

# BLACK TRAVEL..... (Continued from Page 5)

forces that assault the self-esteem of Blacks are ongoing and pervasive. These forces range from the White-oriented media, which tends to sensationalize the negative happenings in Black America, to urban planning which leaves most inner cities looking like bombed out wastelands 20 years after the devastation wrought during the so-called long hot summers of the sixties. Just as the assault on Black self-esteem inescapably continues, so does the resultant need to find ways to bolster sagging self-images.

## The Unique Nature of Travel By Black Americans

**W**ith the desegregation of public accommodations and facilities in the mid-sixties, Blacks—with the encouragement of profit-minded Whites—have made travel another outlet for compensatory gratification. Black

Americans seem to want to “get away.” We do more vacation and convention traveling than any other racial group in America. In fact, a major part of Black travel is to conventions. One of the important things on which AOIP will be focusing—aside from direct literacy enhancement—is the transformation of our ghettos into beautiful oases of pride and fulfillment, which will limit the amount of “escape” travel.

Annually, the Black travel market generates approximately \$2.8 billion in sales for the hospitality industry. A conservative estimate of what Black conventions mean to the hotel industry alone is \$200 million, and there is no end in sight. At the same time that Black travel—especially to conventions—is seen as a growth industry, an increasing number of Black travelers complain about luggage, cash and jewelry being lost or stolen and about returning home to find their residence robbed.

Some of these incidents are part of the

unavoidable hazards that the average traveler, Black or White, encounters. However, there is a growing belief that the Black American traveler may be at greater risk largely because of the reactive behavior patterns established by the unique experiences that the Afro-American has had since first coming to these shores in chains.

## What Good Is Compensatory Gratification If No One Knows About It?

**A** significant aspect of compensatory gratification depends upon your being able to share with others what you are doing. You need to let family, neighbors, club members, co-workers, even strangers know that you buy the best in food, clothing, etc., so that they can appreciate your value—know that you are somebody.

However, where the average Black American lives would suggest a totally different pattern of behavior for survival. According to the United States Census Bureau, Black Americans today are an urban people: 57.8 percent live in a central city; 23.3 percent live outside the central city; and only 18.9 percent live in non-metropolitan areas. This means that most Blacks live in or near high crime areas which are also plagued by inexcusably high rates of illiteracy, unemployment and drug abuse. This situation will remain until a community “transformation” is able to take place.

