

## BLACK TRAVEL.....

Masonic and Elk lodge halls, in Black Y's and, of course, in Black churches. Delegates were housed in Black hotels, where they existed, but more frequently, they were housed in Black homes in the community. While a few Blacks made money offering these services, many others offered their homes at great personal sacrifice.

### Need to Establish "We Are Somebody"

**W**e have been reminded many times over by leading Black thinkers that Black self-esteem takes a daily beating from the unending onslaught of overt and institutionalized racism. The psychological pressures have been so great that traditionally, Blacks have sought to bolster or anesthetize damaged egos by buying the best in food, liquor, personal care products, cars, clothing and jewelry. Others took refuge from this overt ostracism from the White World by seeking every means possible to "be near" Whites in business, social and civil rights settings. Thus, being able to purchase the best or being near Whites, to many of us, always has said, "See, I am somebody."

Many Blacks at every socio-economic level—like other groups—have a tremendous need to establish that they are somebody. Yet, others do it in vastly different ways. The overwhelming majority of Black Americans, in contrast to most White Americans, have a poor image of themselves and their environment. This is part of their living legacy of enslavement, segregation, dehumanization and ongoing institutionalized racism. We see this need *in extremis* in the unconscionable and unredressed illiteracy predicament facing Black America due largely to the often-unconscious—but still damaging—acts of others. And, as we shall see, this affects both the economy and Black travel habits. But first, let us examine further what many see as a "warped mindset" among many Black Americans.

### The AOIP Experience

**T**he national Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP) is a coalition of approximately 90 national Black-led organizations focused on *eradicating the uniquely-based root causes* of the catastrophic illiteracy predicament among Black Americans. The rate of illiteracy among White adults is approximately 16 percent in contrast to nearly 50 percent among Black adults. All major urban or inner-city areas across America are faced with precisely the same situation.

Black professionals from a wide range of

disciplines, who helped to establish and develop remediation procedures for AOIP, agree that poor self-image rather than inability to learn is a root cause of illiteracy among Black Americans. Examination of the early

lives of those Blacks who have been able to learn and to move into productive careers uniformly reveal some moderating factor—family, individual mentor, church, etc.—which stepped in to provide the ego

strengthening nurture that was lacking.

However, whether intentional or not, the

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