Did you vote today? On each of your electronic devices (phone, tablet, home and office PCs)?
In The Home Depot's fourth annual "Retool Your School" Campus Improvement grant program, Oakwoodites' online voting -- at www.retoolyourschool.com, "tweeting" and sharing of Instagram messages -- with the hashtag #OakwoodRYS2013 -- has helped Oakwood shoot to the top of the list of 75 HBCUs participating. OU went literally from the bottom of the list to the top in a matter of hours! Our closest competitor is the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

The Campus Pride Grant will go to the school with the most votes and social media activity. We're asking all of our readers to please:

1) Go online and vote for Oakwood University - once a day, every day, on every electronic device you have (smartphone, iPad, PC, etc.);
2) Tell your friends - family - church members - all of your Facebook and Instagram contacts, Twitter followers, etc. Imagine what we can do by the April 15th deadline!

The editors of OU? Oh, Yes! believe "We can do this!" We'll keep you posted.

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**Oakwoodites attend international vegetarianism conference**

Every five years, the Nutrition Department at Loma Linda University's School of Public Health conducts a scientific vegetarian nutrition conference on the health effects of plant-based diets. This event offers an opportunity for health professionals and researchers to learn from each other in plenary sessions, workshops, poster presentations and social gatherings.
During the 6th International Conference, held in Loma Linda, California, February 24-26, 2013, Dr. Marta Sovyanhadi, chair of the Family & Consumer Sciences Department (left), and dietetics students Avanelle Thomas (sophomore) and Loica Marc (senior), shared research during the poster session. The two projects presented were: 1) "Vegetarian health nuggets: are they only foods for thought?" by Loica Marc, Marta Sovyanhadi and Eva Starner; and 2) "The importance of SDA universities to emphasize the need of nutrition education and a vegetarian diet," by Marta Sovyanhadi, Avanelle Thomas and Eva Starner.

In the latest Southern Tidings --

Oakwoodites Wintley Phipps, Dr. Prudence Pollard, and Elder T. Marshall Kelly are featured on pages 28, 30 and 34 respectively, in the March, 2013, edition of the Southern Tidings.
OU employees trained in emergency response

~ by Jason McCracken, Director of LETC | Photo by Ray Leftridge

During the month of February, on Monday and Tuesday evenings, a number of faculty, staff, students and community members met in a Moran Hall classroom for the 20 hour Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) certification course.

"While it is commendable to want to assist in an emergency situation, it is much better to be trained to render good service," said Assistant Vice President for Service-learning, Mrs. Patricia Stewart Daniel, who along with Scott Worsham, Emergency Management Officer, Huntsville/Madison County, coordinated the month-long training.

The CERT Program educates people about disaster preparedness, how to look for hazards that may impact their area, and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. The course was taught by professionals from local agencies in the Huntsville/Madison community including: HEMSI, Huntsville Fire and Rescue, Emergency Management, and Madison Fire and Rescue.

Individuals who completed the course (pictured above) received a certificate and a backpack containing a vest and helmet that identifies the wearer as CERT trained, along with other essentials, such as flashlight, goggles and work gloves. CERT members were encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness activities and projects in their community.

Oakwood alum is president of Southern Africa Union Conference

My name is Tankiso Letseli and I am currently residing in Bloemfontein, South Africa. I graduated from Oakwood College (now University) in 1990 (BA Theology), Master of Divinity (M.Div) from Andrews University in 1993, MA (New Testament Studies) in 1998,

I am currently serving as the President of the Southern Africa Union Conference (SAU), Bloemfontein, South Africa (2011 - 2015). Prior to that I served as Senior Lecturer, Vice-President for Student Services, and President of Helderberg College, Cape Town, (2006 - 2010). I have also served as the SAU Family & Health Ministries Director (2002 - 2005), and also served as Departmental Director and President of the Trans-Orange Conference, Johannesburg (1993 - 2001).

I am married to Duduzile Letseli, and we have two lovely children: Thabiso (son of 21 years old) and Teboho (daughter of 15 years old).

Jesus Christ, His mission, and my family are still my passion. I am proud to be associated with Oakwood University.
Private school in Alexandria, LA with 10 students (and Oakwood alum principal) could be approved for 70 voucher slots

A private school in Alexandria could have nearly eight times its current enrollment next year through Louisiana's voucher program. Alfred Booker Jr. Academy, formerly Smyrna Seventh-day Adventist School, could be approved for 70 student spots in the Louisiana Scholarship Program that uses tax-funded vouchers to pay for students to attend private schools, school officials said.

The program currently is accepting applications for the 2013-14 academic year. The state has released the names of participating schools but has not revealed how many students each school will be allowed to accept under the program.

