

“Keep the Fires Burning For Justice”

The History of the I.A.B.P.F.F.

The International Association of Black Fire Fighters (IABPFF) is a fraternal organization and not a labor organization within the fire service—composed of Black and minority professionals. The idea of forming an international organization of Black firefighters was first advanced by Messrs. Vincent Julius and John Ruffins, both members of the Vulcan Society of New York, in 1960. It took nine years before a national effort could be mounted which occurred only after the 1968 civil disturbances.

In September of 1969, Black and minority fire fighters of all ranks from municipalities across the United States met in New York City for two days of discussion on the injustices that exist in the following categories: the recruitment of Black youth into the fire service, firefighters-community relations, practices in the fire departments, and the need to improve fire prevention programs in the areas of greatest need—the inner city ghettos which are inhabited by our most disadvantaged, neglected and exploited citizens. The meeting was very productive and out of it was born the International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters.

In October of 1970, the first convention of Black Professional Fire Fighters was held in Hartford, Connecticut. The constitution and the proposed structure of the International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters were adopted at this meeting.

The IABPFF is not to be looked upon as a black separatist organization and its chapters are autonomous. Since many union locals and city governments failed to institute an affirmative action plan in the testing, recruiting and promotional process areas, it is therefore incumbent upon organized minority firefighters to press for wide-scale reforms. And in the course of dealing with these problems, we expect to reduce the number of fires or false fire alarms. We are convinced that the Black community has an abundance of untapped talent to offer the fire service. Conversely, we expect to improve the economic development and employment opportunity for minorities.

As Black fire fighters, it is our challenge to make the fire service more relevant to the needs and aspirations of minority citizens. The IABPFF will insist that Black and minority fire department officials become full partners in the leadership and decision-making arenas of the fire service.

Our first president, Mr. David J. Floyd, also the Vulcan Society of New York, served in this office for ten years. He also was the principles architect of the organization’s Preamble, Purpose and Aims statements. President Floyd designed the IABPFF logo and banner. The following is his explanation of the design.