



Set for the Journey!



Please welcome DVULI's newest City Coordinators. This is the selected team that will lead the class of 2015. If you know urban youth leaders in their cities that are good candidates for the DeVos investment, please contact our office. (Pictured L-R)

Kirk Davis – Oakland/San Francisco

Monisha Randolph – Dallas

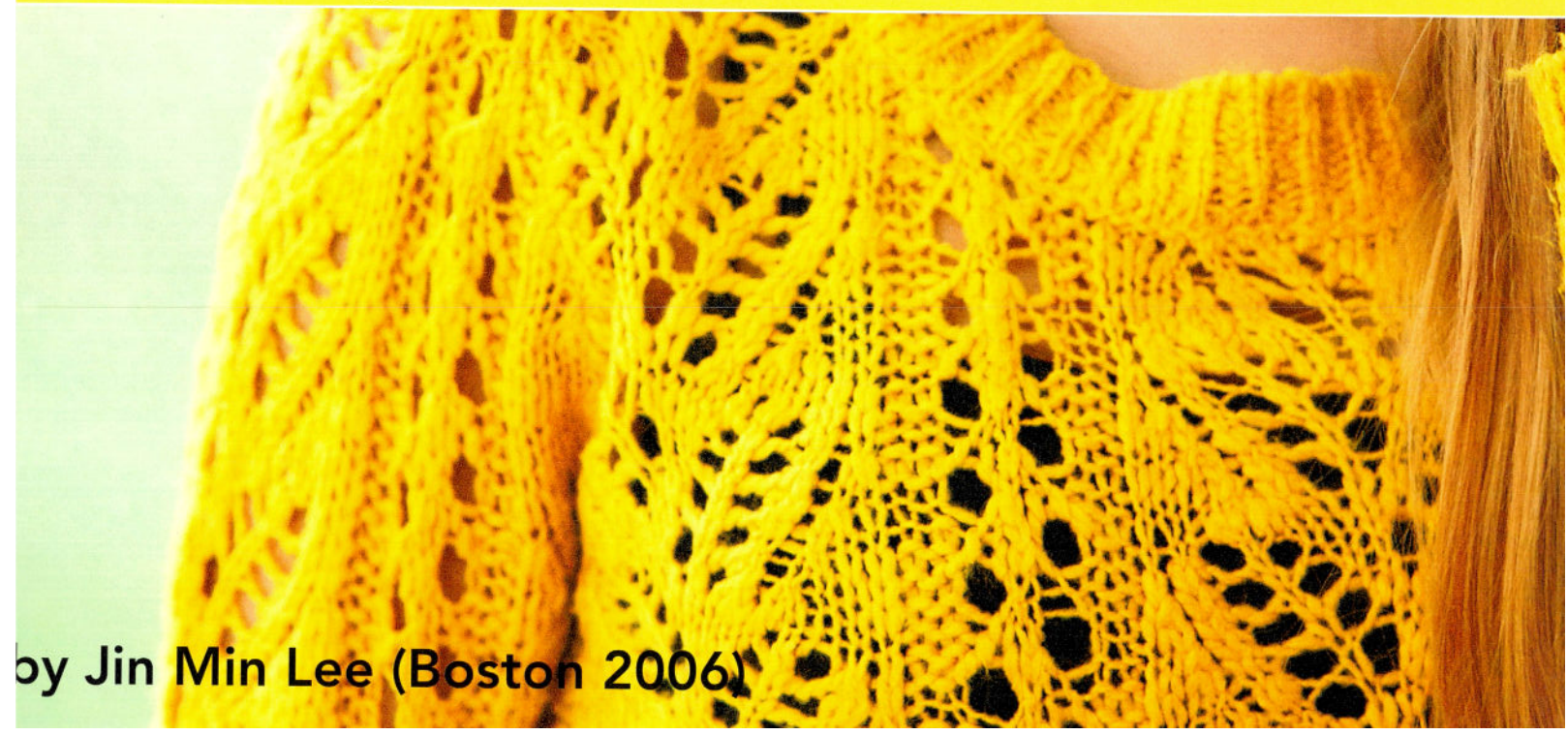
Robert Caldwell – Columbus, OH

Sara Money – Albuquerque

Matthew Farmer – Kansas City



Her Eyes Filled with Tears



by Jin Min Lee (Boston 2006)

I didn't know Julie* very well, but could tell that she was desperate to talk. Statistically, she is one of the two in every ten millennials under thirty who believe that church attendance is important¹. Underneath her complaints about the shortcomings of individual Christians and the Christian community, there lies a deep hunger for a sense of belonging and purpose. It's ironic that Julie and her peers are 24-7 surrounded by social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter claiming to connect people and celebrate life's great moments like never before.

