou proudly states he was born a premature baby in Tallahassee, FL. Sekou's mother passed away when he was six so his father, a skilled tradesman, raised both him and a brother, Joseph. Brother Sekou shared he was blessed to live in a thriving black neighborhood which was made up of doctors, college professors, and lawyers. Sekou remarked that he was a 3rd grade latchkey kid with tremendous autonomy. In school, Sekou engaged in football and band, playing the saxophone and clarinet. After high school, he held a draft card with #1AR004 and was ready to go in the military; however, the Vietnam War ended so he went to college.

Brother Sekou was a freshman upon his initiation into Upsilon Psi, FAMU in Tallahassee on May 28, 1975 as a deuce on a line of 25; he was the 'Show Dog' and his line was called the Potential 25. He has line brothers across land from Guyana, South America to Seattle, WA. Brother Sekou served as Chaplain at Up Psi as well as in the Xi Phi Chapter (Harlem Ques), Manhattan, New York.

Scholarship: Brother Sekou received his Bachelors of Science degree in Business Management from FAMU, 1978. He has an Associates of Arts degree in Computer Science from Daytona State College, 1980. Sekou has two Masters of Science degrees in Management Information Systems, City College of NY, 1992 and in Consciousness Studies – Transformative Leadership, Holmes Institute, 2010.

Perseverance: Brother Sekou has had an interesting and illuminating professional career; he attributes his journey to the benefits of connections and networking. After graduating from FAMU, Sekou found himself working for the Kennedy Space Center. He attained an A.A. degree in computer science to qualify for the position at the space center yet it would eventually lead to a faculty position at FAMU at the age of 24. Sekou turned a summer program at JP Morgan into a full-time job; his employment would take him to Melbourne, Australia for two years. While overseas, Sekou and his wife enjoyed travelling to a number of locations including Hawaii, the Bali Islands, the Great Barrier Reef, and the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. A friend (Josette Clark whose father was Joe Clark) obtained tickets for Sekou to attend the Games over four days to see Fencing and to watch the track and field events. In 2001, Brother Sekou moved back to New York City. He recalled a missed rendezvous with a colleague at the World Trade Center (WTC) around 9:00 am on September 11, 2001. He was present downtown near the WTC when tragedy struck, losing three friends in the first tower. Later in September, he moved to Denver to work at the Department of Interior, driving the distance because of the stoppage of air travel.

In 2008, Sekou started his own company, Transformations, LLC and began consulting for an oil and gas company in Houston, TX. Presently, he works remotely as a lead application engineer.

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Here is a recap of his professional endeavors:

- Computer Analyst & Test Conductor (Computer Science Corp @ Kennedy Space Center) 1979–1981
- Assistant Professor Computer Science (FAMU) 1981–1985
- Corporate Trainer & Computer Developer (JP Morgan - NY, NY) 1985–1999
- Adjunct Professor Computer Science (Medgar Evers College - Brooklyn, NY) 1992–1993
- Computer Developer & Manager (Accenture on assignment @ JP Morgan, NY, AXA Ins, Melbourne Australia, DOI, Lakewood, CO) 1999–2007
- Independent Management & Computer Consulting (Transformations, LLC – Owner) 2008–2019
- Lead Application Engineer (LTCI Partners, LLC) 2019–Present

Brother Sekou's accomplishments and highlights:

- Certified Test Conductor for the first four launching of the Space Shuttle
- Chair & Vice Chair of the Diversity & Inclusion Commission, City of Lakewood, CO (2006–2008)
- Certified Scuba Diver (1984); he worked with a Florida State University professor as part of the Florida Fishery Department (reef and different compositions)
- Basic & Navigational Sailing Certified (1997)
- Certified Myers Briggs Type Indicator Practitioner (2007)

Uplift: Brother Reverend Sekou is a Senior Minister at the Centers for Spiritual Living Denver, a church with a community focus on food, housing and education. Rev. Sekou, who converted to Islam from Christianity but now is a new thought minister, enjoys studying ancient history of spirituality and religion.

In closing, I asked Brother Sekou to provide a contrast of Denver and New York. He stated in Denver living is easier; a little big city with great education institutions. It's a capital city with an international airport; you can drive four hours and still be nowhere. In New York, Sekou remarked there is access to everything but little time and money to enjoy the conveniences. The city provides a cultural connection; Sekou lived one block away from John Henry Clark, an African-American historian and two blocks from the famed Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem. He said you can drive two hours and be in another major city and different culture.

Brother Sekou's aspirations and hopes for the chapter are for Chi Phi to continue taking an active role in the Denver Metro Area. In terms of the fraternity, Sekou hopes Omega Psi Phi, as a whole, continues to take an active role in the community & the world as well as becoming more technically up to date.

Brother Sekou is a remarkable man with a zest for life and helping others. His purpose and patience are always on display especially the latter with the numerous times his name has been pronounced incorrectly. Brother Sekou shared that the Lord God has directed his paths throughout his life. I pray God will continue to direct Rev. Sekou's paths all the while blessing his family and their endeavors richly.