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than in any time.... At a time when we are seeing the nation's [families] disintegrate, we are the hope. Our experience is what this nation needs to restore the family.

Speaking of a plan created by the Black Leadership Roundtable for the rebuilding of the often-beset and always fragile Black family, Fauntroy said the purpose of the plan is to "build among our people a covenant

relationship. When people enter a covenant relationship,...they begin to protect, to defend, and to care for one another.... Let us not lose this opportunity in history. We must serve notice that the Black family is revived,

strengthened and sustained...."

In an improvised version of "The Impossible Dream," Fauntroy described the plight of the Black family in song. He said Black people are fighting for the impossible dream (a strong Black family) against an unbeatable foe (racism).

"We must mobilize our forces and come together," said Dr. Lerone Bennett Jr., author and senior editor of *Ebony* magazine. "We will survive because of the love of the Black family." Dr. Height added that the love of what we knew as the Black family was "the only reason we, as a people, survived slavery. The bond of family was stronger than the bondage of slavery."

### Family Reunions: A Black Tradition

**M**ore than 3,000 Black families hold reunions every year in the South alone. The oldest, consistently documented Black family in the United States is the Quander family. In 1984, this family celebrated the tricentennial anniversary of Henry and Margret Quander's emancipation from slavery in 1864.

Rohulamin Quander is the patriarch of the clan and president of Quanders United Inc. Each year, since 1926, the Virginia branch of the Quander family has held a family reunion. This year they celebrated their 60th family reunion.

On August 31, 1986, the old Somerset Place near Creswell, North Carolina was the scene of a truly unique family reunion, a joyous homecoming. Over 1,000 descendants of the former slaves of the 100,000 acre pre-Civil War rice and grain plantation came from California, Washington, Nevada, New York and almost every state along the Eastern Seaboard. Four busloads of aunts, uncles and cousins, cousins, and more cousins came from Baltimore, Maryland, Washington, D.C. and New England.

During a ten-year genealogical study, Dorothy Spruill Redford—a welfare department supervisor in Portsmouth, Virginia—identified 21 slave families that lived on the Somerset Plantation from 1785 to 1863. Some 2,000 descendants of these slaves were invited to "come home" to Somerset Place.

Dorothy Redford spoke of the reunion as a healing. "With the past opening up," she said, "you feel more complete, you feel whole."

The Somerset Homecoming was truly a symbolic realization of the dream of Dr.

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Dare to be More.



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