Julie has a lot of friends and people to hang out with, but very few who understand who she really is and engage in the messy challenges of life and faith together. Many would call her successful as a college and law school graduate. She is now a practicing attorney in her mid-twenties, but a first job left her scarred with feelings of rejection and failure. In the midst of this painful season of self-consciousness and doubt, Julie decided to throw herself headlong into a less-than-perfect church and their social justice efforts.

I saw a lot of myself in the young woman in front of me, so full of energetic idealism and frustration at reality. Looking back, my twenties were incredibly awkward, confusing and full of hard-won lessons about God, the world and my place in it. I literally cringe thinking about what those years would have felt like under the constant scrutiny of social media. For one, it would have magnified my insecurities and given a steroid-boost to my bad habit of comparing. Yet, this is Julie's reality and it's clear she's buckling under its weight.

After listening for a while, I asked Julie, "*Do you believe in a God who can transform? Do you trust Him to do it?*" The conversation started to move away from what was wrong with the church, Christians and the world, and shifted to who Jesus was/is and how he suffered to love us and live by what he believed in. "*Who do you want to be, and what are you willing to die for?*" Her eyes filled with tears as she realized the Truth in these questions, and that it would require a healthy dose of hardship and loneliness to live this way.

Social media ends up giving us a false sense of connection and instant "social gratification." Just as God designed our bodies to thrive on unprocessed foods and exercise, our souls need the nourishment of the Bible and authentic relationships. In this way, Facebook and the like can leave us paradoxically malnourished and obese in our relationships that may be more virtual than actual.

No matter how many 'likes' Julie gets on Facebook, she needed face-to-face interaction with a person who cared to feed her deeper relational hunger.

