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WASHINGTON--Clinton religion rights directive 'has no teeth,' Whitehead says,  
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Clinton religion rights directive  
'has no teeth,' Whitehead says By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
7/14/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Bill Clinton's recent directive instructing administration officials to inform public school officials of the religion rights of students is "symbolism without substance," a Southern Baptist church-state specialist said.

In a July 13 speech on religious liberty, Clinton announced he was directing Secretary of Education Richard Riley and Attorney General Janet Reno to inform all public school districts in the country of the administration's interpretation of what is permissible religious expression by students.

The president's announcement came near the end of a 39-minute speech in which he said he was "deeply troubled" many Americans believe their religious beliefs are endangered by the government. He cited 10 activities in public schools which are protected by the U.S. Constitution but said school officials had on occasion wrongly prohibited students from such practices as reading the Bible silently in study hall and from praying over their lunches.

"There is no enforcement, no penalty, no plan to stop the tampering with fundamental religious rights which the president has acknowledged," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "The White House admits that fundamental religious liberties are being denied in some schools, and they say violations must stop. Yet they do not issue an executive order or propose legislation with real sanctions to stop the violations.

"The directive has no teeth, because it was not intended to bite. It gives lip service to religious liberty with a smile but with no action."

In contrast, the Baptist Joint Committee praised the president's approach and his reliance in his directive on a document it helped draft.

"Education is the key," said a written statement from three BJC staff members. Clinton "has marshalled the resources of the presidency to help educate our educators, teach our teachers and instruct our students about the many ways that religion can be expressed in our public schools without unhealthful and unconstitutional state involvement."

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In addition to the BJC, other organizations endorsing "Religion in the Public Schools: A Joint Statement of Current Law," the document which Clinton acknowledged borrowing heavily from in his directive, included the American Civil Liberties Union, National Association of Evangelicals, National Council of Churches and Christian Legal Society. The Christian Life Commission participated in negotiations on the document but refused to sign it.

While Clinton did not address the issue of a constitutional amendment to protect religious expression, Assistant Attorney General Walter Dellinger said afterward the president opposed such a proposal. The BJC endorsed the president's opposition to an amendment.

Hearings are being held in a Republican-led effort to adopt a constitutional amendment to protect religious expression in schools and the public square. The CLC and other religious liberty organizations have been working on the proposal's language for several months.

The president's opposition to an amendment demonstrates his directive is intended primarily as an attack on the amendment effort and not as an attempt to influence public policy long-term, Whitehead said of the memorandum, which does not have the force of law. A proper amendment would solve the problems Clinton cited in his speech, he said.

"The president said he thinks *Lee v. Weisman* is wrong to forbid ministers' prayers at commencements. Still, his directive does nothing to correct that decision. A constitutional amendment would," Whitehead said.

"The Equal Access Act applies only to secondary schools, yet discrimination is also occurring among elementary students. The directive does nothing to stop those violations. A constitutional amendment would."

Whitehead continued, "The directive discusses only student rights, but religious discrimination also occurs in the workplace, where the IRS bans employee religious articles and the EEOC proposes harassment guidelines that could penalize sharing one's faith; in rental of school property by church groups; and in zoning cases. The directive does nothing to stop these violations. A 'religious equality amendment' would."

The president's directive summarizes what religious expression his administration believes is allowed in schools. It also provides the Department of Justice's interpretation of the Equal Access Act, which allows student religious clubs access to school facilities equal to that provided secular clubs.

In response to questioning at the briefing, Riley said the directive is "basically an interpretation of current law," rather than a breaking of new ground. When asked about the permissibility of some specific religious practices, both Riley and Dellinger said some details have not been worked out for the document to be sent to the schools.

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Malawi official thanks missionary  
for AIDS education assistance

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
7/14/95

BLANTYRE, Malawi (BP)--Wishart D. Malinga, district AIDS coordinator for Zomba administrative district in Malawi, recently wrote to thank Southern Baptist missionary Rendell Day for "making my work easy."

While Baptists have assisted him, his job couldn't be called "easy" by any measure. The south-central African country is purported by the World Health Organization to have a higher percentage of HIV-positive people than any country in the world.

Day, of Phenix City, Ala., helped by editing and having translated the booklet, "Living With AIDS in the Community." Baptists distributed over 5,000 copies of it at the AIDS Fair on national AIDS Day, at annual meetings of Baptist Women of Malawi and Baptist Youth of Malawi and in churches and associations.

