

*Jeron "Bookie" Gates Ministry after MLB*

*Starrs Scenario Plan in Columbus*

*Remembering Mrs. Helen DeVos*

*Mayra Nolan At Work Fitting In*

  
**ON THE  
LEVEL**



# ***Hitting Home Runs at Home***

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# BE THERE FOR IT

BUT ARE WE READY?

Editorial by Mayra Macedo-Nolan (Los Angeles 2003)

Back when I was running an after-school program in my neighborhood, I had no idea that a decade later I would be sitting around the table at a historical local church, in rooms where church priorities are set, where roles of women in church leadership are determined, and where decisions are made regarding if pursuing racial justice is a priority for the church in 2017. I had no idea what was ahead, or what it would take to sustain me, a girl from East L.A., in those spaces.

My church is a 120-year-old, historically white, upper-middle-class, conservative evangelical church. It carries with it a legacy of global mission and a reputation as a pioneer in various

aspects of mission and church life. Though much of the work of this church is worthy of praise, some requires repentance. It was here that the concept of the homogenous church unit was incubated – a theory that perpetuated segregationist practices and ideologies, and thus inherently produced and maintained generations of predominately white male leadership.

My story is not unique. White Christian organizations and institutions who minister in communities of color are bound to end up with at least one of me on staff. One of me that God elevates to spaces of power. So how do youth leaders, who are often people of color, fit into

these leadership spaces? Further, how do women of color, with our intersectional marginalized identities and experiences, fit, survive, and thrive here? How do we *be there for it*? These are critical questions I have been asking and exploring answers to over the past few years.

There is a need for people of color (PoC) to gather whenever they are in environments like these. This phenomenon of PoC life-gatherings, which serve as a triage unit or an ICU, are becoming increasingly common. Sometimes they happen in public, but often they take place in secret. One such gathering happened a few years ago in the lobby of a conference hotel. The result of the frustration, grief and



# 2018 Save the Dates

**MARCH 2-3**

Legacy Conference Los Angeles, CA



**MARCH 24**

Legacy Conference Houston, TX



**MAY 17-19**

Urban Youth Workers Institute Los Angeles, CA

**JUNE 12-14**

National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast Washington, DC

**The National Hispanic  
Prayer Breakfast**

**JULY 19-21**

Legacy Conference Chicago, IL

**NOVEMBER 1-3**

Christian Community Development Association  
National Conference Chicago, IL



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## Remembering Mrs. Helen DeVos

February 24, 1927 – October 18, 2017

The DVULI staff is mourning the loss of Mrs. Helen DeVos who went home to be with the Lord on October 18, 2017.

The life of Mrs. DeVos—wife, mother, and philanthropist—will always be remembered by her family, friends and beloved community.

The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative is a reflection of her generosity and love for children and families, and we will dearly miss her loving and gentle spirit.

Continued prayers are requested for Mr. DeVos and the entire DeVos family.

The official Helen DeVos tribute website can be viewed at [helendevos.com](http://helendevos.com).



# Dream Big, Think Small

Living an Extraordinary Life One Day at a Time

Resource recommendation by Ron Carter

Every now and then even leaders need to be reminded that overnight success is a myth. Pastor Jeff Manion does this in his recently released book, *Dream Big, Think Small: Living an Extraordinary Life One Day at a Time*. “Lasting success”, he says, “results from faithfully doing small things consistently over the long haul.”

This resource is filled with biblical principles and practical tools, and can be read from cover to cover in a single setting. However, Manion advises “you to chew on it only one chapter per day, five days a week, for six weeks.” This way, he says, “the format of the book mirrors the message of the book, and you can chip away at this message one day at a time, both with the book and with your life.”

Pastor Manion has been a guest speaker for the DVULI Second National Conferences on several occasions. Many alumni may recall Pastor Manion’s presentation and being given a copy of his book, *The Land Between*.

If you are looking for an excellent new devotional, a resource for one-on-one mentoring or small group study tool, I recommend this book.

This resource can be purchased at Amazon.



lament, coupled with the God-ordained power of the women involved, led to the creation of Clothed by the Sun: A Women of Color Retreat. I was privileged to serve my sisters of color as a member of the steering committee and as a speaker. The retreat was designed to address some of the needs of women of color, providing practical tools, Bible teaching, encouragement, inspiration, and connection to support networks and mentors. Resources like this are crucial, as is ongoing mentorship and support.