Read the rest of the story [here](#).
**Former OU Professor includes several Oakwoodites in "Healers in a Multi-Cultural Nation"**

Dr. Ramona Hyman, author, performance artist, poet and Associate Professor of Humanities, School of Religion at Loma Linda University, created and presented the "African American Seventh-day Adventists: Healers in a Multi-Cultural Nation" program on February 16, 2013, at the Loma Linda University Church, in Loma Linda, California.

Dr. Mervyn Warren, Dean, School of Religion and Theology at Oakwood University preached during the first service on "Faith Hall of Famers: Are we there yet?" and Dr. Calvin Rock, retired pastor, educator and Vice President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists preached during the second service on "Healed by Something Better." The online edition of the Adventist Review featured Dr. Rock's sermon in its entirety.

An amazing panel discussion on Healers in a Multi-Cultural Nation was followed up in the Damazo Amphitheatre, Centennial Complex with dynamic speakers Dr. Benjamin Baker, Dr. Andy Lampkin, Dr. Andrea Trusty King, Mr. Anthony Paschal and Dr. Maury Jackson discussing the importance of Healing in a Multi-Cultural Nation for African Americans and all Americans.
The dynamic and healing program ended with a Vespers gospel concert with Daughters of Zion and the Valley Crossroads Chorale, and a touching tribute, honor and presentation to celebrate the work of two dedicated African Americans, Drs. David and Maxine Taylor Professor of Religion and Assistant Professor of Nutrition and Dietetics at Loma Linda University.

Read more about the event here.

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**OUs Aeolians exhibit 'power, precision, inspiration' in California -- a review**

Clarence Brown (organist at the Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church in Los Angeles, and former employee at JET Magazine), had this to say about the Aeolians' ministry at the Kansas Avenue SDA Church on March 2:

"... The Aeolians, under Max Ferdinand, have surpassed human perfection and have been kissed by God into the divine. I didn't get to hear their concert at LLUC, but I was at Kansas to hear them close out the worship service. They literally transcended the congregation! Power, grace, control, precision, and inspiration . . . all at the subtle twitch of Max's eye.

"Beyond the glorious vocalizing, everyone was mesmerized by Max's movements (and non-movements). Incredible!!! I can’t imagine how the choir would have responded had Max sneezed!! LOL I heard the Aeolians brought down the house at LLU (3 standing ovations) and if they aren't enough on their own, they had the nerve to bring out Stevie [Mackey] and Shelea [Frazier] to join them in a special presentation. I know had we been there, we would have been admitted to ICU at LLUMC afterwards."

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**To finish out Spring Break -- on Sabbath, March 9:**

Worship with the Voices of Triumph Gospel Choir at the Emmaus Seventh-day Adventist Church - 1144 Flatbush Avenue - Brooklyn, New York.
Worship with the Aeolians at the
Ethan Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church - 4000 Shiloh Springs Rd. - Clayton, Ohio.

As our students prepare to return to campus from Spring Break, and for anyone else traveling this weekend -- remember to "Spring forward."

Daylight saving time begins at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 10, 2013.
(All states except Arizona and Hawaii observe daylight saving time.)

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<th>Chapel Schedule for the Remainder of Spring Semester</th>
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TEAM PR’S THREE-PRONGED MISSION: TO CAPTURE AND TO CAPSULE ‘THE OAKWOOD EXPERIENCE,’ AND TO COMMUNICATE IT WITH SPEED, ACCURACY, CONSISTENCY AND PASSION, TO THOSE ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLICS UPON WHICH OUR SUCCESS OR FAILURE DEPENDS! FOR YOUR FREE ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION TO OU? OH, YES!, EMAIL US AT PR@OAKWOOD.EDU.
Private school in Alexandria with 10 students could be approved for 70 voucher slots

HOW TO APPLY

» What: Louisiana Scholarship Program, which allows some students to use state funds to attend private schools

» Who qualifies: Students in schools that are graded C, D or F

» Income guidelines: 250 percent of federal poverty level, using a sliding scale based on family size

» Application deadline: March 15

Louisiana scholarship Program

Income guidelines

Maximum income levels to qualify for the Louisiana Scholarship Program for the 2013-14 school year:

Family size Yearly Income Weekly Income
2 $38,775.00 $745.67
3 $48,825.00 $938.94
4 $58,875.00 $1,132.21
5 $68,925.00 $1,325.48
6 $78,975.00 $1,518.75

Cenla schools eligible for the program

» Alfred Booker Jr. Academy

» Alexandria Country Day School

» Cenla Christian Academy

» Holy Savior Menard Central High School
» St. Frances Cabrini School

Editor's note: Story has been corrected to note that the school vouchers have not been approved.

A private school in Alexandria could have nearly eight times its current enrollment next year through Louisiana's voucher program.

