



The ABC's of Successful Travel For Black Americans

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

Background

Before the passage of the civil rights legislation of the mid-sixties, travel for Black Americans was totally different from what was experienced by the rest of America's citizens. Blacks below the Mason-Dixon line were not accepted in “downtown” hotels and restaurants. Bus terminals and railroad stations had segregated waiting rooms and toilet facilities. Blacks traveled in the back of the bus and in special “colored” coaches on trains. A kind of apartheid existed openly in America.

The Black traveler also encountered segregation in the North prior to the mid-sixties, but it was not uniformly practiced as it was in the South. Some “downtown” hotels in some northern cities admitted Blacks, but even then, Blacks often were relegated to certain floors and certain “undesirable” rooms.

The same was true of northern restaurants. In some cities, some restaurants seated Blacks without problems; in other restaurants, Blacks were seated by the door to the kitchen; and in still other restaurants, light-skinned Blacks were seated while their darker brethren were not.

Despite the demeaning Jim Crow practices that made travel for Blacks physically uncomfortable and emotionally draining, Black Americans did travel for business, for family reunions and for the many conventions of the various Black-led church, civil rights, Greek-letter, Masonic, Elk and other social organizations.

The Black community opened its doors to the delegates of these various conventions and convocations. Meeting facilities were found on Black college campuses, in Black
(Continued on next page)