I believe that God calls us into roles and makes way for miracles in the midst of difficult, and, dare I say, oppressive systems. God also grants us agency. We learn, to grow. We learn so that others may also learn. We learn to create change. Some of us will step into these spaces because we are called to. And we bring with us the stories of the young people we have loved, taught, and learned from. But we must not do this blindly. *To be there for it* requires that we begin the journey of asking and answering these questions, and preparing ourselves for the work ahead.

*Mayra Macedo-Nolan is the Director of Community Outreach for Lake Avenue Church in Pasadena, CA, and the Chair of the Board of Directors of CCDA. Mayra is a 2003 DVULI Los Angeles graduate.*

*Got an opinion about subject matter impacting your work as an urban youth leader?*

*Email: [staff@dvuli.org](mailto:staff@dvuli.org)  
Attn: Alumni Push Back*



**“My story is not unique. White Christian organizations and institutions who minister in communities of color are bound to end up with at least one of me on staff.”**

On my quiet time playlist is a song by Micah Stampley, “Heaven on Earth”. It goes....

*The spirit of the Lord is upon me. His anointing is empowering. The kingdom of the Lord is within me and he’s calling me to the heavenlies. To be seated in heavenly places, just like heaven - heaven on earth. To be walking in his favorite graces, just like heaven - heaven on earth.*

These lyrics help me understand how I got here. There is no other way I can explain it. It was ONLY the Lord. They also help ground me in humility. Because, it was ONLY the Lord. –Mayra Macedo-Nolan

# Knocking it Out the Park

## Former MLB Player Turns Pain into Passion and Purpose

by Gerald Bell

Jeron Gates (Seattle/Tacoma 2012) knows the glory that comes with being named MVP and winning championships. It started for him back in high school when he played football, baseball, and basketball all four years. By the time he graduated in 1998, he (and his teammates) were state basketball champions. In his final football season, he passed for 1,517 yards, and 14 touchdowns, and received all-league honorable mention. This same year, he earned the Garfield High School most outstanding athlete award and was also named the US Amateur Baseball Federation World Series co-MVP.

Those stats and achievements gave way to Gates being recruited by Washington State University (WSU) to play baseball and study sports management. There, he earned a varsity letter and the All-Pacific-10 honorable mention honors by the league's coaches after hitting .327 while starting 53 games. By his junior year in college, Gates, nicknamed Bookie (Boo-key) was being eyed by Major League Baseball scouts and was later drafted by the Minnesota Twins in the 35th round of the 2001 MLB June Amateur Draft from WSU. He went on to play for the Colorado Rockies and Arizona Diamondbacks organizations.

Gates' impressive list of accolades and sports prowess are admittedly rooted in some rather bitter soil that stems from

childhood. "I had a pain in my life," he said. "I was stripped away from the community I was living in because baseball wasn't readily available for me. So, I had to take my talents to the east side or to suburbia. That hurt because I wasn't able to play in front of my family and my friends."



The neighborhood where Gates grew up had no organized baseball or athletic field, which meant baseball leagues were not offered close to home. Very determined to play the sport he loved, young Gates would have to travel to unfamiliar communities without a support system alongside him. Although his family and friends were welcome to come cheer him on, it came at a cost that too few of them could afford. Plus, he needed money to pay for his baseball gear and equipment.

As a little league athlete Gates found himself among teammates, coaches, and fans who didn't look like him. "They were not from the same community I

was from," he observed very early. This reality would one day become his cause to ensure that young people in Seattle's underserved communities could have direct access to sports and recreation without venturing too far from home.

After Gates was released from playing in the minor leagues, he began developing plans to address the recreational divide the youth in his old neighborhood were facing. Hence, in 2007 he launched Baseball Beyond Borders™ (BBB), a sports-based community development organization designed to bridge the social and economic gaps between youth and sports within the urban context.

"I said how do I give back to my community that same opportunity and support the individual that brought me on provided," Gates said. "Baseball Beyond Borders was just a vision of mine to make sure we

offered access and opportunity. But it needed to be more than just about playing sports.”

Today, BBB assists youth and families with building a foundation that will focus on overcoming financial, social, and health (mental and physical) barriers. It’s a comprehensive

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approach to educate and build up communities through athletics, academics, life skills, league play, camps, clinics, and tournaments. Their model extends further than sports and includes a curriculum called, Moving Beyond 12. This arm of the program assists student-athletes and their families in navigating the requirements for college admission and prepares them for life after senior year.

