



HONOR IN THE HOOD

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Mom bounces and tussles with her baby boy on her knee and tells him, "Fight, fight, fight!" The live-in father figure tells the five-year old boy that if he sees him back down again from fighting [a man who was pretending to fight the boy], he'd whip his butt. A mother brings a van load of her children into the project to join a fight. Partially naked young women brawl in front of apartments. Boys maybe 10

years old throw whatever they can find at a church youth team that drove 600 miles to love them. The mother of a young boy bloodied after biting a gash in another's arm told a friend, "He'd better start fighting back." It's an immediate solution. Why, then, do we wonder when boys later fight with a gun, instead of with teeth or fists?

Why the anger and violence? The inner city¹ is an honor-based culture². Justice is one's own responsibility. If you're weak, you will face further harassment and to call the police would make your life harder. So you act tough. Another reason is that children and youths have not been given the wisdom or taught constraint by fathers and other older men. Even a small child may "cuss out" an adult. Third, they have not been taken to church or nurtured toward God by fathers and mothers. The trend is worsening. If the knowledge of God can be lost in only one generation³, what can be expected after several generations without godly training? In many families Dad and grand dad and great grand dad are almost unknown⁴.

Fourth, and closely related, there is no ultimate truth in our culture. All truths are relative. The individual is a god, a law unto self. S/he exploits others. Personal honor comes before someone's life. Sexual satisfaction comes before dignity and honor, or the nurture of resultant offspring. Making money is more important than what happens from drug sales. Untruth is rampant. Cults, conspiracy theories and secret knowledge heresies are loudly defended, as Islam may be. The hood is the epitome of the American "autonomous culture"⁵. Daniel Yankelovich observed: "If you feel it is imperative to fill all your needs, and if these needs are contradictory or in conflict with those of others or simply unfillable, then frustration inevitably follows."⁶ This

may partly explain floating anger in the projects and in our society generally. As Ravi Zacharias notes, relativism is another name for anarchy⁷, which leads to the chaos so often encountered in the projects.

The hyper-ghetto may be a preview of US urban culture in another few years, with no inner commitment to the rule of law. We're going adrift, autonomous, without absolutes, each living for self⁸.



How is such a culture penetrated by the Gospel? We're feeling our way along. We're regularly interceding for specific people. We've been seeding the area for ten years with many hundreds of free modern-language New Testaments, and carefully selected tracts. We regularly distribute 100 "Our Daily Bread" devotional booklets and another--"What on Earth am I Here For?", by Rick Warren. We help sponsor or support local events which share the Gospel. The Westside A Team, some of whom appear on page one, identifies, be-friends and disciples Christian leaders living in the project. These local leaders field questions and engage in spiritual debates at all hours, with even the most hardened. We may follow disciples to new homes and visit in jail. We pray for divine appointments to build new redemptive relationships and try to be good news, such as helping to find jobs. Recently we began the Westside Ministry Network⁹, to get to know others working at the Westside and to coordinate resources. Several friends from other churches have started a weekly Bible study and church. As Zacharias stated, "*The soul of a nation is changed one person at a time.*"¹⁰ Few say it as clearly, but it's true for a nation, as for a neighborhood.

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- 1 College Hill Courts would qualify as a "hyper-ghetto", defined as [B]lack neighborhoods... in which two-thirds of more of the families were headed by single mothers and three-quarters of all births were illegitimate." David T. Courtwright, *Violent Land: Single Men and Social Disorder from the Frontier to the Inner City*, p. 5, ISBN: 0674278712.
 - 2 Judges 2:10 And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. (ESV)
 - 3 "Honor ... has been succinctly defined as a system of beliefs in which a man has exactly as much worth as others confer upon him. Good opinion is won or lost by the way he handles himself in conflicts. To fail to respond to a challenge or insult is to lose face and therefore surrender self-esteem." Courtwright, p. 28
 - 4 An interesting analogy exists among elephants. Young bull elephants left to themselves wantonly killed white rhinos, but were quickly brought under the control of older male elephants that were flown in. However, younger bulls will also follow older bulls who are out of control, so the patterning goes both ways. See <http://thesestonewalls.com/gordon-macrae/in-the-absence-of-fathers-a-story-of-elephants-and-men/> and <http://voices.yahoo.com/bad-elephants-teach-bad-behavior-11000372.html?cat=58>
 - 5 "Here every individual is self-determining and independent of authority. In short, autonomous cultures deny any moral authority and shrug their shoulders at intuition.", Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us From Evil*, p. 93, ISBN: 084993950X
 - 6 Quoted by Zacharias, p. 99
 - 7 Zacharias, p. 219
 - 8 "...it is not sufficient just to have a law "out there" for people to obey. There must be an inner urge, or hunger, to keep and honor that law because it is good. Secularism cannot accomplish this in the hearts and mind of people, because the mind it has created is a pragmatic one, and pragmatism will always find ways to circumvent and misuse the law rather than to revere it." Zacharias, p. 53-4



Tonya Rooks (right) partners with RMNI to help Westside residents find jobs



Some attending a Westside Ministry Network meeting

Prayer and Praise

- ↑ Thanks for prayer, gifts and encouragement!
- ↑ Two breakthroughs added about 60 AfAm missionaries to the census! Pray for continued good cooperation.
- ↑ We're grateful for the Westside A Team volunteers and others with whom we partner there.
- ↑ Pray for radical salvations. Pray for prayer warriors to come together for the Westside.
- ↑ Pray that we can complete the website update soon.
- ↑ The square kilometer of land in S. Sudan is now owned by our church friends! Please pray for wise and consistent development of this huge property for the

Kingdom, using the new block machine & team.

- ↑ Our Sudanese ministry partner Patrick was injured in his eye. He's seeing a visiting American ophthalmologist—pray for healing.
- ↑ Pray for jobs for Kippy, Oscar and Gary.
- ↑ Pray for effectiveness of the next meeting of the Westside Christian Network, Sept. 10.
- ↑ Pray for a spiritually and physically strong team to serve in the July 2014 S. Sudan ministry.
- ↑ A local leader and I are

in a Life Transformation group at the Westside—pray for other local leaders to meditate regularly upon the Bible.

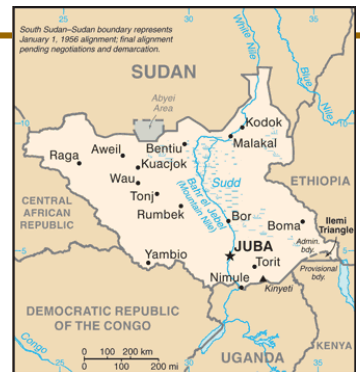
- ↑ Pray for 4-5 Sudanese MA (Bible) students attending another module of work in August at Westminster Seminary and for ministry certificate students to grow.
- ↑ Pray that two AfAm churches that have requested help to develop their global missions program will move out.
- ↑ Pray for wisdom, strength and open doors for ministry and to abide in Christ.

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www.RMNI.org



Another S. Sudan church property ready for a sanctuary—pray it is built



South Sudan Ministry Opportunity

July 12-26, 2014 See www.rmni.org/global-and-short-term-missions/sudan.html

Our eighth ministry trip—we design a ministry for you around your gifting. South Sudan remains wide-open to ministry at this time. Physically fit evangelists, teachers, builders and medical personnel are needed. The fee is \$2,300, plus airfare to Africa, visas, immunizations and outfitting. Call us at 423-822-1091 or email and we'll provide information. S. Sudan needs everything good, particularly the Gospel. You can make a difference in an infant nation! Please consider joining us and praying for this work.