Alfred Booker Jr. Academy, formerly Smyrna Seventh Day Adventist School, could be approved for 70 student spots in the Louisiana Scholarship Program that uses tax-funded vouchers to pay for students to attend private schools, school officials said.

The program currently is accepting applications for the 2013-14 academic year. The state has released the names of participating schools but has not revealed how many students each school will be allowed to accept under the program.

Alfred Booker currently has 10 students from kindergarten through eighth grade. The academy, named for a former Seventh Day Adventist pastor in the area, is supported by Smyrna Seventh Day Adventist Church, located next door to the school on Richmond Drive.

Alfred Booker Jr. Academy has been in the lower Third Street area since the 1960s as Smyrna, and tuition is $300 a month.

Principal Sheldon Eakins said the school always has had a low enrollment.

"Before we've maybe peaked at 20," he said.

Eakins started at the school in August and is one of two faculty members at the school. He also serves as a teacher and holds a valid teaching certificate with the state Department of Education.

He splits the students by grade with teacher Whitney Mack, who teaches the younger students. They take turns teaching physical education and electives like Spanish.

This is Mack's sixth year to teach, some of which was in Washington, D.C., and Florida. She enjoys the small class size.

"I can have some one-on-one time with the students," she said.

Mack incorporates group work into her class, which includes the younger grades at the school.

"I think they learn better when they're interacting with themselves," she said.

Eakins said the school began using Common Core State Standards curriculum -- which the state is implementing in public schools -- about three years ago.

The first step in becoming part of the state voucher program, the Louisiana Scholarship Program, was becoming an official nonpublic school, which Eakins said involved paperwork about teachers' credentials, standardized testing and more.

In January, Eakins submitted to the state a letter stating the school's intention and how many student spots it would like to receive.
Initially Eakins had wanted to apply for 25 students, which would triple his current enrollment.

But after a state Department of Education representative visited the campus in February, he said he learned the school would be eligible for 70.

Eakins said the representative saw the students and toured the school, a 25-year-old building with seven classrooms, computer lab/library, lunchroom, gym and playground.

It has the capacity for about 105 or more students, Eakins said. Two of the seven classrooms are currently being used. Both are equipped with SMARTboards.

"We have a building that's empty now," he said.

He found out the school was approved in mid-February and went through training about applications and student eligibility, which depends largely on income, residence and students' age.

Eakins said parents of his students have responded positively to being part of the program.

"The parents want their kids to be able to interact with more kids," Eakins said.

Other parents are responding, too. Within weeks of being accepted into the program, Eakins said students had already turned in applications.

"We have big plans in store for next year if we increase enrollment," he said.

If the school fills all 70 voucher spots, Eakins said he will hire more staff, likely by recruiting from Seventh Day Adventists colleges like the one he attended, Oakwood University in Hunstville, Ala.

"We do have access to instructors," he said.

As a Seventh Day Adventist church school, Alfred Booker Jr. Academy is under the jurisdiction of a regional superintendent that covers five states. Eakins said he would work with the superintendent's office in recruiting teachers as well.

Eakins said he wants to hire enough teachers to keep a low teacher-to-student ratio with no more than 20 in a classroom.

He said the urge to join the program was one to reach the community both educationally and spiritually.

"The whole purpose of joining (the program) is we have a commitment to service not only our own churches but the whole community," Eakins said. "How are we reaching out to those and witnessing if we're not proactively going after the kids?"

Eakins said students are not required to be Seventh Day Adventist, but religion class is included.

"We teach Bible," Eakins said. "We are a Christian school. We have chapel."

Pastor Jonathan McCottry said Smyrna Seventh Day Adventist Church has upgraded the school with capital improvements and new computers.

"The church has invested close to $300,000 to bringing quality education to the area," McCottry said. "We're giving people in this area a better quality of education. We're trying to do it at a low cost."
McCottry said another reason enrollment remains low is many in the area do not know about the school. He hopes the voucher program will change that.

"Give us three years, four years, and hopefully we'll be better known," McCottry said.
And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Hebrews 11:39, 40.

The principle of “something better,” nestled in verse 40 of our Scripture, is mentioned no less than 11 times in Hebrews’ memorable portrayal of the means whereby Christ reconciles lost humanity. Likewise, history reveals that nestled in the human heart the principle of “something better” is a true and traceable cause of humanity’s most noble and productive energies.

We see this concept of “something better” at work in the founding of our nation, whose pilgrims were drawn to these shores in search of religious and political freedom. We see it in the history of our church, whose pioneers assembled from various “post-Reformation groups” in response to new-found truth. And, as this month of African-American history reminds us, we see the hope of “something better” at work in the remarkable climb of the descendants of American slavery to present status.

