

ERADICATING ILLITERACY..... (Continued from Page 12)

commodate our year 2000 goals. These are as follows:

- Almost 50 percent of our Black adult population has not been enabled to become functionally literate enough to hold a job whereby they can produce sufficiently to earn their keep in the open market;

- The lack of positive personal values has become so widespread that—in some urban areas—it is reported that over 50 percent of our Black males have a criminal record and over 70 percent of our children are brought into this world without a known father to join with the mother in providing for (and rearing) these precious children;

- Our present welfare policies and practices are such that they reinforce the demeaning belief imposed on many of our people that they are not worthy of the “dignity of work” and that, as an alternative, welfare is a legitimate hustle;

- The original outwardly-imposed negative feelings about ourselves have become so deep and fixed that it is reported that we allocate less than eight percent of our disposable income with businesses, professionals and institutions of our communities whereas others spend seven or eight times as much with “their own”;

- Many of us have become so “elitist” in our thinking and our actions that almost all of our organizations, as an example, allocate nearly 100 percent of their educational dollars (and focus) on the 10 or 15 percent of high achievers, who do need some help, without investing those resources proportionately with that other 85 to 90 percent whom we have—by such policies—allowed to become like albatrosses to us; And,

- Our classroom teachers—often because they have not been enabled to understand the uniqueness of our needs—have relied neither on the urgently-needed ego-strengthening tools like those prepared by AOIP nor on the many forms of complementary help available through a well-organized, AOIP-focused community.

Please let me again remind you—before we go forward in setting forth the details and urgencies of our present AOIP approach—that I have made every so-called “mistake” in “heeding” the need for properly prioritizing our determination to meet the challenge for change that faces us all.



Essie McGriffe, California



Elizabeth Munnings
President, West Palm Beach Unit

III. Detailing Our Focus:

In this section, I will segment (or detail) that initial statement of focus into smaller parts with comments personalized from my constantly-evolving perceptions about the potential of our coordinated focus.

Segment A. “AOIP is an all-volunteer community-building coalition of nearly 90 Black-led organizations that are focused in a coordinated way on complementing and supplementing the role of teachers and tutors...”

This says to me—and hopefully to all of us—that AOIP is not simply a teaching or tutorial entity. Our primary role is to create the kind of secure, value-laden and hope-filled climate in which teachers and tutors can be successful. Thus, AOIP goes beyond (but still importantly includes) a strong tutorial component.

Segment B. “...in overcoming illiteracy—and all its resultant ills—primarily by 1) *reinstilling positive personal values* in our young and older population and 2) *prioritizing the uplifting of our entire population through supportive togetherness* in every possible way.”

This should say to us that every concerned person in Black America (and especially those in our AOIP-participating organizations) has a vital but easily-achievable role



Clara Grant, Illinois



Marvin Williamson
President Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Division

to play simply by being a good role model for our masses. In a press release issued by the U.S. Department of Education on June 22, 1984, the Secretary of Education said, “The Department will continue its cooperative efforts with AOIP as they begin their ‘community-building’ approach toward illiteracy eradication.” Accordingly, even though only a limited number of our people might ever want to become tutors, 100 percent of our people can—and must—be involved in the overall *uplifting* struggle which we want to have completed long before the year 2000. So, the next question must relate to “How can this be done?”



Dolores Harris

IV. Easy Ways to Meet the Needs of Our Year 2000 Goals:

Some of the easy (but quite different) ways we can begin achieving our year 2000 goals are by simply doing the following:

A. Get our entire membership informed: We can do this by scheduling both plenary presentations and group workshops at all of our regional and national meetings. At these meetings, there should be a full discussion not only about the AOIP concepts...but also about how all of your activities can fit in a coordinated way into our overall *Year 2000 Campaign*. Then,

B. Try hard to do a far better job of the things we're doing: We should be motivated enormously just by the idea of knowing that we can make a massive amount of impact by our interorganizational framework which—before now—was not possible.

One of the surest things you can do that will increase our tutorial effort efficiency is immediate use of AOIP's weekly reading motivational and comprehension-enhancement tools in all of our present programs. The *Who Am I Guide To Learning* is for total non-readers...and *The ADVANCER* is 8 pages of ego-strengthening for low-level (below 5th grade) readers. Both pride-instilling tools are equally good for young and older adults. And, these fun-to-learn (and other) tools are *available in bulk at cost* (about 15 cents per student) through your nearest AOIP-participating community newspaper. (Please see pages 55 & 56 in your AOIP UPLIFTING Manual for Local Unit formation.)

Another sure thing we can do at once is to properly proportion our “scholarship” funds. Presently, almost all of us allocate nearly 100 percent of those funds for the so-called “gifted” and make little or no allowance for the other 85-90 percent who now are a large part of the “albatross” population—without guidance and without incentives to learn and become responsible. *These funds should be proportioned* so that the “gifted” obtain their fair share and those in need of help get theirs.

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Our Year 2000 goals are obtainable, worthy and realistic. We finally have a framework for uniting our community across the country.

—Dolores Harris,
Coordinator
Northeastern Region