

The Launching of AOIP's Year 2000 Campaign

Our First Coordinated Steps

The Impossible Dream Announcement

The first steps of any newborn entity—no matter how faltering and “bump-laden” they may be—always are welcome ones. However, when those steps long looked like an “impossible dream,” that first real step is an occasion for exceeding joy...and, that precisely was the tenor of the solemn, yet exuberant, meeting at the United States Department of Education in Washington, D.C. on the morning of May 12, 1986.

That date and time is when a long-awaited dream of all Americans became a reality. That is when it was first announced to the nation as a whole that the leadership of the national UPLIFTING organizations from within Black America had committed in a coordinated way to take leadership responsibility for “pulling up our Black communities largely by our own bootstraps.” It was to be done by all of the 88 national Black-led organizations associated with the national Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP) agreeing to work to achieve goals in eleven (11) specific areas by the year 2000.

Those goals were summarized in the *National BLACK MONITOR* which was distributed at the announcement ceremonies in Washington, D.C. on May 12th and was distributed nationally through AOIP-participating newspapers later that same week.

This June issue importantly not only includes our *first step* objectives, but also sets forth procedures for both orientation sessions and implementation procedures within each state and locality. However, we will first describe the launching ceremonies.



Faye Bryant, Grand Basileus of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Earl Gray, Deputy Imperial Potentate of the Shriners (Prince Hall Affiliation)

National co-chairpersons of AOIP

The Stage-Setting Remarks

Setting the tone for the occasion was the reading of a comprehensive, highly-instructive and moving position paper entitled, “Background on AOIP’s Year 2000 Goals.” Complete and utter silence—except for the thunderous sound of many “Amens” and “Hallelujahs,” along with grateful tears—was pervasive

as the following words about this unprecedented kind of commitment by so many were slowly read by Ossie Davis:

“Today—May 12, 1986—is a long-awaited day for many of us who, in January 1980, had only a dream. That was when many of the publishers now supporting AOIP learned of the extent of the “functional illiteracy” predicament that inflicts three times as many Black American adults as it does White American adults.

“It was a dream brought on by a wide

range of fears which are concomitants of the awesome illiteracy predicament. We know that inner turmoil often does turn to violence when those who have legitimate wants are separated from the *dignity of work* to achieve those aspirations simply because our society has not enabled them to become literate and thus productive. It is easy to see why all of us should be in a state of fear because of the illiteracy predicament.

“It was a dream nurtured by the values and precepts instilled in many of us that both we and all of *God’s other children* are something precious...and that all of us truly are our brother’s keeper.

“It was a dream strengthened, and finally made a reality, by hope and faith that—if we would but persevere in what we believed to be right—God would make a way...and all of us here are witnesses to that faith-induced reality.

“A summary of AOIP’s beginning dreams and six and one-half year struggle is set forth succinctly on Pages 18 and 19 of the May issue of the *National BLACK MONITOR*. Prior to this day, we never had an interview or announcement before the largely White-oriented press. We refused it simply because our “affective-oriented,” “community-building” forces were not in a sufficient state of readiness. However, due to God’s enabling hand, our many friends outside the Black Community here with us today and our collective perseverance nurtured by faith—we now have nearly 90 national Black-led organizations in a state of readiness. Praise God!

“We were—with God’s help—enabled to bring together our broad coalition of uplifting Black-led human rights, civic, professional, fraternal and church organizations to support the national

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“Pulling Ourselves Up By Our Own Bootstraps”...A Series
