

Organizing To Eradicate Illiteracy..... (Continued from page 7.)

the name of Carrie Ayers Haynes, who is a national vice chairperson of AOIP and chairman of AOIP's Interorganizational Liaison Committee. It was her committee's function around which the Shreveport meeting came to pass. Also, the exceptional spirit of service at Southern University and an administrator of that institution, Dr. Joyce Peoples, played another significant part.

The focus of this article is not only to describe the separate roles of service both of Southern University and AOIP...but also, and more importantly, to report on their joining together in a much-needed way as a model for other institutions and concerned leadership to follow. Southern University's overall role will be portrayed through a Shreveport focus solely because it was the site of this historic meeting.

Southern University: A History of Service

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY was chartered in 1880 as a school for "persons of color." The school opened with 12 students one year later in New Orleans, Louisiana. In 1888, the agricultural and mechanical department was organized. Four years later Southern University A & M College became a land grant college.

During World War I, the New Orleans campus closed and the "new" Southern University opened in Baton Rouge. In 1956, a branch campus was authorized by the state legislature for New Orleans (SUNO) and for Shreveport-Bossier (SUSBO) in 1964.

According to Chancellor James J. Prestage of the Baton Rouge Campus, Southern University is an Open Admissions educational institution. Students are admitted with a high school diploma, or its equivalent, or as a special student. No entrance examination is required.

"Service is the bottom line" is not merely high sounding rhetoric at Southern University. This institution is committed to providing education for those students who may need developmental or pre-college level instruction in order to achieve proficiency at the college level.

"Southern University intends," Chancellor Prestage promises, "that all individuals should have educational experiences and related services compatible with their varied abilities, interest, achievements, motivations, needs and goals."

Southern University is especially con-

cerned with providing opportunities for creative expression, for cultural and intellectual advancement, and for social awareness and mobility. With these concerns as fundamental, the university maintains exemplary administrators, faculty and staff to guarantee the highest academic and professional standards for educational programs and community service.

The visitor to any Southern University campus finds a warm, friendly, family atmosphere which is generated by its close association among faculty, administration, staff and students. As Chancellor Prestage says, "Southern is small enough to care and big enough to make a difference!"

The Shreveport Model

IT is always a significant event when people come together to work and plan together on the problems and predicaments which both describe and challenge their lives. For Black Americans, such events take on paramount significance because there have existed—and still exist—a host of obstacles to the building of organizations in our own interests. Thus, for well over 80 national organizations to lend active economic, intellectual, moral and material support to a particular cause—the assault on illiteracy—represents a landmark phenomenon for Black Americans, and for all people committed to constructive change within our society.

Over half of AOIP's organizational



NAUW's National Leadership—(left to right) Lillian E. Ross, National Second Vice President, Rhebena T. Castleberry, National President, and Carrie A. Haynes, National First Vice President.

membership gathered on June 14, 1985 for a major national workshop aimed at guiding groups through the conceptual and practical process of organizing and developing local AOIP units within their disparate and diverse communities. Situated within easy access to the Southern University, Shreveport-Bossier City campus, the meeting drew heavily upon the vast resources of leadership from the university, the local surrounding community and national organizations like the National Association of University Women (NAUW), many of whose principal functions dovetail with those of AOIP.

For Chancellor Emmett Bashful of the New Orleans Campus and indeed for a good part of the three-campus Southern University System leadership, AOIP "properly and naturally derives—and should continue to derive—its most concentrated support from the intellectual and academic fronts among us."

Further, Chancellor Bashful believes, "The suffering of our forebears and those generations immediately preceding us, requires a sense of responsibility and commitment reflected in active practice. Especially those among us who have been richly enabled to learn and to produce must be ever ready to serve! The Shreveport campus, like our campuses at Baton Rouge and New Orleans, represents a unique collaborative effort in the consolidation of academic and larger community resources. Such a consciousness on the part of our University System's leadership lends itself naturally and comfortably to a merging of our institutional interests with those of the broader Assault On Illiteracy Program."

Commenting further on the extraordinary commitment implied by the key words of his comments, "Service is our bottom line," Chancellor Barnes gave this analysis of the coming together of campus and larger community within the context of AOIP:

"Service to one's community—however that community may be defined—is giving, giving to oneself and to posterity. For Black Americans, such giving *among* ourselves, *through* ourselves, and *to* ourselves, is the only lifeblood of which we are truly certain at all times, for it is that gift from God which neither oppression nor wastage can ever destroy or alter in a fundamental way.

"We here at Southern University see AOIP as a signal development for our people and for the nation as a whole, both because it represents the largest and most diverse grouping of Black organizations actively working for critical

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