



Making Those Travel Dollars Work For Black America

Black Americans travel, and more are doing so each year. When you compare our size to the total population, we do more vacation and convention traveling than any other racial group!

Convention Travel Significant

While we travel for business, vacations and family reunions, a major part of our travel involves attending conventions. These conventions are the yearly national meetings of a variety of Black church groups, civil rights, Greek-letter, professional, social and business organizations.

For example, the more than eighty Black-led organizations that work inter-organizationally in the national Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP) each hold an annual national convention, involving extensive travel. Usually, each of these has been preceded by a series of regional meetings involving some travel. The AOIP community-building organizations represent a combined membership of over 15 million—and Black America has more national organizations of other kinds!

Black Organizations Growing

Despite the increased acceptance of Blacks in predominantly White organizations with their so-called mainstream thrust, there has been a phenomenal growth of membership in Black organizations. Some have felt a contributing factor has been the resurgence of Black identity and Black pride.

The late D. Parke Gibson, minority marketing specialist and author of *\$70 Billion In The Black*, commented on this continuing growth of Black organizations, which surprised some after the passage of the civil rights legislation of the mid-sixties. D. Parke Gibson saw the following as key growth factors:

- The nation's society remains dualistic, despite the elimination of some racial barriers, sustaining the need for Blacks to foster closer ties.
- Black organizations represent a kind of "proprietorship" to their members, not something into which they have been accepted from the mainstream. They are

not going to relinquish this.

- Calls for Black unity on issues involving Blacks and other minorities give new importance to these groups. Challenges presented by the rank and file are confronted with enthusiasm and determination.

- Being part of a major organization provides the opportunity to exchange information and compare notes on activities in various parts of the country, as well as renew friendships and socialize.

- As pointed out in *\$70 Billion In The Black* (1978, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., N.Y.), some 37 of the more than 120 major Black organizations now in existence are 50 or more years old. The Prince Hall Masons, for instance, are in their 193rd year. Protecting this legacy is important.

Importance of Conventions To Black America

D. Parke Gibson also felt that:

Conventions are important to Black

organizations primarily because they offer platforms from which to provide direction and goals for local chapters and their memberships. These meetings allow national Black leadership to take the pulse of local and sectional feelings to determine the receptivity to the changing national climate on race relations, major movements and to such sensitive issues as affirmative action, busing and political participation.

Economic Impact of Black Conventions

A conservative estimate of what Black conventions mean to the hotel industry is over \$200,000,000. There are about 173 national Black organizations today. At least 150 of them hold national meetings each year.

The 1982 National Urban League and Alpha Phi Alpha conventions give us some measure of the Black dollars that are spent at these national gatherings.

Both the Urban League and the Alphas
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"Pulling Ourselves Up By Our Own Bootstraps"...A Series