

African-American Minister: 'I'm Praying for Godly Fear to Grip Our Hearts'

Note: The following is a first-person account by Pastor Pat Chen, founder and president of First Lover Ministries International Prayer Center in San Ramon, California, of last week's White House African-American Faith Leaders Briefing. Approximately 120 African-American ministerial leaders attended the event in Washington, D.C., as a prelude to the 44th annual Congressional Black Caucus.

To my surprise, I recently was invited to the White House African-American Faith Leaders Briefing by Ashley Allison, associate director of the White House Office of Public Engagement. She has spent only three months on the job after replacing Paul Monteiro, who now is a presidential appointee. Ms. Allison said that she would follow up with the attendees with a phone call or email communication.

I shared with her that prayer was a huge part of my ministry, and that I continually pray for President Obama and our nation's leaders. She asked me to remain in prayer for her as well.

The other key person in organizing the event was Melissa Rogers, executive director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership. Ms. Rogers is also new to her position after replacing Joshua Dubois, who, since leaving his role at the White House, has written a book with the devotions he compiled for President Obama every morning. I have not seen the book yet, but I plan on reading it soon. Although there was a room full (approximately 120) of pastors, preachers, and church organization leaders present, there was no opening or closing of prayer over any issue discussed. But,

I was honored to receive the invitation and to pray privately as I listened to the topics and discussion.

At the time of the briefing, President Obama was at the United Nations. However, two of his Cabinet members came in to speak, one of whom announced that President Obama would return shortly from the U.N. to make the official announcement of the resignation of Attorney General Eric Holder. Most everyone (mainly African Americans) in the room seemed very sad to hear this news, but other Christians that I spoke with outside this meeting (Caucasian Christians) were gleefully happy with the news. We still have such a cultural divide and come from different perspectives, even in the church.

The issues that were discussed during the briefing were social and cultural in nature that are important to the African-American community, including the recent shooting death of Michael Brown by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. The discussion included "police reform efforts" and "patterns and practice investigations," among other things. The White House has set a director representing the Faith-Based office in almost every government agency including the Department of Justice, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Labor/Commerce and Small Business Administration, etc. Each one had key personnel represented at this meeting.

ISIS was not mentioned, but the Ebola outbreak was mentioned very briefly. ISIS, for the most part, is not on the top of the minds of many in the African-American community. The concerns and issues were centered around the economy, jobs, poverty, prisons, police, justice and racism, especially as it relates to Ferguson-like situations. There were several people from Ferguson present, and they spoke a lot about trust—or the lack of it—with their police and government officials.

My prayers are for God's mercy on America for the saved and unsaved, for His grace and wisdom to know what to do and the courage to do what we know to do when He tells us. I'm praying

for revival for the church and spiritual awakening for our nation and its leaders. I'm praying for godly fear to grip our hearts and godly leaders to be raised up.

I'm praying for His truth to prevail and the love of God and of people will be manifested in the church and in every race and cultural divide. We, as a society, seem to call good evil and evil good these days. We are confused and deceived, and we are far away from biblical thinking. I'm praying for new mindsets and God's presence in this country.

I don't know how or why my name got on the list to attend this event. This is my second time I have attended a White House briefing of this type. I attended the first year of President Obama's first term, and it was good that I was there to meet new people and hear what they feel is important to share with African-American leaders.

I have to say that the Lord put me there regardless of the who, why or how. My role was to listen and to pray, and I want to keep a low profile so that I can continue to get invited to these key assignments.

As important as the subjects were that were discussed, the most important issues, from my opinion, were not discussed because they were of a spiritual nature—issues that would literally change and revolutionize everything and everybody.

President Obama appointed Broderick Johnson to be Cabinet Secretary, Chair of My Brother's Keeper Task Force. Secretary Johnson seemed to be a brilliant, sensitive and caring man and gave us an update on My Brother's Keeper Task Force. He said that one of his best friends was Eric Holder, and he was heartbroken with Holder's resignation. Whether we agree with his sentiments or not, it was a privileged moment for us to be in the room to hear this top leader sharing his heart so tenderly.

I'm praying for a Holy Visitation to come from a Holy God, and

that we are transformed by the renewing of our mind with the Word of God. Only a great spiritual awakening can bring us to the point of being our brother's keeper by lifestyle in the biblical sense.