

# Follow AOIP's Community-Building Lead: BE COUNTED

**"N**EXT to voting, completing the census questionnaire is one of the most important civic functions a Black American can do.... That questionnaire is used to determine political empowerment and crucial funding for social programs and services.... If you don't fill out the form, you're hurting yourself, your family and your community because you're not counted. If you're not counted, you don't count."

--Rudolph Brewington\*

**O**N April 1, 1990, the Census Bureau will conduct the 21st decennial census of the United States. The Census Bureau took the first census in 1790, 200 years ago, and has conducted a national census every 10 years since then. In 1990, the Census Bureau will celebrate the bicentennial anniversary of census taking in the United States.

**T**HE first United States Census was taken nearly ten years before the first census in any other country except Sweden. The requirement for a national census is contained in the U.S. Constitution (Article I, Section 2) which states:

*"Representatives...shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this union, according to their respective Numbers.... The actual Enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of Ten years, in such manner as [Con-*

*\*Rudolph Brewington is one of the hundreds of thousands of temporary workers hired by the Census Bureau to promote greater participation in the 1990 census.*

## Only you can tell us!

How many Blacks are there in the United States?

Make yourself count in 1990.  
Answer the census.

22,580,289

1970

26,495,021

1980



Population of African Americans as reported by the 1970 and 1980 Censuses.

gress] shall by Law direct."

An important stage in the national Assault On Illiteracy Program's (AOIP) Year 200 Goals is to "have [African Americans] in proportionate bargaining positions in all major political parties so as to assure an equitable number of Blacks working for us are elected and we can obtain an equitable share of all benefits from the political system." The results of the 1990 census will have a profound impact upon the ability of African Americans to achieve this goal.

More African Americans are registered and are voting than they did before 1980. The number of Black elected officials at every level of government has grown. In 1980, for example, there were 17 Blacks in the U.S. Congress; by 1988 this number

had increased to 23. During the same period the number of State elected officials increased from 323 to 413; county elected officials from 451 to 742; and municipal elected officials from 2,356 to 3,341.

As the result of Supreme Court rulings, many states, counties and municipalities have changed their election systems from at-large or multi-member districts to single-member districts. As a result of these changes, the redistricting process will have greater consequences for African Americans than it ever has.

The fact that there are more Blacks in state legislatures means that they should be able to use this Black political clout to influence the redistricting process in a manner that will

be favorable to their Black constituents.

## Why Be Counted?

**R**EPRESENTATION In the House of Representatives is determined by the results of the census, which is conducted every ten years. Once the population of a state is determined, political boundaries are drawn by state legislatures in such a way that each House district has about an equal number of people.

This drawing of boundaries by state legislatures is known as "redistricting." After each census, states redefine their districts based on the number of representatives they have been apportioned.

Changes in population since the 1980 census could affect the ability of African Americans to win election to the U.S. Congress and to state legislatures, as well as the ability to be in a position to influence legislation and policy.

Projected population loss in states like New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Illinois will cost these states at least 16 seats in the House of Representatives. These seats will be picked up by population gainers like Florida, Georgia, Texas and California.

It will be the task of state legislatures elected in the fall of 1990 to determine which districts in the state will be eliminated as a result of population losses. In the past, when states have suffered population loss, districts represented by African Americans have sustained the most dra-

(Continued on Page 9)

"Pulling Ourselves Up By Our Own Bootstraps"...A Series

Have you joined AOIP?