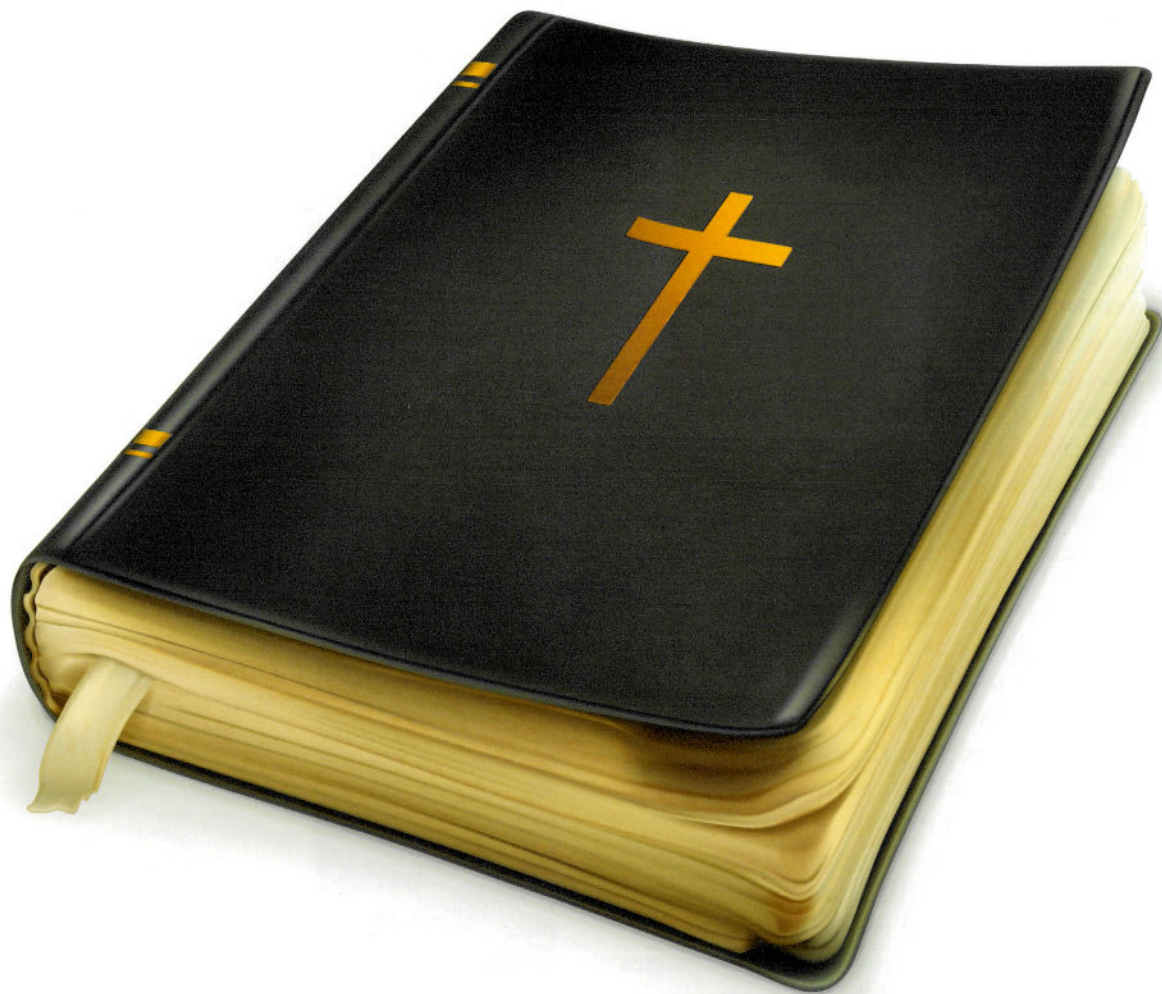


Jim Min Lee (Boston 2006) is a member of the DVULI Millennial Think Tank.



¹ <http://www.christianpost.com/news/study-analysis-6-reasons-why-only-two-in-10-millennials-believe-church-attendance-is-important-116882/>. Accessed July 31, 2014.

An Irresist



V

By Din E. Tolbert

ible Urge

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(New York City 2009)

Two years ago, I heard a preacher make a plug for the value of printed text Bibles. She argued, while introducing her sermon, that there was an additional spiritually enriching element to thumbing through pages to find the assigned text, and that something was lost with this “scroll and tap” on a glass screen navigation of God’s word. A portion of the congregation erupted into loud cheers and thrust their Bibles into the air – a show of solidarity and agreement. I shrugged, then scrolled and tapped a few times until the screen on my smartphone displayed the passage she had announced as her thematic scripture.

A few months before that, the Communications Director at my church had begun to make appeals for ministers to submit ideas for digital content, so that the ministry would always have something available for members to see, connect with, comment on and share. We were expanding the kingdom by beefing up our digital presence. I knew both of these moments were about the changing shape of church and religious life, in light of technological innovation. I did not know that my generation, the Millennial Generation, was at the center of these and much larger conversations about preference, spiritual formation, and relevance. Now I understand that the survival and vitality of the church, as an institution, rests on whether it can engage members

in the 20 and 30 something age group and get us to commit to attend, evangelize and give like previous generations.

Our religious orientation

In no uncertain terms, the church has a complex task in

has ever existed in this country. Some of our BIG myths have been dispelled i.e. our choice in information gathering and media consumption (6 companies control 90% of American media, down from 50 companies just over two decades ago), that our great and powerful country is immune to foreign terrorism, or that the mere election of a Black president would bring about a utopian, post-racial America. Coping with what we have learned is scary, messy, and exhausting, but we do try... to fight for equality where we



front of it: outside of just technology, Millennials have been impacted by our inherited world in a number of ways that set us at odds with its traditions and institutions. American Millennials have grown up during two wars and an economic recession that blew the lid off of the largest (and still widening) gap between the “haves” and “have nots” that

don’t see it, to seek out more organic, crowd-sourced reports on world news, and to interpret/ use that information in ways that fuel and direct us toward hope, peace and positive change. All of this informs our religious orientation.

So much of the technology use my generation is known for is about reimagining and reshaping the world towards that hope, peace and change. Our social networks make the distances across oceans, mountains and deserts smaller and blur some of the lines separating “self” and “other.” Our smart phones are veritable Rosetta stones in our hands, offering tap and scroll access to how someone 10,000

miles, 1 language, and 3 regional dialects away understands what we are experiencing, or thinking about, in real-time. Millennials are ever exposed to the changing beliefs of our global peers.

We can't resist

The irresistible urge to re-imagine everything, lessen distance, and blur distinction is at the core of our identity. Again, we don't just want our technology to expand our world. Stop me if you know (or are) a 20-something White person who has said this: "I don't see race... just people." People of color tend to see this as dismissive of their heritage, culture, and individual beauty. Yet, it is completely plausible that a White Millennial sees it as a well-intentioned attempt to break down a barrier that has led to so much tension and terror throughout human history. So, that same individual would stand front and center at a rally decrying police violence against minorities, motivated by the same sense of the importance of social justice that defines Millennials as a whole. But his or her idea of a solution would probably be a lot different from what the rest of the crowd is thinking.