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Malinga also has used copies of the booklet at the government health clinics in Zomba and has recommended the booklet to other Malawian district AIDS coordinators, noting:

"I find this book very handy and immensely helpful when teaching community AIDS programs as well as home based programs which the National AIDS Control Program fully supports."

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Uzbek student graduates with honors;  
validates World A student exchange

Baptist Press  
7/14/95

By David Williard

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. (BP)--No Hollywood! No beaches! Just "tiny" Arkadelphia, Ark.!

It sure didn't fit the image of America that Bashorat Ibragimova, 21, brought with her to the United States three years ago.

But faculty and students at Ouachita Baptist University, where the exchange student from Uzbekistan graduated summa cum laude in May, have modified the image she will take back to her native Central Asian nation.

A student at Tashkent State Economic University in 1992, Bashorat met Ouachita teachers who taught summer classes in a Cooperative Services International Educational Consortium (CSIEC) effort in Uzbekistan. They gave one-year scholarships to her and four other top students. She and one other, Timour Rakhimi, earned additional scholarships to continue to graduation.

Bashorat's journey from Tashkent, the bustling Uzbek capital of nearly 3 million, to Arkadelphia, an Arkansas county seat of barely 10,000, was long, both physically and perceptually.

Her first impression: "I was shocked. When you're over there (in Uzbekistan), the stereotype you have of the United States is Hollywood everywhere, beaches and Cadillacs. I got here to Arkadelphia, which only has 10,000 people. I never thought tiny places like this could exist here."

As she settled into campus life at a small Baptist university, she discovered another cultural gulf. Being raised in a communist state, she had accepted atheism as a world view.

At Ouachita she was confronted daily by Christian symbols, conversations and witness. It was disconcerting. She struggled to remain open-minded.

"Since this is a Baptist school, religion is everywhere. It's in the atmosphere," she explained. "I considered myself an atheist. At first it bothered me that they were so religious. But they were so kind and caring. After a few months, my rejection of them was gone."

Over the course of her three-year interaction with students, faculty and local residents, the gulfs have been spanned. Friendships have been built that promise to extend far into the future.

Bashorat has heard the gospel in ways that touched her. She attended First Baptist Church of Arkadelphia regularly and participated in a Baptist Student Union summer mission project by working in an Atlanta soup kitchen. In her individual experience every broader goal of CSIEC was achieved.

Dan Grant, president emeritus of Ouachita and president of CSIEC, said the consortium was established in 1987 at the suggestion of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to respond to World A needs traditional missionaries can't meet. World A is FMB nomenclature for peoples in countries who haven't heard the gospel of Christ. The consortium seeks to break down barriers of ideology and to establish ground from which the gospel can be shared.

Member schools typically engage in faculty and student exchanges and research ventures. Summer business and English-as-a-second-language classes are popular. Grant estimates 40 CSIEC schools have 50 exchange agreements in 20 cities in China and take part in 300 exchange programs' worldwide.

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Bashorat's achievements reflect positively on the consortium, Grant said, because they represent "the culmination of an earlier exchange" -- in this case one initiated between CSIEC and the Uzbek officials in 1990 when Uzbekistan was still a Soviet republic.

"When students stay long enough to get a degree, it means the roots are growing deeper. We have a case of permanent hands across the sea," he said.

In many ways, Bashorat's experience typifies the experience of other exchange students. "When they first come, they tend to be shy and reserved. They're kind of suspicious of America and Baptist institutions," said Trey Berry, Ouachita's director of international programs. During their first year, the barriers start to fall away.

Berry, among the first Southern Baptist professors involved in the Uzbekistan partnership, explained Ouachita's role: "We're here to show them what Christians are all about and that we expect nothing in return. We'll love them and treat them with care and trust. Our goal is to show them Christianity isn't the enemy faith they make it out to be."

Benefits flow both ways. Ouachita students develop an international outlook by interacting with foreign students. As they debate world views in the dorms or cafeteria or on the lawns, students learn, for example, that not all Muslims are terrorists or that not all atheists are closed to discovering truth in religion. In many cases it strengthens Baptists' understanding of their own convictions. "They realize they may not know enough about their own faith to debate," Berry said.

Eventually, Bashorat hopes to return to Uzbekistan to work for one of the multinational corporations operating there. First, she plans a stop at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, to pursue a graduate degree.

Many positive memories will remain of Arkadelphia -- a place that three years ago she considered "not even a speck on the map of the world." The most special recollections will revolve around "relationships with so many different people" who showed her kindness, who became her friends, she said.

Her most radical revelation involves the testimony of those friends. In contrast to her atheistic world view they presented -- by their Christian love -- their belief that God does exist and that his will can be known.