Gates noted that youth who participate in BBB are not only gaining certain knowledge and skills they need, but the community as a whole is being replenished with leaders for tomorrow. “They’re getting a sense of self-pride, cultural awareness, and relevance,” he said. “And they’re also getting coaches who look like them and come from their community, and who understand where they are in life...And they’re playing with peers who look like them, too.”

As a 2012 participant in the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative, Gates credits the breakthrough planning process for many of his organization’s

recent accomplishments. He and his cohort city coordinator, Clarence Presley, agree that significant and sustainable advancements are clearly making a difference in the community BBB serves.

In his breakthrough plan Gates writes:

*Our vision will create a learning community to engage and promote healthy, educated, productive citizens using [baseball] as an avenue. Staff and community stakeholders will build a foundation to embrace the mission, vision, focus, and philosophy. These efforts will be made to create baseball enthusiasts, enhance community development, and empower organizations that enable youth to move along pathways to adulthood by supplying them appropriate access, opportunity, and sustainability in our service delivery.*

“I needed the breakthrough plan to give me the ability to develop a sports-based community development model,” Gates said. “Instead of me just focused on the teams, we needed something that was bigger than just putting kids on the field of play – my breakthrough plan really opened the door.”

In the summer of 2017, BBB celebrated their tenth anniversary and Gates said their work is a

direct expression of this passion and purpose that was birthed out of a painful experience. “We know where we’ve been, but now we want to focus on where we’re going,” he said. “We’re in the people business and we care about communities and we want to see them be safe, healthy and hopeful using sports as a vehicle to advance life and academics.”



BBB is what gets Gates going each day. He is now ensuring that aspiring student-athletes can play in front of their family and friends and not have to take their talents elsewhere. On his website he states, “It is our responsibility to provide access to training, education and facilities to promote and encourage access and opportunity for youth to explore their potential.”

*Jeron “Bookie” Gates is the Director of Baseball Beyond Borders and Executive Pastor at Word of Truth International Ministries. He is 2012 graduate of the DVULI Seattle/Tacoma cohort.*

# Scenario Planning in the Hood

by Kristen Pearson

Just north of downtown Columbus, Ohio is a hidden gem known as the Milo-Grogan community. It's near two major highways, a short bike ride to downtown, and only a 15-minute drive from the airport. For the past 11 years Milo-Grogan has been the home of Aaron and Emily Starr (Columbus 2017 and Columbus 2015 respectfully) and their ministry, Reaching the Nations International (RTNI). But that's about to change. Milo-Grogan is the next community in Columbus targeted for major redevelopment by the city and social entrepreneurs.

This historically African American neighborhood has a median household income of \$22,000 – below the 2016 poverty threshold for a family of four – and it's already becoming harder to find affordable rental properties and homes for purchase in the area. With signs of gentrification on the horizon, the Starrs have seen more change in the past two years than in the previous decade combined. For example, a home that sold for \$10,000 seven years ago is currently on the market for \$150,000, and do-it-yourself enthusiasts are making quick improvements to inexpensive properties and selling them for \$120,000 or more. The city has purchased 66 properties in Milo-Grogan, with plans to make half of the lots available to developers for market rate housing, and building low-income housing on the others.

"It's going to change the look and feel and population of the neighborhood very quickly," Aaron said. "...I would say moderate-income housing because it will be for people making 60-120% of the median income in Franklin County to qualify for them. A lot of our families are below that and won't qualify."

The couple was first drawn to Milo-Grogan in 2005 when they were youth pastors working in a suburban community ten miles north of the area. One of their youth brought a friend from school, Malia, who lived in Milo-Grogan, to their youth group. A few months later, Malia began to bring her younger brother along.



Soon the Starrs were attracting numerous youth from Milo-Grogan, and they had a strong desire to become more involved in the kids' lives.

"We started recognizing this separation, or isolation, that if you're from the hood you see people who don't live in

the hood as outsiders who don't understand you," Emily surmised. "So, for about a year we really prayed and sought God about moving here to be a part of the kid's lives. We were looking at houses, praying, seeking advice, and we ended up moving here in February 2007."

Around the same time as their move, they started RTNI with the specific focus of reaching into a community that is hard to reach (due to poverty, gang violence, drugs, and other hardships), and forming relationships with neighborhood youth between the ages of 5-18. Over the years, RTNI has grown from just Aaron and Emily to include 220 volunteers. They partner with 24 churches throughout the city, and have touched the lives of 700 youth. "The heartbeat of our ministry is to connect with people on a life on life level," said Emily.

