

The Diamond Jubilee and Beyond

As the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists, Inc. (ASBS), moves to greater heights, it is most fitting that a brief focus on its past is made in order to continue this ascension. On March 17-20, 2010, the Association will celebrate its 75th Anniversary. This Diamond Jubilee Celebration promises to be a glorious occasion for the membership's return to its birthplace-Charlotte, North Carolina.



In 1935, Twentieth Century America was dominated by political and economic events that would, seemingly, forever change this country not only politically and economically, but socially and educationally. This was the year that Germany abandoned the Treaty of Versailles, moving the world closer to World War II, Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act, giving workers the right to organize; the Social Security Act created a national plan that would pay benefits to the unemployed and pensions to those reaching advanced age; and the Work Progress Administration (WPA) was formed, creating jobs for millions of unemployed Americans.



Emerging among these colossal events was the longtime dream of the late Theophilus Elisha McKinney Sr. to establish an organization to allow Negro social science teachers to meet professionally and to exchange their social-scientific knowledge and research. At the time of the organization's initial meeting, McKinney, was Dean of Johnson C. Smith College (now, Johnson C. Smith University) located in historic Charlotte, North Carolina. The result of his dream was the Association of Social Science Teachers in Colleges for Negroes. The initial target group had as its purpose to accommodate African American Social Science scholars as they exchanged ideas, information, thoughts, and theories which would serve as a springboard for the further development of African American minds and the African American community. After



realizing that it was attracting scholars from disciplines beyond its boundary, the "Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists, Inc." (ASBS) became the heir to McKinney's dream.



The founder was in good company at the initial meeting of ASBS. McKinney was joined by other educational leaders including Ralph Bunche, who later became the first person of African descent to receive the coveted Nobel Peace Prize for his works as Under Secretary of the United Nations. The noted historian and author, Benjamin Quarles, was among the giants who gathered with Charles Harris Wesley, the eminent historian and pioneer of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History). Prominent also among the group was W. E. B. DuBois, the trained academic historian who became the epitome of sociology during this era.



From the first ASBS President Dr. Theophilus E. McKinney Sr. of Johnson C. Smith College to the current President, Dr. George L. Whaley of San Jose State University, this leadership position has been occupied by seventy leaders primarily from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). To assure that the African American community was well served during its annual conference, the Association generally selected sites that allowed easy access for students from local colleges and universities, especially HBCUs. The publishing arm of the association is the Journal of Social and



Behavioral Sciences, now edited by Dr. R. Gail Grass Fulgham at Jackson State University. Additionally, a newsletter is produced by the Association's Executive Secretary, Dr. Mary B. Myles who is also from Jackson State University.



In order to recognize excellence in service, ASBS created the prestigious W. E. B. DuBois Award Luncheon. The Executive Board selects and honors an individual who has made great strides in enhancing life and research in academe and the African- American community following the philosophy of Dr. DuBois. Since 1970, 39 scholars and prominent individuals have received this award. Some of the honored individuals include Oliver Cox, ASBS's first recipient, Vincent Harding, Horace Mann Bond, Margaret Walker Alexander, John Lewis, and Lerone Bennett, Jr., Editor Emeritus of Ebony Magazine.



Dedication of ASBS's membership to academic freedom and probing and new directions in theory and research are evidenced by the fact that 11 of its past W. E. B. DuBois Award recipients have also been past presidents of the Association. Members of this group of stalwarts are Charles U. Smith, Jacquelyn Johnson Jackson, Marguerite Rogers Howie, George Breathett, Delores P. Aldridge, Alton Hornsby Jr., John Moland Jr. Lena Wright Myers, Gordon D. Morgan, Dorothy Cowser Yancy, and LaFrancis Rodgers-Rose.