My proposal this morning is that as we consider the role of Black Americans as healers in today’s multicultural society, we also celebrate appropriately the healing they themselves have experienced by the elevating, innervating power of “something better.”

Previously Without Hope
While many of the ships that brought slaves to these shores had such suggestive names as The Liberty, The Desire, The Brotherhood, and the Good Ship Jesus, their human cargo had no such outlook. Shoved in and shackled together for weeks in the putrid bellies of rolling ships, those who survived were disgorged upon these shores besieged and bewildered, weakened and wanting. They were shoved upon auction blocks where they were poked, prodded, beaten, bartered, and delivered into the most hopeless brand of slavery known to human history.

What distinguished American slavery as so depressingly unique is that it had no “manumission,” no exit clause. From as far back as Hebrew slavery, as noted in the book of Exodus, the cruelest of slave systems had provisions whereby, ostensibly at least, slaves could gain their freedom by an accumulation of earnings or years of service.
There was no such allowance in the slave codes of America. As a result, slaves were forced to labor day after depressing day, year after weary year, decade after dreary decade, with no hope or possibility of something better.

Often fed like animals at troughs where they thrust their grimy fingers into the mush hoping to gain strength for yet another day of unrequited labor, they worked in tattered rags, slept on muddy floors, and rose each morning to function at the mercy of avaricious, often rapacious masters. Destined to live and die in this pit of misery without a sliver of hope, their brief longevity contained no rainbow of deliverance, no ray of freedom, no light at the end of the tunnel. They were a race for whom, as one poet put it, “hope unborn had died.” There was for them no hint of healing, or hint of “something better.”

**A Glimmer of Hope**

None, that is, until in 1671, when the Bible promise of a better life in a world to come was brought to a small number of slaves on a Virginia plantation by a group of Friends, or Quakers. They were followed in 1701 by The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, a Christian forum based in England; the Episcopal Church in 1705; the Anglican Church in 1727; the Methodist Church in 1780; and the Presbyterian Church in 1794.

These brave missionaries risked their lives when infiltrating the properties of slave owners with the news of “something better,” as did the slaves who dared connect and listen.

Nevertheless, slaves found clever means to communicate with their benefactors and spread the good news across the cotton rows in whispered excitement, and from plantation to plantation by the coded beat of their speaking drums.

The good news, rudimentary as it was, stirred in their hearts visions of freedom that gave birth to singing and a brand new genre of music, later labeled the Negro spiritual.

Knowing that their masters would not be pleased, they turned their cooking pots upside down to mute their voices and sang with soulful joy, “up above my head I hear music in the air,” “swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home,” and “steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus. . . . I ain’t got long to stay here.”

Our prophet, Ellen White, affirmed the reality of many slave conversions when, in portraying the scenes of the Second Coming she wrote: “Then commenced the jubilee, when the land should rest. I saw the pious slave rise in victory and triumph, and shake off the chains that bound him, while his wicked master was in confusion and knew not what to do” (*Early Writings*, p. 286).
Not surprisingly, the ennobling power of “something better” soon generated in their hearts a determination for deliverance in this life as well. The few masters who thought that teaching them Bible verses would suppress any desire for “something better” were on the wrong side of Scriptural dynamism. Those masters who sought to keep them from Scripture lest it stir them to rebellion, had it right.

Because inevitably in the sequence of godly urgings, the “Thy kingdom come” appeal for future bliss is precursor to the “give us this day our daily bread” plea for present satisfactions. It was thus preordained and predictable that the biblical principle of “something better” would drive the slaves to overt resistance. And it did so in a number of ways.

**A Response Born of Desperation**

The first was a spate of physical attacks spearheaded by zealous slave leaders who led their ragtag followers in violent revolution against their owners. Principal among them was Gabriel Prosser (Virginia, 1800), who, inspired by Joshua 15, saw himself as the Black Samson, commissioned to lead God’s ill-equipped people against highly superior foes.

Another was Denmark Vesey (South Carolina, 1822), who, charged by the life of Moses’ successor, proclaimed himself as the Black Joshua.

Most notable of all was Nat Turner (Virginia, 1830) who, when trapped and caught after considerable bloodshed was asked moments before he was hanged if he had any final words, replied with convicted resolution, “They hanged Jesus, didn’t they?”

A second, more practical way in which the “something better” principle generated resistance was in the conduct of the Underground Railroad that spirited thousands of slaves from the cotton fields of the south all the way north to the snowy fields of Canada. The conductors who led slaves through and around dangers were Christians; the stations where they were temporarily housed were Christian churches, homes, and barns. Hiding by day and following their starry GPS by night, they waded through mosquito-infested swamps, evading bounty hunters and baying bloodhounds, bravely trudging tirelessly on to freedom.