The Starrs have noticed that some of families who have lived in Milo-Grogan for years are relocating because affordable housing and rentals have become scarce. "A lot of our families who are renting are not as attached to the neighborhood, so those families may not feel as displaced as those who have lived here a long time and feel like this is home," said Emily.

At this point it's an issue of timing for the two and their call to this community. By applying the principles they learned in the DVULI Scenario Planning workshop, the Starrs are looking at the future of RTNI and what options they have for moving forward. "We'll be introducing



the tool of Scenario Planning to our board at our retreat in January,” said Aaron. “We don’t know how fast our community is going to gentrify, but we can scenario plan it and see what it means for us. Because our mission will take us out of Milo-Grogan if it’s no longer an at-risk community.”

The Starrs have started identifying other communities in Columbus where their Milo-Grogan families are most likely to relocate, and those that fit the ministry’s mission and their personal calling. They, along with the RTNI board, are going to discuss possible scenarios that might occur depending on how quickly the community changes. By recognizing the common threads, they’ll be able to plan for whatever the future holds.

“It’s hard to envision being completely out of Milo-Grogan, due to the relationships we have,” said Aaron. “I think some of the expansion efforts will look at growing while we’re still



here, being positioned [here] if the neighborhood doesn’t completely flip, and being here for the benefit of our kids and families as long as we’re here and it makes sense for us to be here. We’re not looking to bail on our families, but finding how we can

best serve them in this process of great transition.”

“This could be God opening the door for us to move on to the

**“We’re not looking to bail on our families, but finding how we can best serve them in this process of great transition.” – Aaron Starr**

next place,” said Emily. “I’m just really working on not seeing it as a negative, but just as a fact.”

“You got to put that white hat on and put the red one down,” said Aaron making reference to the Six Hats thinking method taught at the DVULI second national conference; red representing emotions, and white for objective facts.

With the city pushing for change and an increase in urban density, surveyors have become a semi-regular sighting in Milo-Grogan, working on streetscapes to help the city and developers visualize what a redeveloped community could look like.

While the Starrs agree that a safer, cleaner community would be a positive outcome, it shouldn’t come at the cost of displacing current residents and losing the identity of their neighborhood.

“I don’t want to see the city as

the enemy, or see myself and neighbors as martyrs in the hands of a mean government,” said Emily. “But knowing that this is going to happen...how can we be


a bridge between the people who live here and those who are about to come.”

Other communities in Columbus that have undergone changes include Weinland Park and Franklinton, which are both very close to downtown Columbus. Residents have seen older buildings in their neighborhoods demolished and replaced with a mix of affordable and market rate housing, along with other developments. While some community stakeholders might not characterize the changes as gentrification, there is no denying that these redevelopments have affected people at various income levels. These same changes are currently happening in Milo-Grogan.

“Nothing ever stays the same, everything is always changing, growing, shrinking, dying, being born – so the change in our neighborhood is just a part of that,” said Emily. “So is acknowledging God’s sovereignty in it all.”

*Aaron and Emily Starr have lived and served in Milo-Grogan with RTNI since 2007. Aaron is a current member of the DVULI 2017 Columbus cohort, and Emily is a DVULI 2015 Columbus graduate.*

# Alumni Updates

 For more, visit:  
[facebook.com/dvuli](https://facebook.com/dvuli)



Thomas Howard (Chicago 2000) received his Doctorate of Ministry from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, IL on May 11, 2017.

Jessica (Morris) Landon (Columbus 2015) married James Landon on August 19, 2017.

Alvin Sanders (Cincinnati 2014) was named the new President and CEO of World Impact in Los Angeles, CA on November 21, 2017.

Chrain Walls (Orlando 2010) was appointed as the Young Adult Pastor at The Experience Christian Center in Orlando, FL on November 14, 2017.

Tony Lattimer (Columbus 2017) and his wife Kristiauna welcomed Legacy Grace Lattimer on July 28, 2017.

Yammilette Rodriguez (Fresno 2014) was inducted into the State Center Community College District and Arte Americas Muro de Honor (Wall of Honor) on November 8, 2017.

Ayeisha Mathis (Boston 2016) has two new positions as a Professor at Berklee College of Music (August 2017) and Education Manager at the Boston Kroc Center (July 2017).

Steven Neumann (Pittsburgh 2012) and his wife Annet are the proud parents of a baby girl. Royal Tereza Neumann was born on September 14, 2017.

Karol McIlvaine (Boston 2000) has released a book titled *Transformation and Transparency in Thy Kingdom*.