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Golden Gate to initiate  
'lifelong learning' program

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7/14/95

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary has elected a new continuing education director, intending to launch a "lifelong learning" program this fall.

Don Simmons, director of the center for volunteerism and community service at Los Angeles-area Occidental College, has been elected to the new post at Golden Gate. He begins official duties Aug. 1 at the Mill Valley, Calif., campus.

"Seminaries in the 21st century cannot assume they provide all the training needs necessary for church leadership through their basic degree program," said GGBTS President William Crews. "We must establish lifelong learning covenants with the men and women who entrust us with their theological and ministry education.

"The leadership of Dr. Simmons will ensure that Golden Gate provides continuing education opportunities that go beyond the typical offerings of most institutions," Crews added. "Our commitment to our students is intended to last throughout the lives of their ministries. The world in which people minister is so diverse and changing so rapidly all the time that retooling throughout life is critical to long-term effectiveness."

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Simmons was founder and director of the nonprofit management certificate program at Biola University, Los Angeles, from 1990-93 and previously served that school as foundation and corporate affairs officer.

He recently served as curriculum consultant to Leadership Network's Lay Mobilization National Institutes. He also is on the founding advisory council for the Non-Profit Management Center in Santa Ana.

Simmons was associate pastor at Euclid Baptist Church, Anaheim, Calif., 1984-87, and minister of childhood education at First Baptist Church, Garland, Texas, 1979-83.

He received a doctor of philosophy in higher education from East Texas State University, Commerce; a master of public administration and nonprofit organizational management from the University of San Francisco; a master of arts in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; and a bachelor of science from Charleston Southern University in South Carolina. He is pursuing a doctor of philosophy degree in philanthropy and leadership from The Union Institute in Cincinnati.

He has taught at Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, Calif.; the Southern California Campus of Golden Gate in Brea; the Non-Profit Management Assistance Center in Santa Ana; California State University, Long Beach; Biola University; and Southwestern Seminary.

He is president of the National Association of Collegiate Volunteer Administrators and a member of the Los Angeles Directors of Volunteers in Agencies, National Society of Fund Raising Executives, Western Decision Educators Association, Western Marketing Educators Association and The Greenleaf Society.

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Layman trades full-time job  
for motorcycle race ministry By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
7/14/95

ATLANTA (BP)--Last year Brent Houston quit his job, sold his Florida home and moved to Bryson City, N.C., so he could go to motorcycle races.

He's not a fanatical spectator though; he's a layman who became Southern Baptists' first and only chaplain to motorcycle racers.

Endorsed by the Home Mission Board's chaplaincy commission, he is the official chaplain for the Western/Eastern Road Racers Association and the AMA/Prostar motorcycle drag racers. His only salary comes from offerings taken during chapel services at the races.

"I made \$9,000 last year, but I wouldn't go back" to his previous job of selling John Deere tractor parts, Houston says. "My heart is deeply into the relationships and opportunities for discipling."

About 10 years ago, Houston's church in Florida was challenged to be involved in an outreach ministry during Daytona Bike Week. Houston had done some drag racing in the 1960s, so he volunteered.

Houston developed relationships with the bikers and began traveling with them to races outside Florida. When a biker was killed at a race in Atlanta four years ago, Houston was asked to notify the family and perform other ministerial duties.

Eventually, Houston was asked to lead chapel services at the tracks.

"The only thing I knew to do was teach Sunday school," Houston says. "I found a core of Christians looking for a service like they were missing at home. I soon found out that leading chapel services was the tip of the iceberg."

Since quitting his full-time job, Houston goes to motorcycle races across the country from early March to the first week in November. He and his wife relocated to North Carolina because it was more centrally located to the race tracks than Florida.

Injuries are common in motorcycle racing, and Houston frequently spends time in an emergency room waiting area, encouraging the biker's spouse and notifying extended family members of the injury.

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Financial pressure is another stress of motorcycle racing. A racing bike can cost more than \$50,000, Houston says, and winners are the only people who make money at a race.

Races attract as many as 300 riders, Houston says. As they travel and compete together, they become like a congregation with Houston taking a pastoral role.

While Houston ministers during the races, he encourages bikers to be involved in their local church when they are home. Churches can help by understanding the race schedule rather than assuming the biker has backslidden because he doesn't attend church regularly, Houston says.

Houston's primary goal is to disciple Christians. Winning bikers become sport heroes, and Houston wants them to take advantage of the chance to witness.

"Nobody wants my autograph, but sports figures have an incredible opportunity to share Christ," Houston says.