The third and most determinative assault upon the institution of slavery fueled by the “something better” dynamic was manifested in the aggressive approaches of the abolitionist movement (1835-1865).

Abolitionists came in two categories: Christian terrorists, such as John Brown, the fiery Puritan preacher and architect of the ill-fated Harper’s Ferry, Virginia raid in 1859. Along with his colleagues, he was captured and hanged, riding to the gallows on the coffin so soon to receive his remains.

The other category of abolitionists was Christian pacifists, chief of whom was journalist William Lloyd Garrison. These were pastors, educators, editors, and statesmen who wrote and spoke with great passion against human bondage, and who with the superior weaponry of moral sanctioning successfully pricked the country’s conscience, hastening slavery’s demise.
The influence of the Christian church with its scripturally inspired mandate of “something better” did not cease with the end of slavery. It operated with needed efficiency in the post-nineteenth century as well.

**After Emancipation**

With the coming of emancipation, 4 million freed slaves (twice the number of captives that fled Pharaoh’s Egypt), 95 percent of all Blacks then in the United States, were set adrift in the land, the vast majority unlettered and unskilled. They were, for the most part, a mass of hapless, homeless, helpless wanderers.

The bitter resentment of their former masters coupled with their vulnerability made their plight (except for the psychological damage of slavery) in some ways worse than their former lot. They had been ushered into freedom under the protecting watch of the Union army. But they had no Moses to lead them, no pillar of cloud by day or pillar of fire by night.

Compounding their plight was the removal of the Federal troops from the south in 1876 by United States president Rutherford B. Hayes in fulfillment of his promise to do so if the south would vote for him. In 1896, 20 years later, the establishing of “separate but equal” in the case of Plessey vs. Ferguson further compounded the misery of former slaves and their descendants.

Early on the White church, primarily in the North, led out in the healing process; there was no Black church. However, in 1787 the first Black Christian congregation, naming itself the African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in Philadelphia. Other Black congregations followed during the next three decades. By 1918, the end of World War I, what became known as the Black Christian church, with its many branches, was fully operative.

That group, which today claims approximately 80 percent of all Black American Christians (generously aided by their White Christian counterparts) provided the primary principles and personnel for African American protest and progress during the twentieth century.

That support was direly needed not only in the south, but also in the north, which is where southern Blacks migrated in huge numbers at the time of World War I. Pushed by nature’s droughts and human cruelty on the one hand, and pulled by the promise of factory jobs and social freedom on the other, they made their way from “down south” to “down north,” as Martin Luther King, Jr. would later derisively label it, only to find themselves unprepared for the bitter cold of winter, the crowded landscape, and the ever present reality of urban crime.

Then came the 1930s and the awful depression years, followed by the 1940s, during which World War II produced more factory jobs and a second great migration of Blacks with a repeat and compounding of the woes encountered in the first. After that came the 1950s and 1960s with the bitter, bloody, riots before, during, and after the triumphs of the civil rights movement.
In the latter years of the century just ended and the early years of the twenty-first, African Americans continue to face challenges of poverty, joblessness, skills education, prenatal and elderly care, and the crippling lack of access to health care in general.

While it is accurate to say that the Christian church has through the decades been foremost among the institutions of the land in the healing of Black America, that is not to say that the church has done all that it could have or should have done. But in comparison with all other institutions, its grades are clearly superior.

**A Positive Legacy**

It was the Christian community that first said no to the sin of slavery and yes to its disenfranchised survivors. During the decades following slavery, when Blacks were denied attendance at the colleges and universities of the land, it was the church that founded a broad system of “faith-based” education institutions (primarily in the south). H. Richard Niebuhr, in his book *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, describes their birth as, “mushrooms springing up after a summer rain.”

It was the church in 1905 that supplied the charter members of the Niagara Movement, later to become the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and supplied the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s its primary spokespersons, its transportation system, its meeting houses, and its many marchers and martyrs, Black and White.

And how did we, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, relate to the needs encountered by this people, the only minority in the land brought here against its will; the only racial group whose males were castrated for spite and lynched for sport; the cultural unit whose women were so abused by their masters as to, along with later mixing with various Indian tribes, effectively eliminate the pure African strain that was brought here resulting in the redefinition of the slave descendants from African to Colored; the group decreed by the Supreme Court in the famous Dred Scott case of 1857 as “having no constitutional rights that the White man was bound to respect”; the only group in American history whose individuals, as voted by the infamous Philadelphia compromise of July, 1787, were legally declared three-fifths a person; the group that has for most of American history been the last ones hired and the first ones fired; and who, largely because of the many boundary maintaining mechanisms (formal and informal) structured by the nation, have proven insoluble in the cultural melting pot proposed by Thomas Jefferson as America’s social ideal?