This gap-bridging and blurring doesn't reverentially stop at the door to our religious lives however. We are frustrated with the "either ors" of holiness/compassion, intellect/fait, science/Bible, etc. Why can't it all just get along somehow? In a sense, our ideal faith would consist of beliefs and practices that existed only in the sweet spot of that Venn diagram. Since the religious experiences we often have don't look like that, you might rightly assume that there's some

measurable discontentedness. We are less affiliated with a particular religion than previous generations, less confident that God exists, and more prone to leave the faith tradition of our upbringing without adhering to a new faith (almost 1/5 of us leave and stay gone). You might not expect that a 2011 Pew study revealed that we pray slightly more often than previous generations, take less issue when churches or church leaders become involved in politics, and for those of us who do believe in God, we actually believe with as much absolute certainty as our elders.

Reaching the Millennial

And what of Jesus? Well, believers and nonbelievers like Him and believe He'd be great to meet. We just don't always think churches let us do that enough. Like us, He seems very social 'justice-y', interested in breaking down the walls that separate people, and quite disinterested with maintaining the status quo. Most similarly, He exudes confidence that the way He has reimagined the world is the way it actually should be.

Churches and ministries should always be mindful to keep this Jesus – this almost too good to be true figure who was super approachable, and brought nothing but a timeline-altering gift of larger-than-life love – at the center, at the edges and all throughout. The most important step to engaging Millennial's about faith is perspective shift. This conversation is not about diverting from (or watering down) the real work and message of the Church for the purpose of appealing to a new group. This is about passing down Christ-centered ideals to a younger

generation and allowing us to use tools we are proficient with to carry on the legacy and the purpose of the Church. This is even more so about expanding God conversations to include language Millennials understand, so that we too may be ushered into a more abiding life in the presence of God...and that is God's will for His people, revealed through scripture, whether you "scroll and tap" or "thumb through" to find it.



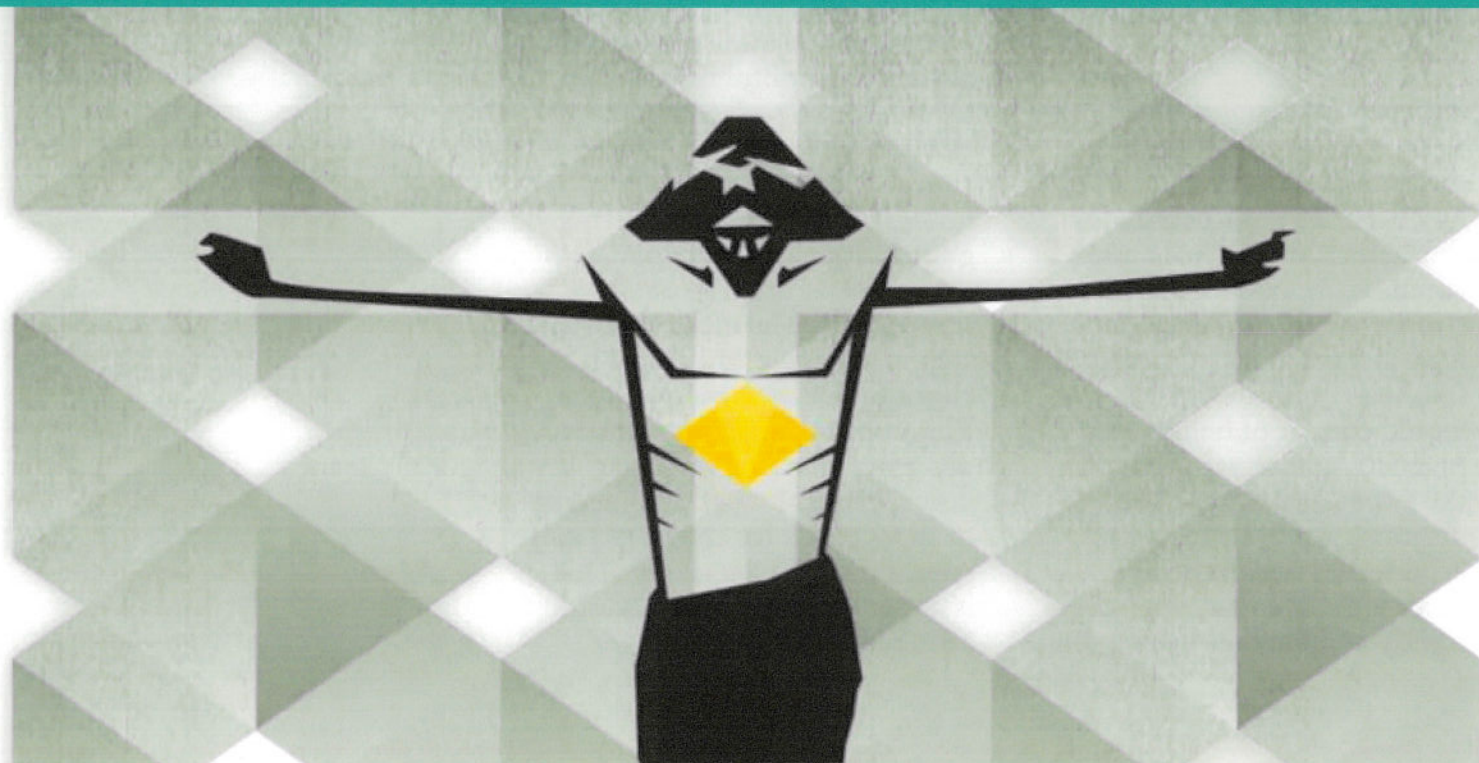
Din Tolbert
(New York 2009)
currently serves
as the Protestant
Chaplain at
The Children's
Village in Dobb's
Ferry, NY. He is a
licensed minister
with The Greater