Because of the injuries, motorcycle racing is dominated by people ages 18 to 23, Houston says. Someone who is still racing at 25 is considered a legend, he adds.

Retiring before age 25 is hard, especially for the winners, Houston notes. "You're used to cheering crowds and big trophies . . . I tell them that God has given them a talent to go fast. Make the best of that while you can. But there's more to life than racing."

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Retired missionary journalist  
'takes it all in stride'

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press  
7/14/95

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Roberta Hampton takes things in stride.

That quality served her well during 40 years in foreign missions. Like when the brakes went out on a bus she was riding over washed-out roads in a remote part of Brazil. Or the times she flew over the Amazon in a single-engine plane whose pilot had no radio contact in case of emergency.

"I've traveled on just about everything and in every state and territory of Brazil," says Hampton, of Oklahoma City, a retired missionary journalist of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

But it's not such adventure that she remembers most. It's the people.

She remembers countless Brazilian Baptist home missionaries in whose homes she stayed while traveling across the country. She recalls street kids she taught to read and write in Rio de Janeiro. She especially remembers Terezinha de Souza, an unwed mother in a Rio "favela" (slum).

Hampton "adopted" her after the young woman accepted Christ as Savior in 1986. From then until retirement in 1994, the missionary led her in one-on-one Bible studies and discipleship training and counseled her about personal problems. She helped her organize Bible clubs for children in the slum.

"She was so surprised that a foreigner would go to her home and work with her so closely and come to her aid like that," says Hampton.

Today Terezinha teaches children's Sunday school at Tijuca Memorial Baptist Church in Rio. "Seeing her growing in her Christian life and giving to others for Christ's sake is really meaningful to me," says Hampton.

Hampton visited her Brazilian friend during a recent trip to Rio to "kill my homesickness," she says, borrowing a Portuguese expression. The trip included a stop at Brazilian Baptist Home Mission Board headquarters in Rio, where Hampton worked in journalism for much of her 29 years in Brazil.

During chapel services there, Brazilian Baptists gave her a plaque naming her an honorary home missionary. She's reportedly the first foreigner to receive the honor for "services rendered to work of missions in Brazil."

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"It really humbles me," she said in a telephone interview from her home at Baptist Retirement Center in Oklahoma City.

The honor also went to four Brazilian Baptists, including Hampton's former boss -- Lucia Margarida Brito, executive director of Brazilian Baptists' Woman's Missionary Union.

Hampton worked as a promotion consultant for Brazil's WMU headquarters in Rio from 1988 until retirement. She helped their magazine editors, translated and wrote articles and took photographs. Earlier she worked in a similar role, concentrating on photography, for 16 years with the Brazilian Baptist Home Mission Board.

Her first assignment in Brazil was as public relations counselor in Recife for the North Brazil Baptist Mission (organization of Southern Baptist missionaries). Assigned to a six-state area, she wrote news and feature articles on missions for Brazilian and U.S. publications.

Her work was a "dream come true." In junior high school, Hampton decided on a journalism career after reading a series of books about a young woman newspaper reporter. But at age 14, while her family was living in Lamar, Mo., she felt God's call to missions.

"In my limited vision, I thought that meant throwing out being a 'girl reporter,'" says Hampton, from Piedmont, Okla.

While a student at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, she learned she could combine journalism and missions. As a journalism major there, she did a seven-month internship at the Guthrie (Oklahoma) Register-News.

After graduating from college and seminary, she was appointed in 1954 by the Foreign Mission Board for service in Mexico. She resigned three years later for health reasons and worked the next eight years as an editor at FMB headquarters in Richmond, Va. While editing a mission study on Brazil, she felt God calling her to serve in that South American country.

"I was a victim of my own profession," she says.

But it's a profession she's glad she chose. "Unless people are informed, they won't become involved or know why they're giving and why they should pray. It's important to get the word out to the people what the Lord's doing and how he can use us," she says.

During retirement Hampton has found her niche at Village Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, where she leads missions for her Sunday school class and takes part in the city's personal computer club. And, through a Brazilian Baptist family who moved there, she's meeting other Brazilians living there.

Hampton doesn't do much writing or photography anymore. She even sold her bag of cameras -- called her "bag of gold" by colleagues -- that she once fiercely protected while bouncing over Brazil's "washboard roads" in cars, trucks and motorcycles.

"You just take these things in stride," she says matter-of-factly.

That's her attitude about four decades in mission service. "People talk about missionaries giving up so much," she says. "I really haven't given up any more than anyone else. I've gained by being in the Lord's will. That's the place to be. It's the most satisfying experience we can have."

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