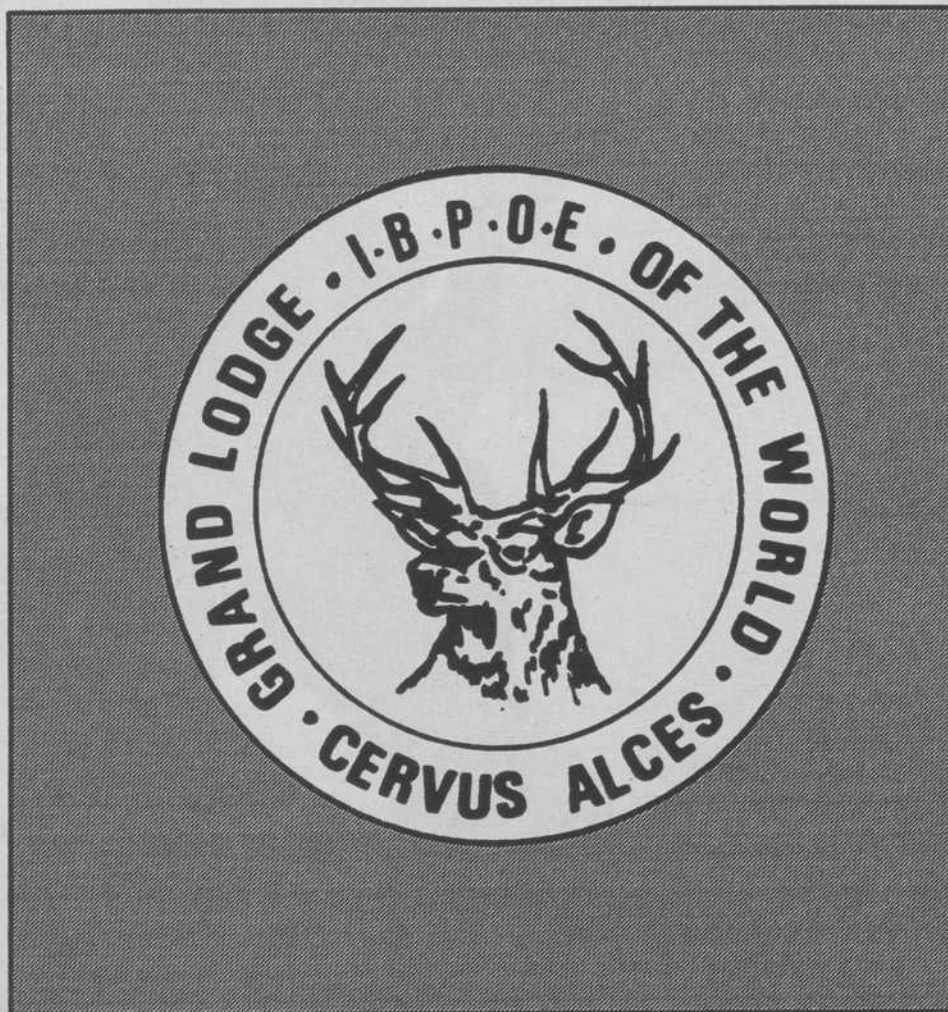


# THE ELKS: PRIORITIZING SUPPORT OF BLACK AMERICA

“I love a parade!” At the turn of the present century and extending well past World War II, these words expressed the fervent feelings of millions of Americans. And at no time in our history have parades meant more to so many, and been more glorious, than when the Black Elks “strutted their stuff” in all their regalia on the main streets of every city in America.

Our Black Elks might have been long known for their huge parades just as they are in many cities today. However, the full story has never been told—of the magnificent contributions of these Elks to the pride, stability and economic growth of Black America during the long and bleak post-Emancipation years. And despite many mistakes from which their present and astute new leadership has learned much, the Elks still remain the largest owners of prime real estate within Black America...and have been the largest single contributor of college-level scholarships among all groups within Black America...and have both the framework and focus which, today, could be the redeeming factor in a presently-faltering Black America.

According to the new, insightful and deeply-committed new Grand Exalted Ruler of I.B.P.O. Elks of the World—Dr. Donald P. Wilson, “At no time in our history as a long-denied people have we allowed ourselves to have gone downhill in terms of “functional illiteracy,” drug usage, crime, teen pregnancies and outright murder of our own than we are today...and those of us in Elkdom must assume our part of the blame for what we have allowed the pursuit of so-called “integration” to do to our needed sense of “togetherness” and support of our own. However, one thing is certain. And it is that, under our new leadership team, the Elks will be taking a major part of the lead in assuring complete success for the massive movement to rebuild our communities so astutely begun by the Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP).



“Moreover,” Dr. Wilson continued, “every Lodge and Temple will be centers for learning and togetherness for our young and others...and no one has better conceived programs for youth than do we. Our need is to reactivate and strengthen those past endeavors and to educate our people on rebuilding by giving priority support to our own and then supporting only those White and other entities) which are demonstrating that they are beginning to do their part to return to our communities in some reasonable relationship to which they benefit, directly or indirectly, from us...and surely, the Japanese government is one on which reassessments have to be made.

“We also intend to institute a massive membership campaign, not only for our own growth, but also to focus on all Black Americans belonging to—and supporting—all of our other organizations as never before—because the time for unity never has been more vital.”

Dr. Wilson then noted the fact that many of our present-day and former leaders got their start with the extended “helping hand” of the Elks. Among those he mentioned were Dr. Dorothy Height, John O. Killens, Oprah Winfrey, Thurgood Marshall, James Farmer, Pat Russell, A. Philip Randolph, Adam Clayton Powell and Martin Luther

King Jr.

Thus, because so many of our young and older concerned citizens in AOIP and otherwise are not fully aware of the important history of the Elks, and of fraternal orders in general, we have chosen to present some essential highlights, with the hope that all of our readers will give serious consideration to helping to rebuild our communities through joining an Elks Lodge (for men) or Temple (for women).

## “The Golden Age Of Fraternity”

Sail on, Beloved Order strong and great!  
A Race of men with all its fears,  
With all its hope of future years,  
Is standing breathless on its faith;  
In spite of rack and tempest roar,  
In spite of false lights on the shore,  
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!  
Our hearts, our hopes are all with thee,  
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers,  
our tears  
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,  
Are all with I.B.P.O.E. of W.

Fraternalism is as old as human society. Secret societies, lodges, initiation groups, age groups, bush schools and similar organizations were found among the primitive tribes of Africa, Asia and Europe, North America and South America.

In response to a deeply-felt need and desire for fellowship, association and improved status, Black Americans likewise organized lodges, clubs and other forms of fraternal societies. These organizations were characterized by group traditions, symbols, titles, uniforms, ceremonials, initiatory rites and secret activities. They afforded the opportunity for the formation of leadership among the more enterprising members of the community. The lodges also provided ex-

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