

AOIP.....

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Imperial Potentate Carl L. Wilson



Grand Master Charles F. Bates, Washington, D.C.



Grand Master Earle L. Bradford Sr., Louisiana



Grand Master Edgar Bridges, Mississippi



Grand Master William A. Clement, North Carolina

Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP). Seldom had we experienced such commitment, such willingness to sacrifice from so many for such a high purpose. And today, we are here to unveil our overall plans to help our schools and other educational thrusts to vanquish illiteracy in the Black and other communities in America by the year 2000.

"While we in AOIP do have a strong tutorial component as one of our ten (10) major functions, our focus is largely on enhancing the "affective" climate within which teachers can do a far better job in their classrooms.

"What we seek is nothing less than to spark a revolution of rising expectations. We are working through those very institutions which have served so long and so well: through families, churches, organizations, schools and charities...and through a generous offering of the time and talent and resources of innumerable volunteers.

"We are working to assure that the benefits of economic recovery and improved national morale are more equitably spread throughout our land. Illiteracy, youth unemployment, drugs, out-of-wedlock pregnancy and crime still exact too high a toll among young people in the Black community.

"For too long now, our community has been devastated by the tragedy of illiteracy. Black folks greatest successes have been too often undercut by the inability of many young people to "read all about" them. The great victory we have won over neglect and indifference is witnessed by the outpouring of books, magazines and journals about the Black experience in America. But this victory is diminished if many of our young people cannot read them.

"We in Black America have found by looking back into our history that we can turn this tragedy into triumph. We know we have no reason to—and will never—surrender to despair.

"As Black Americans, we have a great spiritual heritage. Many of our greatest leaders, writers and artists were nurtured in the Black churches and/or institutions of faith. We have shared with Americans of all faiths and races an unshakable belief in ourselves as people created in the image of God. Only such a strong faith could have sustained us through the long nights of bondage and oppression. This faith sustains us today. Our people have had the Bible with its great truths of how we should live together as brothers and sisters in this one nation under God: a cultural treasure in which all must have the opportunity to share. As American writers have observed, reading the Bible was once the great engine that propelled us on the road to literacy.

"Noted Black educator Carrie Ayers Haynes, one of our volunteers, enjoyed great success with her young pupils in a predominantly Black public school*. They succeeded because she taught them they were God's children. She kept a Bible on her desk to underscore her words. In times like these, when we are faced with alarmingly high rates of illiteracy, we believe it is no time to ban the Book of Books.

"First, we insist that schools provide uplifting, wholesome and safe environments in which our young people will be free to learn, in which they will be free from drugs and in which they will be filled with that great self-motivating spirit that directs all those who believe.

"Schools must teach positive values: honesty, self-respect, hard work, punctuality and respect for teachers and parents and we in AOIP are committed to do our part in bringing this about. Parents who entrust their precious children to the school should have confidence that the school will support the values of the home and never undermine them.

"Second, in our fight for literacy, we reject the policy that has sought to teach reading without teaching phonics. We have based our reading program firmly on self-appreciation and phonics. These offer early success and our young people need a head start on achievement.

"Recent reports show that children who are taught phonics learn to read better than children who are taught the "look-say" approach. AOIP's professional educators developed the *Who am I Guide to Learning* weekly series and the reading-motivational and ego-enhancement weekly series called *The ADVANCER*. We encourage the schools to use proven tools like those developed by AOIP.

"Finally, we know that it is common to speak of the gifted and talented and of the disadvantaged when speaking about education. Today, we assert that the Black community in America—including its often neglected masses—is a gifted and talented community. We have had the gifts of faith and endurance and we have developed the talents of resourcefulness and resilience.

"It is not for ourselves alone that we are engaged in this task of community-building. A secure, productive, hope-filled

Mrs. Carrie Haynes is a retired and renowned school administrator who now serves as a consultant to school administrators. A school in the Watts section of Los Angeles was second from the bottom among almost 600 schools in the L.A. unified school districts when she took over as principal. By involving the total community in a grassroots ego-enhancement, or "affective-oriented," approach to education, every class was enabled to be on grade level within six and one-half years.

environment for our young people can be as a "city built upon a hill." Millions of our fellow citizens: White, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islanders—who are struggling to overcome the handicap of illiteracy will be encouraged and inspired by our efforts. They will emulate our example.

"The "Labor Letter" column of the *Wall Street Journal* on Tuesday, May 6, 1986 reported that

A National Alliance of Business study dedicated to improving job opportunities for the disadvantaged predicts significant growth over the next 10 to 15 years in the less well-educated segments of the population that have been typically the less prepared for work—notably minorities, high school dropouts and teenage mothers. The population shift will be occurring, the group says, at the same time workers with critical technical skills will be retiring at an increasingly rapid rate, and when new technologies will be requiring higher skills for entry-level jobs. The result will be pervasive mismatches between workplace needs and workforce capabilities.

The Alliance says business and government must improve training and tackle problems breeding unemployment.

"Blacks certainly must take far more responsibility for their own as we are beginning to do in a broad-based way in AOIP. However, illiteracy eradication is everyone's responsibility...and together, we will forge an alliance for advancement which will secure a brighter future for all young Americans.

"Truly God has blessed us with the coming of this day by the many organizational leaders, the dedicated AOIP-participating publishers** and many others. The United States Department of Education is counted on to be totally supportive of our focus in this essential *Year 2000 Literacy-Enhancement, Community-Building Campaign*."

The Secretary Speaks

The overflowing crowd including dignitaries, leadership groups, senior officials from the U.S. Department of Education and many from the non-elitist masses was well prepared to be greeted warmly and enthusiastically by the Honorable William J. Bennett,

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**It was the newspaper publishers under the leadership of Dr. Calvin W. Rolark—and with the guidance of Dr. H. Naylor Fitzhugh of Pepsi Cola and the Rev. Dr. Leon Sullivan of OIC—who both developed the concept of AOIP and, as a commitment to business and industry, have borne most of the financial burdens of nurturing this coalition.