

A National Membership Campaign: A Proposal for Increasing ASALH's Membership in 2023

Dear Colleagues on the Executive Council:

As you know I have been talking about and discussing raising ASALH's membership from the roughly 3,000 members that we have now to at least 5,000, and eventually, to 10,000. Obviously, more members mean more funding for our capacity to do all of the things that ASALH does.

I want to present some ideas of how we can kick off this National Membership Campaign, raise public consciousness about ASALH, and make it a success. Of course, as some of you have already done, I welcome your suggestions, input and ideas to make our National Membership Campaign successful. I have itemized my ideas below as to how we can carry out this new National Membership Campaign.

1. **Kick off the National Membership Campaign.** As one of our branch members suggested, we need to prepare a press release and circulate it widely with the media, social media and of course, with our branches. If no one knows that ASALH is seeking new members, what is the point? So, I will draft a press release to start this part of our campaign. I will include a "case statement" as to why one should join ASALH, using the benefits of membership on the website, but also including some of the reasons and rationale for membership in ASALH. I want to tie the announcement of the National Membership Campaign to the announcement of the Black History Month Theme, Black History Month Festival, and to all of the events and programs planned for February 2023. We can also do a press conference.
2. **Phone Bank.** I want to follow up immediately on Jeff Banks's suggestion that we start a phone bank to reclaim the members who have not renewed their memberships for 2023. I have asked Sylvia to prepare a list of 200 people who did not renew their memberships. We will divide the list and ask each member of the Executive Council to call former members who have not renewed their memberships. We will have a script that each Executive Council member can use to make the calls and speak intelligently about why former members should renew their memberships with ASALH.
3. **Each One, Get One.** In this part of National Membership Campaign, I may be asking all of you to do too much in terms of supporting our membership campaign. But it needs to be done and I am going to ask. I am asking you to solicit your relatives, your friends, and your colleagues and to ask them to join ASALH. I am asking you to ask and get one new member per month for ASALH from your network of friends, relatives, colleagues and associates. Again, I apologize for adding this additional burden to your membership on the Executive Council. But, if we are going to increase our membership, all of us have to be engaged with carrying out this goal.

4. **Branch/National Membership Committee Engagement.** I need the National Membership Committee to assist in the process of increasing membership by developing strategies that will bring in new members. One of the strategies I am suggesting is to engage the branches in the National Membership Campaign. The Branches have heard about the campaign at least twice from me. Now, I want to get their suggestions, ideas and strategies about how to recruit new members. I like the “Think Tank” idea of having several of the successful branch presidents serve as a source for new strategies for increasing membership. Let me know how I can follow up to make that happen.
5. **Mass Mailings.** I also want to suggest an old idea for soliciting new memberships. Even in this digital age, I still receive *letters* from the NAACP, Tuskegee Airmen, National Museum of African American History and Culture and other organizations soliciting memberships and donations by mail. We have Constant Contact. But let’s ask for and use some of the list of our partners and like organizations to do some mass mailings.
6. **Each ASALH Committee Should Develop a Strategy for Increasing Membership!** Last fall as we were pulling together some of the strategies for the Academic Conference, we were figuring out and developing ways to get contacts, associates and people from our various networks to attend the conference. I was primarily successful in getting members of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity to attend the conference in honor of one of the organization’s former national presidents. Each ASALH committee needs to develop similar ideas to focus its programming and activities on getting people to join ASALH. There are several ASALH committee that lend themselves to this strategy:
 - a. Awards
 - b. Academic Program
 - c. Nominating
 - d. Development
 - e. Black History Month Festival

Final Words. As I have stated, I know that I am asking each member for a lot of time and support for ASALH. I want all of us to focus on recruiting new members. I think that it is a worthwhile goal to grow the organization and to make it financially solvent and successful. I was a member of ASNLH when we could not publish the *Journal of Negro History* because our finances were in the tank. I have also reread Jacquelyn Goggins’s book on Carter G. Woodson (*Carter G. Woodson: A Life in Black History* (1997)). Dr. Woodson’s struggles to finance and support the ASNLH were much more acute and critical than ours. So, I think we can make this happen because we are not relying just on new memberships, but also on our capability to get grants from foundations, donations from business and corporate partners, and our agreement with the National Park Service. So, we can get it done. We just need to get started.

Sincerely,

W. Marvin Dulaney
President

Association for the Study of African American Life and History