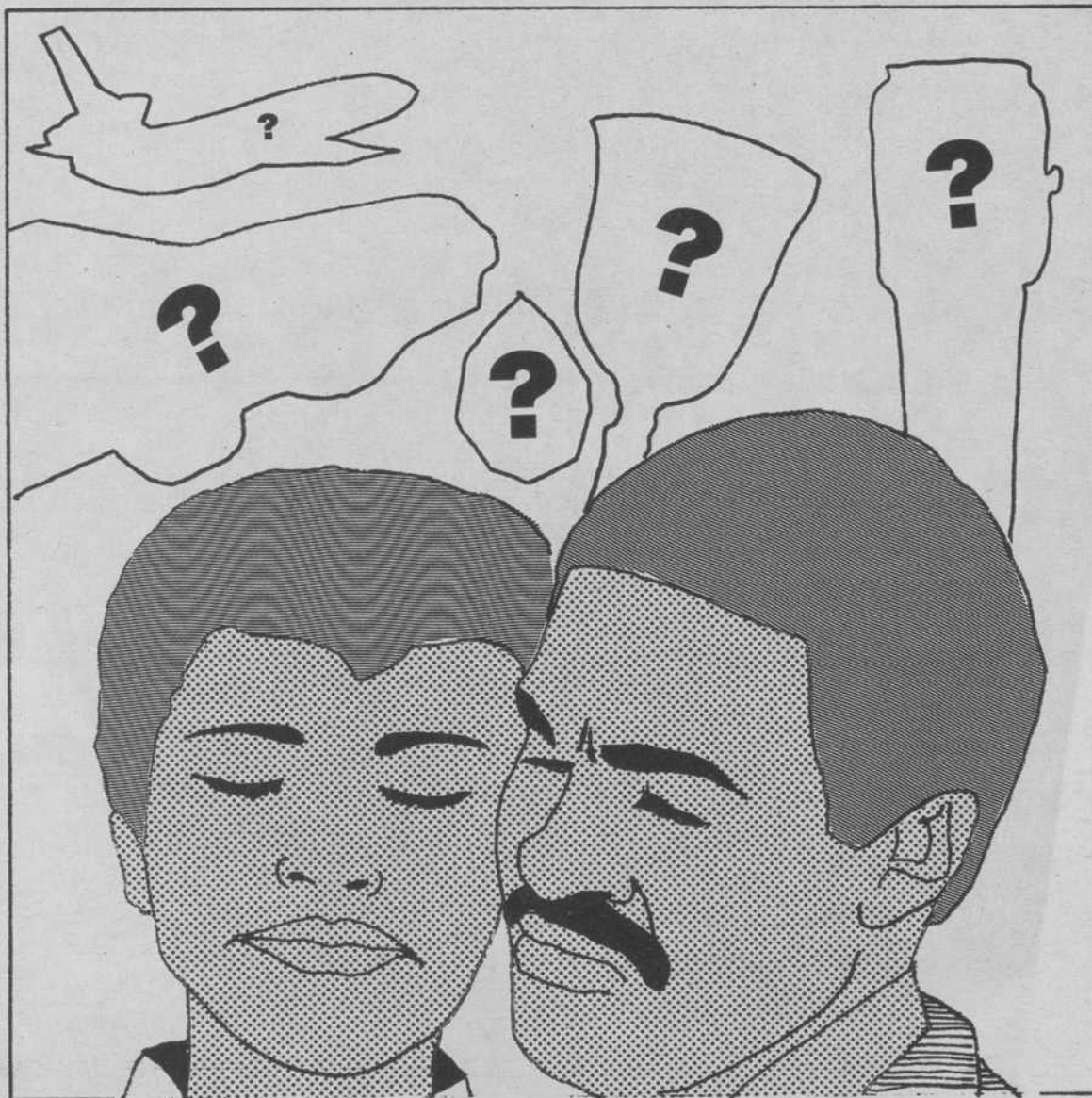
Until then, instead of broadcasting travel plans, the prudent Black conventioner should share only with those who need to know his/her travel agenda. Until that community transformation takes place, arrangements should be made for someone to check the premises each day. Remember also that an overflowing mailbox is an invitation to robbers. Contact the post office to either hold or forward your mail, depending on the length of your trip.

Letting others know that you can afford the trip is another aspect of the need for compensatory gratification that makes the Black traveler vulnerable. Flashing a wallet stuffed with cash, especially large bills, is like sending an engraved invitation to trouble. Yet, the outwardly imposed negative self-image is a reality and a costly one to all, especially to Black communities.

Under such circumstances, the money in your wallet should be in small bills and just enough to cover such things as tips, ground transportation to and from the airport, etc. Large sums of money should be carried in travelers checks and a copy of the check numbers should be left with a trustworthy person at home. Neither cash nor travelers checks should be packed in your suitcase. A money belt is a wise investment. Money belts come in a variety of styles for both men and women. Cash and credit cards that are not needed immediately also belong in your money belt.

## Other Expressions of Compensatory Gratification

**B**lack Americans also are known for their fashion consciousness. A beautiful wardrobe has long provided some solace for the Afro-American whose self-esteem is under constant attack by overt and institutionalized racism. Thus, Black conventions are known not only for their substantive deliberations, but also for the “last word” in fashion worn by the delegates. But this expression of compensatory gratification carries with it a high cost in lost or stolen luggage and reduced maneuverability while in transit.



(Continued on next page)