**The Adventist Connection**

Our church’s contribution, given the time of its origin (1863), began slavery as slavery ended, and is a matter of good news and bad good news.
The bad news is that, as is the case with most churches with a high degree of apocalyptic expectation, our theologians tended to limit the “something better” principle. First, by framing it as a strictly spiritual notion. And second, in just as crippling a concept, relegating it to the “kingdom come,” what the cynics have coined as “pie in the sky way by and by."

The result is that we have historically functioned within the parameters of the government’s decisions regarding such issues as the fugitive slave law, separate but equal, racial quotas, miscegenation, voting rights, and the like. Change has usually come only after the government has, by changing its laws, admitted its errors.

That includes opening our institution’s doors (hospitals, churches, and schools) to all, only after the government’s overthrow of Separate but Equal in Brown vs. The Board of Education in 1954. Clearly, we preachers of prophecy have, for the most part, been far less than prophetic in regard to social justice.

The consequence in the African American sector of Adventism has been much frustration and the loss of literally thousands whose understanding of God’s “something better” in the “here and now” would not allow them permanence in a structure where this was not a priority.

But there is good news as well. The good news is that many of our founders, including John Byington, our first General Conference president, were abolitionists. The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia states of Byington, elected to office in 1863, that in his early years “he was actively anti-slavery in his sentiment.” Also that “He regularly entertained Indians and Blacks in his home, and is said to have maintained a station of the Underground Railroad at Buck’s Ridge, New York, where he lived on a farm” (vol. 10, p. 266).

The good news is that our church prophet, Ellen White, from her earliest years of ministry, issued repeated rebukes against the slave trade, and was so adamant a crusader for justice that she advocated civil disobedience rather than conformity to evils of existing law. Her words were, “When the laws of men conflict with the word and law of God, we are too obey the latter, whatever the consequences may be. The law of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey; and we must abide the consequences of violating this law” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, pp. 201, 202).

The good news is that in spite of defections from the ranks of Adventism by several notable Black leaders, we have not, as is the case with most recognized denominations, suffered major organizational schism. This is largely because of the shining examples of faithful church members such as Ruth Jeanette Temple, M.D., who was born in Natchez, Mississippi in 1892, moved to Los Angeles in 1904 as a young adult, received a five-year scholarship to the college of Medical Evangelists, and in 1918 became the first Black female to graduate from Loma Linda University. Among other accomplishments, Temple began a clinic for the underserved in southeast Los Angeles, later named after her. She died in 1984, having remained a visible, loyal Seventh-day Adventist.

The good news is that we were blessed with a succession of highly visible ministerial leaders--White and Black--whose preaching inspired unity of belief and fellowship. Evangelists Fordyce
Detamore and H. M. S. Richards, Sr. and Jr. are examples of Caucasian pastors who were forthright in this regard.

Within the Black community itself, F. L. Peterson, the first Black graduate of Pacific Union College (1916) and the first Black general vice president of the world church (1962), and evangelists E. E. Cleveland and C. D. Brooks typify many whose preaching emphasis has been pivotal to the loyalty index of Black Adventism.

The good news is that at critical periods of the past century there were presidents of the world church who boldly urged the church forward in the matter of fairness.

Two who stand out were W. H. Branson (1950-1954) and Neal C. Wilson (1968-1979). Branson’s truly ground-breaking statement to the nation’s union conference presidents and chairmen of sanitarium (hospital) and college boards on December 23, 1953 reads in part, “Seventh-day Adventists should not hold back any longer in this matter, but should step into the ranks of those organizations that are declaring themselves in favor of non-segregation in our schools and sanitariums.”

The good news is that largely as a result of Branson’s boldness and Wilson’s wisdom, and that of others, six of our nation’s nine union conferences have (or have had) Black presidents. These include the Atlantic, Columbia, Lake, Mid-America, Pacific, and Southern Union Conferences.

The good news is that the North American Division elected a Black president, Charles E. Bradford, in 1979, three full decades before its territorial counterpart, the United States of America, would do so in the person of Barak Obama.

The good news is that the second female to serve as president of a Seventh-day Adventist college or university in the United States is an African American, Heather Knight, now at Pacific Union College.

**The Journey Ahead**

But are such evidences, including the appointment of our own Barry Black as chaplain of the United States Senate, or even the $170 million in tithe returned by African Americans in 2012 signs that the patient, so badly wounded by 250 years of slavery and 90 years of legally imposed inferiority, has sufficiently healed so as to stop treatment? Or to put it another way, that this group has achieved parity in terms of professional, political, and economic status in society and/or the church?