Allen AME Cathedral and recognizes
that first and forever ministry is to his
family; wife
Destiny and
daughter
Acacia.



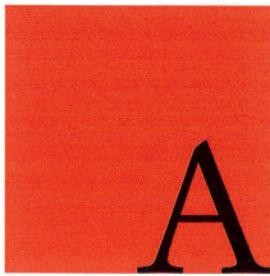


STREETLIGHTS



Flavored Bible

By Gerald Bell



Although I am not a coffee fiend, I'm very intrigued by the diverse blends, flavors and forms coffee marketers have created in recent decades. From medium roast to bold and robust - caffeine (or decaf) lovers can get their "cup-o-fix" perfectly fashioned for their own palate. When I drink coffee, I prefer Cinnamon Hazelnut Decaf, with French Vanilla Coffee Mate and two Splenda.

I would have never imagined that our spiritual taste buds would be treated to the same diversity, until recently when I was introduced to a new flavor of the Holy Bible.

Streetlights is the world's first urban multimedia Bible – it uses audio, video and curriculum tools to communicate the transforming Word of God. It's specially blended for the "God thirsty or sampler" who might find the discipline of reading asking a bit much of them.

Scott Grzesiak (Chicago 2007) is part of the team that started the *Streetlights* project to address the needs of young people who simply could not pick up God's Word and read it for themselves. This was due in part to illiteracy, lack of education, and lack of parental presence. Their Chicago based ministry, GRIP, thought it important to deliver God's Word in a way that all people - especially youth - could understand.


Listening, you'll hear top quality music tracks accompanying crafty spoken word artist and poets. Watching, you'll see the backdrop of urban life, the faces of authenticity and a passion for the truth.

This is a phenomenal blend of skilled vocalists, musicians, producers, videographers, editors and writers who have expanded how the Bible speaks to people's heart. Much like what Starbucks did with caffeine for the coffee drinker. Today, *Streetlights* has become an excellent tool for anyone involved in discipleship, and is also in demand as a resource to the body of Christ throughout the world. In addition, it is a social media friendly tool that emerging and future generations will find fits how they're wired.

Visit: Streetlightsbible.com

Welcome Claudia Witte





The DVULI staff is excited to introduce our new administrative assistant Claudia Witte. She will be responsible for providing administrative support to the DVULI staff, which includes scheduling meetings, coordinating travel arrangements, compiling expense reports, managing correspondences, and other tasks that support the implementation of DVULI.

Claudia comes to us with a background in International Relations, Law, Governance and Development. “What excites me is being involved in a great program that is concerned with the development of leadership roles in the community,” said Claudia. “I have a passion for human rights in the area of education and I believe education is very important in leveraging our society.”

Claudia is an experienced program manager who has worked for a number of years with several organizations and in various fields. She said of her new position, “I look forward to connecting with the DVULI staff, cohorts and alumni and help them have a smooth and productive learning process as they experience the Initiative.”

Claudia is a native Belo Horizonte, Brazil and resides in Wyoming, MI with her husband Mark and their newborn son Oliver John Witte.

