



BY ANDREW YOUNG

It was on my way home to New Orleans from college that I realized that I didn't have much purpose or direction in my life, and little success. I had not been even an average student. I spent most of my time participating in track and swimming while partying at the fraternity and chasing girls. I sort of wasted four years, wasted an opportunity to get a good education.

On the way back from college I drove up to the top of King's Mountain, North Carolina. I felt a sense of frustration and maybe guilt. When I got to the top of the mountain and looked out it dawned on me that everything I saw had a purpose. I couldn't imagine that the God who created this beautiful universe with purpose, didn't have a purpose for me too. I came down from that mountain convinced that there must be a purpose for my life and I determined to find it.

Not long after this I was invited to a church youth conference in Texas. For the first time in my life I met young people of all races who really loved each other. There were black and white people there who had a purpose in life which was serving God and serving others. But their faith was also strong enough to help them break with the racial teachings and traditions of their parents and culture. This had a great impact on me.

For example, I met a young white woman whose father was a sheriff in Texas. She told me that if he knew that she was attending an interracial conference he would put her out of the house. Those were sentiments that were echoed by just about everybody there. Their parents did not want them to have any interracial contacts. They were doing this very much against the tradition of their families, their culture and even their churches.

It was there that I decided that I would follow the Lord and put my life under his direction. Later I volunteered to go to Hartford, Connecticut as a youth worker for six months. Then I was asked to go to Alabama to develop a recreation program in a church that didn't have one. The family I stayed with had a daughter who loved reading the Bible and had a senior life-saving certificate. I saw a woman with a love for God who was a good swimmer. I knew the Lord had sent me a wife. We were married

Andrew Young marches with Martin Luther King Jr. and other religious leaders and activists past Browns Chapel in Selma Alabama during the second attempted march to Montgomery.

My

Incredible

Life

for 40 years and had four children.

Everything about me since then has been part of a spiritual journey. I find that if I follow where God leads then I have success. For instance, in 1958 I had agreed to run with the Pioneer Track Club in New York to try to make the Olympic team. About this time I was asked to go to Georgia to pastor a small church that was in danger of closing. So I went to serve the church instead of serving my own ambitions for the Olympics.

The Olympics remained important for me but instead of competing in the Olympics I was able to bring the Olympics to Atlanta as mayor and share the Olympic experience with everybody. I think God ultimately blessed my willingness to put his

no for an answer. He started calling people like Sidney Portier and Lena Horne, asking them if they would join him in doing a fund-raiser for my bid for congress.

I was elected in 1972 to Congress from Atlanta. There I attended a congressional prayer meeting every Wednesday morning. I met Congressmen who were both democrat and republican, left and right but for whom their relationship to God and his purposes in the world were the most important thing in their lives.

In 1976 Jimmy Carter was running for President and was attacked as a racist in New York. I knew it wasn't true. So I wrote a letter answering these charges on the front page of the


Village Voice. Through a variety of circumstances, I ended up being a spokesman for Jimmy Carter. Because he was a southerner, people were always asking him about civil rights and human rights. But he knew the problems of race and of poverty.

He was asked about three African countries that he wasn't familiar with. He asked me what he should be saying about Azania, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Well those were not terms that were being used in 1976. So I compiled some churches' statements written by missionaries and pastors who lived in these areas to give him a background for what should happen in Africa. He started talking more about Africa in his speeches. When he was elected he asked me to join his administration and go to the United Nations.

I wanted to stay in the Congress because I thought Carter really needed help there. But he argued that the U.S. needed to be serious about human rights and our record there was very shaky

around the world. He felt that people would listen to his administration only if someone like me was a spokesman for human rights. So I left Congress and went to the UN. I had a wonderful time because I felt like I was having an influence on the world.

I came back to Atlanta and was elected mayor. Atlanta was struggling in the late 70's but we were able to turn it around economically. We brought in 1100 foreign companies and over 70 billion dollars worth of private investment, not to mention the Olympics. It was a phenomenal success.

So much of what has happened in my life seems to be a series of coincidences. But I have learned that coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous. And whenever I see things that seem to be happening coincidentally, I put them together and they add up to a beautiful tapestry that God is weaving in me and in the world. 

Andrew Young has been a member of the U.S. Congress, Ambassador to the United Nations and the mayor of Atlanta during his distinguished career. He is currently the founder and president of Good Works International, an international consulting firm that is feeding the hungry of Africa by bringing jobs and investments from the private sector into the African continent.



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agenda first.

From there I went to work with Martin Luther King, Jr. My wife and I were in New York at the time and we decided, looking at the student sit-ins, that we needed to move back south. So I wrote to Martin and asked if there was anything he could use me for.

He asked me to go to Tennessee and Georgia to teach people to read and write so they could register to vote. It was a program with Martin's Southern Christian Leadership Conference. So I went to work with Martin Luther King's literacy program throughout the south.

For years Martin and I worked together to promote voter registration because we could see how crucial that was for furthering civil rights. After Martin's death I spent a lot of energy trying to get a prominent black to run for congress. One of the last meetings Martin held before going to Memphis was with Harry Belafonte and Dick Hatcher, the mayor of Gary, about how to take the energy of the civil rights movement and transform it into a political process. We were a little tired of going to jail every time we disagreed with something. Well, nobody wanted to do it so Harry Belafonte asked me to run. He wouldn't take