Dear Team:
I have been asked this question several times in recent years - "What about Caucasian Youth & Young Adults?" There is a concern that while youth within certain ethnic groups have received major focus across the NAD, leaders have noticed a decline among some Caucasian youth compared to years past.

I have sat on this burden for several years now and I refuse to ignore it any longer. I have finally been pushed to action! This symposium will cover most of our time that was planned for the Executive Youth Committee. I have spoken to most of the executive committee members, and they too feel my passion are are willing to "give away" this time for the good of the symposium. We need to get the conversation started! I believe we can start this conversation, and simultaneously, place this concern in God's hand.

AdventSource is assisting in the logistical part of this. Participants are still being confirmed. We anticipate about 300 attendees.

"What about Caucasian Youth & Young Adults?"

There is no doubt that because of the history of slavery in the United States, and the ugliness of racial discrimination and prejudice that have plagued our society for so many decades it is very difficult to have honest conversations regarding the needs of various ethnic groups, even in the church.

As a minister of the gospel it is very rare that I have used my ethnicity to make a point, however for the sake of discussion I will do so here. As an African American who was born in the south in the late 50s, I am now old enough to say that I have seen and even experienced both the good and the bad in these United States of America. However, my ministry has given me an opportunity to create bridges among people, groups, communities, and churches in order to promote the mission of reconciliation and unity, and to help make a better world.

Few will argue that over the last 20 years America has strived to place diversity on its national agenda, and some will testify that it has succeeded in many ways. But while some communities and churches have embraced this mission of reconciliation and unity, and have progressed somewhat, there are still some that struggle in this area. However, we must be able to have honest conversations, and for me, as a minister for all youth and young adults, this is one of those times.
New awareness is evident today. New voices are being raised. Many of the youth have a better understanding of where they stand on the issues that once stifled our society. It’s not that they are color-blind (which is a disease), insensitive to gender, or anti-equality, but they have chosen to respond to social issues differently. Their focus is on other things. They do not see their friends as White, Black, Hispanic, etc.; they are just their friends and the people they hangout with.

Approximately six or seven years ago while speaking at one of our universities, two Caucasian ministerial students approached me with an interesting question. They heard in my introduction that in 2002 I had directed the United Youth Congress at the RCA Dome in Indianapolis for over 20,000 predominately African American youth and young adults. Now that I was the director for youth ministry for the North American Division, their question was simply, and I quote, “What about us?” “What about Caucasian youth in North America?”

Now, standing in front of me were two intelligent, promising young adults who had heard about what the regional conferences had done and is still doing for their youth—the African American, and what Latino/Hispanic leaders are doing for their youth. The African American and Latino/Hispanic church communities have multiple events and training opportunities for their youth. Not only do they advertise their meetings, but they are able to boldly advertise workshops and seminars like “Meeting the Needs of Black American Youth” or “The Plight of Hispanic Youth in North America”, while other non-Caucasian or non-White ethnic groups have not been able to do the same. Certainly, we all agree that the church is so diverse now that many just see all our kids as youth in one body.

But the resounding question that has stayed with me for these past few years is “What about us?” This was their question, and though they may not represent the sentiments of all Caucasians, they represent enough to justify at least a discussion.

Following this experience I approached several key Caucasian leaders to see if they would assist me in addressing this but they were split over the issue. Some felt that the effort would be misunderstood because of our history, or because Caucasians are not a minority, or because research shows that many Caucasians are less challenged in certain areas compared to minorities. While these concerns may or may not be true, we do not have time for political correctness when it comes to saving the lives of our youth. Jesus says in John 10:10 “...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” Therefore when a believer asks “What about us?” it is my belief that we should and can respond in a tactful and responsible manner.

I am bringing this question to you, openly, because recently after speaking at another event that was attended by mostly Caucasians, I was approached by a 15 year old. I had just completed an altar call/anointing and what he told me shook me to my core (I will share his statement at the appropriate time). Many of our youth have the same struggles—drugs, sex, family issues, depression, cutting, etc.—all these
issues are destroying young people across the board. When it comes to destroying the hearts and minds of our youth, the devil is not concerned about ethnicity; he is like a “roaring lion” and will destroy anyone that he can. If something does not change soon many of these young people will fall through the cracks. This young man who came to me feels there is no one there for him, and no one understands his issues. I am certain that his concerns represent the concerns of many if they could express it without the risk of humiliation.

After much prayer and council, I truly believe that God has placed me in a unique position to raise awareness for youth and young adults of all ethnicities. I truly believe that we need to have an honest conversation that represents the concerns and needs of Caucasian youth in the church. We must find ways to adequately address issues concerning them and not ignore their concerns.

On March 12-13, 2013, during our NAD Youth Ministries Annual Committee Meetings at Union College in Lincoln, NE, Pastor Manny Cruz and I will convene researchers, conference and union youth directors, conference and union administrators, youth pastors, campus chaplains, university faculties, academy teachers, and selected youth and young adults for a special one and a half days symposium to officially address the issues facing Caucasian youth in the North American Division. We have already assembled a small steering team to help give direction for this discussion. This symposium will be for leaders of all ethnicities, and will be the beginning of many more to come. To adequately plan all attendees MUST REGISTER. Registration is through Plusline, at www.plusline.org

Please pray earnestly for our team and this ministry endeavor. We want to see all our young people equipped to begin and maintain a saving relationship with the Lord and each other.

If anyone has any concerns, comments, observations or suggestions that they would like the steering team to consider, please send them to my attention ASAP.

Blessings,

James L. Black, Sr. NAD Youth/Young Adult Ministries Director

**Symposium Documentation**

- [PDF letter & proposed schedule](#)

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