Please join us in welcoming Claudia to the DVULI family. She can be reached at claudiaw@dvuli.org.



CALLING SOON A LIAISON NEAR YOU **2014 AND BEYOND**

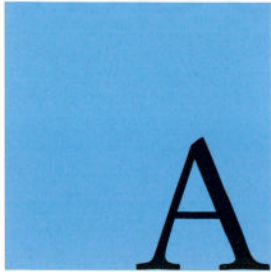
APPROVED FOR DEVOS ALUMNI AUDIENCES ONLY



LIAISON CONVERSATIONS INCLUDE

**REFLECTIONS, LAUGHTER, BREAKTHROUGH CHECK-IN,
REUNION INVITES, PERSONAL AND MINISTRY UPDATES,
PRAYER REQUESTS, SOME TEARS, MUCH GRATITUDE,
NETWORKING, FOLLOW UP, CELEBRATE STRATEGIC,
SIGNIFICANT AND SUSTAINABLE CHANGES.**

By Cynthia Burton (San Diego 1999)



A few years ago I received a surprising phone call from Rick Diaz, my DVULI Liaison. He gently offered me the opportunity to engage in a few minutes of reflection and dialog about life after my DVULI experience. That conversation allowed me to relish in the tremendous amount of personal and spiritual growth that has taken place in my life since I graduated from DVULI in 1999. The conversation also sparked feelings of gratitude for the investment, time and commitment given to me through DVULI.

As I settle now into my new role as a DVULI Liaison for Southern California, I thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to connect with alumni each year to experience those moments of reflections and to dialog about their desire to be a return on the DVULI investment. The relationships that formed in your city cohorts were grounded with a commitment to doing kingdom work for a lifetime together. I encourage you to eagerly anticipate the opportunity to stay connected to your city Liaison at least once a year. It is our intention to keep the lines of communication open for a lifetime. We are committed to supporting and networking with you in hopes that we all can see the personal gains that the DVULI investment is having among urban leaders such as you.

Please don't let the phone go to voicemail when your Liaison calls!



Catrina Rule (Grand Rapids 2006) earned MA degree in Business Administration



Chuck Harper (Albuquerque 2004) named General Director of Western Indian Ministries



Byron Peterson (Portland 2013) named Associate Pastor of Rehoboth World Healing Center



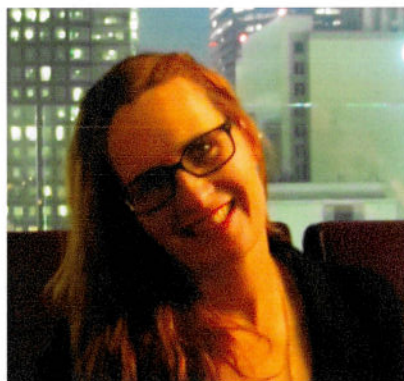
Edwin Arevalo (Paterson 2001) earned MS degree in Christian Counseling 5/17/14

Alumni Updates

For more visit: facebook.com/dvuli



Marvin Jacobo (YFC 2010) named Executive Director of City Ministry Network



Jennifer Hicks (Los Angeles 2010) named Assistant to the Executive Director of Homework House



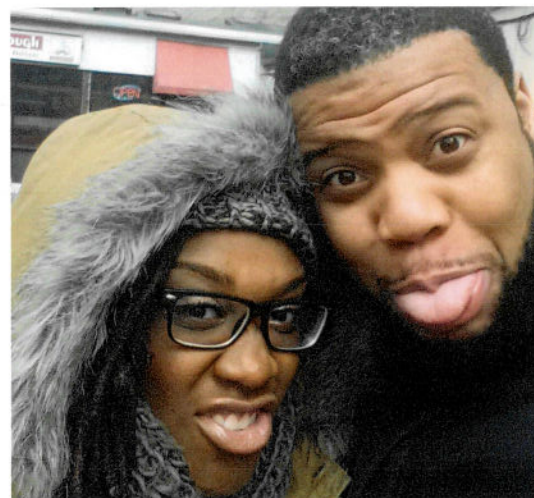
Natividad Mendoza (Phoenix 2008) received 2013 Epoch Award for Outstanding Service



Candice Austin Wynn (Miami 2013) & Maxim had Mason Austin Wynn 1/31/14



Marvin Daniels (Chicago 2002) named Executive Director/CEO of The Hope Center in KC



Din Tolbert (New York 2009) & Destiny were married 5/5/14