The answer is no, not while comprising 13 percent of the population and less than 4 percent in critical professions such as law and medicine; not with 3 percent of PhDs and 40 percent of the jail population, not while earning paychecks that are 30 percent less than the national average; not with eight years less longevity for men and seven years less for women and an infant mortality 2.3 times that of the national rate.

And as regards the matter of interracial fellowship, have we achieved or are we soon likely to achieve a state of harmony that will allow us to relax or abandon our efforts for healing?
Again, the answer is no. In fact, our prophet has warned: “The relation of the two races has been a matter hard to deal with, and I fear that it will ever remain a most perplexing problem” (The Southern Work, p. 84).

However, in spite of that knowledge and the hard-wired social realities about us, we modern Christian Abolitionists, if you please, are all of us under gospel obligation to work for “something better.” And those efforts must involve better things than intermittent pronouncements regarding racial harmony.

They should include, first of all, honest desegregation, an open door policy for all as opposed to forced integration or contrived assimilation. We should not feel guilty because ours is a flower garden rather than a monolithic society, especially given the fact that a so-called colorless society is sociologically impractical, organizationally untenable, and theologically unsubstantiated.

Critical to that view is our comfort with the knowledge that, as with the day of Pentecost, it is still a fact that each distinct culture hears the gospel best in its own socialized idiom. It is wrong to label a group racist or segregationist because its members choose to worship in that language without restrictions toward others.

Second, we can and must, while maintaining the standards of excellence for which our institution, such as Loma Linda University are known, continue to expand our community-based services for the underprivileged. That should include not only “boots on the ground” ministries where people live, but again without diluting operational excellence, on-campus programs that address practical needs.

Third, our institutional calendars, churches, and otherwise, would do well to include year round education programming as today’s, involving all of its significant cultural components as a means of strengthening and healing relationships.

This Is Personal
Four years ago last month, on the very day of Barak Obama’s first inauguration, my mother died at age 96 here in the east campus hospital. Her mother, Etta Littlejohn, was a girl of 15 when she heard the message from the decks of the Morning Star, the boat built by our prophet’s son, Edson, which he sailed down the Mississippi River for the purpose of educating the children of recently freed slaves.

Etta was one of the original 16 students at what was then Oakwood Industrial School (the fortieth such school built by churches) when it doors opened in November 1896. She earned her nursing certificate, and later served as one of Ellen White’s chamber maids at the old Melrose sanitarium in the Boston area.
Etta married Robert L. Bradford, a Seventh-day Adventist minister, and became the mother of Eva, her fourth child (my mother); and Charles, her eighth and youngest (mentioned earlier).

When my mother was an octogenarian, I invited her to speak at the Abundant Life Church in Las Vegas where I was pastoring. When I asked her that morning about her topic, reminding her that it was a Back History Sabbath, her reply was, “Don’t worry; I am Black History.”

And she was. Born just 47 years after slavery and steeped in Adventism, she was an encyclopedia of historical information, an eyewitness to almost a century of transitional events in society and the church.

That reply also contained all the soulful pride of one whose great-grandfather’s name was changed from Weems to Bradford, that of the White family relocating from Alabama to Kansas on whose wagon his parents placed him knowing that his opportunities for “something better” would be enhanced.

It was the answer of one whose years on earth doubled those that intervened between the end of slavery and her birth, and who through those decades had witnessed her people’s climb against staggering odds from the out-house of legal discrimination to the White House of international recognition, a feat of faith and works endurably fashioned by the call of “something better.”

It is paradoxical, absolutely stunning, and unspeakably incomprehensible; in fact, humanly inconceivable that Jesus was willing to undergo the exact reverse of that process in order to free us from the slavery of sin.

He left the health and happiness of glory, the conduct of universal affairs, the rule of interferential operations, and the praise of adoring angels to save us from the slavery of sin and the tyranny of death. He came from opulence to obscurity, from riches to rags, from sovereignty to servant hood, to bear our grief’s and carry our sorrows.

He came all-God and all-man. He was in all the right ways “separate but equal.” His divinity was separate from ours but equal with the Father’s; His sinless humanity was separate from ours but equal with unfallen Adam’s; and at the end He was separated by a cloud that engulfed Him in the final moments of His agony. But because He was equal with the law, He could and did die as our penalty for its breaking. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5, KJV).

By His precious blood Jesus signed our emancipation proclamation and opened freedom’s gates to all humanity. Then, mission accomplished, He ascended back to glory. But He did not leave us comfortless, He did not pull the troops. In fact, He sent reinforcements in the Person of the Holy Spirit, and promised never to leave us, never to leave us alone. He pledged that even as He came down to represent the Father to us when He got home, He would represent us to the Father and further, make a way that where He is there we might be also.
Because of that He is not only the courier of something better, He is something better! Hebrews affirms He is a better tabernacle, a better hope, a better resurrection, a better reward, and, most meaningfully, a better sacrifice, a better high priest; Himself the offering, Himself the offered.

