

On The Scene In Baltimore

Reginald Anderson-Exum, armed in faith, moved in the power of the Spirit to embrace burning Baltimore's hurting and unheard people.

April 27, 2015 is easily the most heartbreaking day of my short 30 year life. I am a native Baltimorean. Reared at Berea Temple SDA Church and attending Baltimore Jr. Academy, this city is part of the makeup of my very being. More than any other place our city has influenced my integrity and work ethic. Members of my community insured that I saw more 12 countries around the world and received a Christian education. When they hurt, I hurt.

The death of Freddie Grey is devastating to me. Seeing his situation unearthed my own painful personal memories of when I was chased, slammed to the ground, and handcuffed without cause. I was just 13 years old walking home from school with my uniform and backpack.

Now, witnessing the flurry of activity between police and citizens caused me to weep openly. I saw teenagers, small children, women, and men that needed to be heard.

My love for them would not allow me to sit in front of my television and do nothing. Saying a word of prayer, I put my suit on and kissed my family goodbye. The situation was dangerous and I did not know if I would be seriously hurt. I entered the city on North Avenue, the area seen by helicopter on TV and it was a complete "war zone". There were no traffic laws being followed. The streets were filled with every type of debris. Complete anarchy could be felt in the air. I knew, at that point, this was much bigger than me. On behalf of the people of Baltimore I quoted Romans 10:13 (NET) "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved".

Teaming up with the other clergy of Baltimore City was powerful. Each man and women called out to God to save our city as we marched arm in arm. Old and young, small and large congregation, White and Black stood as one. Reaching the epicenter of the tension you could feel the mood change. The hardened eyes and clinched fist of frustrated community members begin to visually soften. They let us through without delay. It was clear the Holy Spirit was at work.

As we approached, the city's police force—dressed in full riot gear—had a different feel. In their eyes I could see anger mixed with fear, a deadly combination. We knelt and began to pray aloud. When I looked up several officers removed their protective face mask out of respect for God and the clergy. Did I mention the Holy Spirit was working?

As I directed traffic at a busy intersection I began to hug and shake hands with people standing on the corners. I asked the small children to return home, and they did. An SUV with about seven young men pulled up. They had gang colors on. They were indignant. And they had been given the orders to kill any police officer they could. Lord, what can I do? I opened my arms and physically embraced the most vocal member. We both cried. The devil intended lives to be loss. God had mercy our community because He controls the affairs of men.

My purpose for sharing this experience is three-fold. First, Jesus loves Baltimore. Each person represents an investment of His priceless blood. Second, because Jesus loves Baltimore, we should too. Third, the Adventist church in Baltimore is active in relevant ministry. Our church, Edmondson Heights SDA Church has this mission: "Being Encouraged by Christ, Educating

our Church, and Embracing our Community". Embracing our neighborhood that we view as "Edmondson Village" is a core value of our congregation.