

Writer of gospel novel gets high praise

By DONNA GRADY CREER
Electronic Urban Report

If you listen to gospel music, there are some people that you just need to hear - like Shirley Caesar, Richard Smallwood, Vickie Winans, and Tonex. If you read, you need to read Sharon Ewell Foster.

Bishop T. D. Jakes calls her one of America's best kept secrets and has nicknamed her "Picasso of the pen" - pretty high praise from someone whose books regularly reach the New York Times best-sellers lists.

Very high praise if you consider that Ewell Foster writes novels. But, before you change that dial, it really does her writing a disservice to call them novels.

If they are novels, then they are gospel novels... and they're changing people's lives.

Ewell Foster's modern-day parables, because that's what they are, find their foundation in the Bible. The stories are good enough that they will engage your late teen and twenty-somethings.

They are written well enough that she has won awards - like the Christy Award, the highest honor given for Christian novels - and they contain enough Biblical commentary and revelation that even pastors like Jakes call her writing inspirational.

He said, "Sharon writes for those of us who want more than just words on a page, but pictures painted on the canvasses of our minds." Like gospel music, her books touch all ages and all kinds



Sharon Ewell Foster

of people.

Her latest book, *Ain't No Mountain, No Bible*, published by Bethany House, will have you laughing out loud. There's a chicken scene that will have you cracking up while you run to your favorite chicken place or fry up a batch of your own!

Parts of *Ain't No Mountain* will leave you in tears. In the middle of all this, she manages to write passionately and honestly about singles, youth, men, and the church.

Her Web site is www.sharonewellfoster.com

Joshua's Troop signs with New Haven Records

Special to The Recorder

New Haven Records announced the signing of Joshua's Troop, one of gospel music's premiere youth groups. Originating from Chicago, Joshua's Troop consists of more than 30 young people and a band whose members range in age from 16 to 22 years old.

Blending urban and hip-hop tracks with contemporary gospel, Joshua's Troop proves to be a vocally experienced group beyond their youthful years.

"Currently in gospel music, there seems to be a void of youth choirs creating music for youth," said Ken Harding, president of New Haven Records. "As soon as I heard Joshua's Troop, I knew they could fill that void. The songs are great, and they are vocally mature. Combined with their en-



ergetic live show, Joshua's Troop has the ability to connect with people of all ages."

Their new record, "Project Youth," is produced by Grammy, Stellar, and Dove Award nominee Percy Gray Jr., and Jarel Gray of the respected GrayBoyz Productions.

"I thank God for Ken Harding

and the New Haven family for believing in the vision," said Percy Gray, who is also one of the directors of the group. "New Haven's willingness to give Joshua's Troop an opportunity allows these young people to minister to other young people."

Joshua's Troop is a result of a vision of Pastor Clay Evans, the founder of the African-American Religious Connection (AARC) and Pastor Charles Jenkins, successor to Pastor Evans at Fellowship Methodist Baptist Church of Chicago. Their desire was to create a youth and young adult division of the AARC convention headed up by Pastor Jenkins that focused primarily on those attending between 12-30 years old. Joshua's Troop began as the music ministry of this division.

Prominent Baltimore pastor challenges A.M.E colleagues

By CHRISTOPHER JACK HILL
Special to The Recorder

BALTIMORE (NNPA) - The Rev. Dr. Frank Madison Reid III shocked the African Methodist Episcopal Church this week with the uncovering of his controversial book titled, *Up from Slavery: A Wake Up Call for the African Methodist Episcopal Church*.

Reid, pastor of the Bethel A.M.E. Church in Baltimore and a syndicated TV evangelist, launched the book during the Quadrennial A.M.E. General Conference in Indianapolis, Ind.

Reid, who for years has been critical of the church's process, which he calls a bureaucracy, became more vocal leading up to the conference in Indiana.

In *Up From Slavery*, Reid criticized the church, calling for its focus on growth and development of faith rather than financial gain and bureaucracy. Reid used storytelling methods and examples of unethical practices by individuals of the church during his younger years.