It is into His nailed-pieced hands, hands that now present to the Father His faultless blood as something better than our efforts for forgiveness, that offer us His righteous robe as something better than our relative perfection, that in which we lodge our pleas and rest our hopes: our pleas for tolerance to accept difference, for boldness to confront oppression, and our hope of His soon return and the inauguration of the peaceable kingdom where the redeemed will never cease their enhancement. As we now see through the glass darkly, we will see Him face to face, ever reveling in untarnished fellowship with one another in unmarred, unmitigated, unbroken, unhindered, unwavering, unlimited, untroubled, untiring, unending communion with Him.

Will you join me in that quest?
Dr. Ramona Hyman presents "Healers in a Multi–Cultural Nation" program

Dr. Ramona Hyman, Associate Professor of Humanities, School of Religion at Loma Linda University presented the African American Seventh–Day Adventists: Healers in a Multi–Cultural Nation program on Saturday, February 16, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dr. Ramona Hyman

PRLog (Press Release) – Mar. 4, 2013 – Dr. Ramona Hyman, author, performance artist, poet and Associate Professor of Humanities, School of Religion at Loma Linda University, created and held an African American Seventh–Day Adventists program called Healers in a Multi–Cultural Nation on Saturday, February 16, 2013 at Loma Linda University Church in Loma Linda, California. Dr. Mervyn Warren, Dean, School of Religion and Theology at Oakwood University preached during the first service on “Faith Hall of Famers: Are we there yet? and Dr. Calvin Rock, retired pastor, educator and Vice President of the General Conference of Seventh–day Adventists preached during the second service on “Healed by Something Better”. An amazing panel discussion on Healers in a Multi–Cultural Nation was followed up in the Damazo Amphitheatre, Centennial Complex with dynamic speakers Dr. Benjamin Baker, Dr. Andy Lampkin, Dr. Andrea Trusty King, Mr. Anthony Paschal and Dr. Maury Jackson discussing the importance of Healing in a Multi–Cultural Nation for African Americans and all Americans. The dynamic and healing program ended with a Vespers gospel concert with Daughters of Zion and the Valley Crossroads Chorale and a touching tribute, honor and presentation to celebrate the work of two dedicated African Americans Drs. David and Maxine Taylor Professor of Religion and Assistant
Professor of Nutrition and Dietetics at Loma Linda University.

This program, Healers in a Multi-cultural nation, is the mantra that Dr. Ramona Hyman wants everyone to voice anytime someone opens his or her mouth in America. “I hope that as people think of African Americans they will think of a people whose improvisational spirit helped them to survive and flourish though they were enslaved. I hope that as people think of the African American, they hear the sweet, multi-generational “souls of black folk.” In my soul I find in the African American a seed of healing that has imbued within the African American veins of beauty, strength and a love that binds us, that holds us and that rocks us,” says Dr. Hyman.

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**About Dr. Ramona Hyman** – Dr. Ramona Hyman is a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She is an Associate Professor of Humanities, School of Religion at Loma Linda University. In addition to, she is an author, performance artist, essayist and poet. She earned her B.A from Temple University, her MA from Andrews University and her PhD from the University of Alabama. Dr. Hyman has served as a speaker for the Alabama Humanities Foundation and a poet in resident for the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the Huntsville Arts Council. She has been the recipient of the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminars for College Teachers grant. Dr. Hyman has served as an adjudicator for Faculty Research Awards for the National Endowment for Humanities in Washington, D.C. Dr. Hyman’s literary work has been included in journals and anthologies such as Amiri and Amini Baraka’s *An Anthology of African American Women Writers* (Marrow Press), *African American Pulpit, Message, and African American Review*. She is a consulting editor for *Message* and the author of the collection of poetry, *In the Sanctuary of a South*. Dr. Hyman’s stories are designed for all audiences: academic institutions, religious and social organizations.

Dr. Hyman is currently available to conduct seminars and lectures and present her poetry and stories to churches and businesses. For more information, you may email her at rhyman@llu.edu.

**About Loma Linda University** – Loma Linda University (LLU) is a Seventh-day Adventist educational health-sciences institution with more than 4,000 students located in Southern California. Eight schools comprise the University organization. More than 55 programs are offered by the schools of Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, Religion and Behavioral Health. Curricula offered range from certificates of completion and associate in science degrees to doctor of philosophy and professional doctoral degrees. Students from more than 80 countries around the world and virtually every state in the nation are represented in Loma Linda University’s student body. LLU also
offers distance education. For more information, visit the website at [www.llu.edu](http://www.llu.edu).

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