

88 National Organizations: Eradicating Illiteracy By “Affective-Oriented” Or Community-Building Means

Black Togetherness

Is there really Black *uplifting* “togetherness” with the masses being fostered by traditional Black leadership groups? Even a year or two ago this would have evoked questions as to its veracity and potential to happen simply because it “never had been done before.” Yet, under the until now, little-known banner of the Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP), almost 90 presidents of national Black-led community-building organizations have agreed to work together on a lasting basis. This dramatic and vital new focus was enabled to be achieved primarily because of the awesomeness of our illiteracy-related “ills.” These presidents now see clearly that these were brought on largely by their not working together with our masses and supporting our own in *uplifting* ways and that they now have no other choice.

At a recent AOIP planning meeting in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Earl Gray, one of the two new national co-chairpersons of AOIP declared, “No longer can our Black leadership groups like the Masons, Elks and similar broad-based groups sit idly by and let a few people lead our masses down the primrose path of so-called integration. We must look inward not only for our divinely-inspired values, but also must look inward among our long-overlooked masses so we can build *together* as God wants all of his precious children to do.”

Donald Wilson, Grand Exalted Ruler of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World, was quick to add, “The togetherness and mutual support concept of AOIP is by far the most productive thing that could have happened to us at this time. By working through and *with* the other organizations in AOIP, our group is rededicating itself not only to greatly expanding Elksdom, but also to building all of our communities as never before by taking leadership responsibility



(Clockwise) Ulysses McBride, Vice President, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity; Frankie Gillette, National President, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs; Mildred Bradham, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority; Theresa L. Watson, American League of Financial Institutions; Ada Jackson, President, National Pan-Hellenic Council; Captain Gordon Fisher, President, National Naval Officers Association; (center) Mabel D. Haden, Esq., National Association of Black Women Attorneys.

for garnering priority support for and involvement by our Black businesses and professionals committed to AOIP and ‘Buy Freedom’ concepts.”

How To Begin

In the May and June issues of the *National BLACK MONITOR*, we highlighted the need for AOIP's community-building thrust to eradicate illiteracy and the overall plan of action embodied in eleven

community-building goals to be achieved by the year 2000. The official launching of these Year 2000 Goals on May 12, 1986 with the blessing and support of the United States Department of Education was the subject of the June Cover Story.

This July issue (and future issues) of the *MONITOR* will focus on the specifics for achieving these goals.

Now let's take a careful look at the five-year interval objectives for each of our Year 2000 Goals with the knowledge that *immediate objectives* are now being worked on by the Planning Group of AOIP and will be presented in the August issue of the *MONITOR*.

The Networking Activities of the Local Units

The train is in motion! AOIP has a clear focus with detailed objectives just finalized at a major planning meeting in Winston-Salem. Eighty-eight organizations are now ready to focus more intensely on guiding this train to its manifest destiny. Yet, the question on the minds of many is: “How will this be coordinated?”

In large part this will be accomplished by using *existing* programs, resources and manpower which are in some ways already focused on these objectives and by expanding them through interorganizational cooperation. All of this requires organization.

Organizing Is the Key

No description of how we are moving forward in AOIP would be complete without highlighting some of the types of things already being done by the Local Units.

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