"I discovered a religious bureaucracy that was selfish, bloated, self-serving and had little concern for the development of the local church, pastor and laypersons," stated Reid.

Conference members say the book took the church by surprise, but reactions to its contents were swift.

"The book went a little too far, but there are some undeniable truths," said one conference at-

tendee, who preferred to be unnamed.

But A.M.E. officials say this book exudes criticism on a whole new level.

"It seemed as if Reid was slamming the A.M.E. church, but the slamming was valid, and it raised the consciousness of the people," said Joseph Taylor, a conference observer from the sixth district.

But one church leader called this unanticipated book a "masterpiece that swivels the consciousness of the church and its organization" which Reid describes as a "demonic spirit that has run using bureaucracy."

Though reactions to the book are mixed, many agree the book is one of the most critical challenges to the A.M.E. church in the history of the denomination.

Released just days after the withdrawal of his candidacy for bishop, the book has sparked speculation among church leaders and conference observers about Reid's reason for not running.

Reid was almost guaranteed one of the seven available seats and if elected, he would have become a third-generation bishop.

Reid explained his reasons for withdrawing in the book saying, he did not want to "bow down to a system that lost its dynamic mission."

He went on to say that the church had lost touch with the original mission of Richard Allen, who founded the A.M.E. denomination in 1787.



Rev. Dr. Frank Madison Reid III

Contrary to some claims, the book is not a precursor to his leaving the A.M.E. denomination, Reid said; rather, it is a love letter to raise consciousness of the church's bureaucratic pitfalls.

Reid said though he may be forced out of the church, he would continue to love and to be committed to the A.M.E. faith, as his ancestors were.

Up From Slavery is Reid's second book. His first, *Restoring the House of God*, swiftly made it on to the best selling list in 2000, and his latest release is showing similar promise, said Reid.

"People have lined up to get a copy of this book and I think that it will be a success, and hopefully I will write more books that speak to the younger generation and the hip-hop generation as well."

Acts of Faith

A Chance to Testify

The Indianapolis Recorder wants to hear about your Acts of Faith. These typed two-page letters should reveal the role faith has played in helping you to overcome any trial or tribulation in your life. Please, provide your signature along with a contact phone number where you may be reached for potential follow-up questions.

Robert Leslie "Speedy" "Chub" Edwards

Robert Edwards, 80 of Indianapolis, died Friday, July 23, 2004. Bro. Robert Leslie Edwards son of the late Rev. William

"Dee" Edwards and Alice Virginia Scott Edwards was born in Indianapolis on May 20, 1924. He was called to the services in 1942 and served eight and a half years during World War II. Mr. Edwards was employed at the Federal Foundry where he made Magic Chef Stoves for five years. Then he went to Chrysler for thirty-five years retiring June 1, 1980.

Mr. Edwards was united in Marriage to Mary Jane Campbell in 1946 and this union lasted 26 years. Of this marriage was born four children, Sandra L. Edwards, Robert L. Edwards Jr., Joyce L. Edwards, and Janice M. Edwards. On October 20, 1972, he married Louise Morgan. He was then married to Latonia E. Edwards June 26, 1976 until her passing in March of 1994. He is survived by his wife Mary Etta Hickman who he married in June of 2001.

He leaves to cherish his memory his loving wife Mary Etta Edwards, two sisters Virginia Mae Franklin and Dorothy E. Thorne, two daughters Joyce L. Moore and Janice M. Gardner; one son-in-law, John G. Moore Sr.; seven grandchildren, Cecilia L. Edwards, John G. Moore Jr. and Rachel, his wife; Jason L. Moore and Keisha, his wife; Sandra R. Edwards, and Justin G. Moore, and a host of nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

Calling: Stuart Mortuary, Friday, July 30th from 5:00pm - 8:00pm. Services: Mt. Helm Missionary Baptist Church, Saturday, July 31st at 11:00am.

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