

Revolution Generation

Tens of thousands of teens and adults converged on the nation's capital recently to pray for a Revolution that will change America for Jesus.

In the pre-dawn darkness Sept. 2, thousands of bleary-eyed teens tumbled out of buses and vans onto the Mall in Washington, D.C. The humidity, still thick on the Saturday morning in late summer, quickly wilted hairdos and dampened blankets and backpacks that were strewn across the two-mile length of grass between the Capitol and the Washington Monument.

Teens, youth leaders, adults and children were arriving en masse for The CallDC—or “The Call”—a 12-hour “solemn assembly” that was held from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Based on the Old Testament passage of Joel 2:15-16, the purpose of the gathering was to “consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly... assemble the elders, gather the children” (NKJV). Organizers had set apart the 12 hours for a day of fasting, prayer, repentance and reconciliation in hopes of sparking a massive youth revolution to change the destiny of America.

In a large white tent strategically erected in the center of the Mall, prayer warriors had prayed all night seeking God's blessing for all those who now were converging on the site. Intercessory-prayer minister Bonnie Chavda had led the “watchnight” prayer group with her husband, Mahesh.

As dawn broke, gray clouds were threatening to fulfill the local forecast for rain. No one seemed to notice, as all eyes were focused on a stage where a sheer green backdrop displayed a single arrow pointing heavenward. Ché Ahn, one of the main organizers of the event and the pastor of Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena, California, was welcoming those who had arrived.

"Today is not about anyone here. It's not about any band. It's not about any speaker. It's all about Jesus!" he shouted.

Cheers erupted along with spontaneous worship as the gathering crowd lifted their hands and voices to heaven. Everywhere, T-shirts abounded in every color and design imaginable, many heralding the event.

Though attendance figures differ, it is estimated that between 100,000 and 300,000 youth and adults took part in the event before the day ended.

The CallDC was the fulfillment of a dream for Lou Engle, associate pastor of Harvest Rock Church, who first envisioned the event. A day after the Promise Keeper's Stand in the Gap Rally of Oct. 4, 1997, Engle addressed a group of 600 youth in Phoenix and told them God wanted a corresponding movement of young people to go to Washington to pray and fast, just as their fathers had done for Promise Keepers.

"God has an answer for this dark time in our nation," Engle says. "Malachi 4:5-6 speaks of a bi-generational turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers."

That kind of reuniting held true for Dave McCahan and his daughter, Gloria, who came from their small Baptist church in Amherst, Massachusetts, with a group of 12 dads and daughters to fulfill the verses in Malachi 4 and to spiritually join two generations.

"We came because we couldn't possibly miss a historic moment like this," said Dave McCahan, who had heard about The CallDC just a month before.

Gloria, 16, who helps lead a prayer group at her school, said it's easy to become discouraged about changing her generation because Amherst is "a very liberal place, and only three or four people attend the prayer meeting."

"But coming here today has helped me realize how important one little light is in my school," she added.

Michelle Modica, 16, of DeLand, Florida, drove all night with 56 other members of her youth group to answer the call.

"I'm here because I'm expecting God to revolutionize this generation," Modica said.

Evidence of that could be seen all across the Mall as muffled sobs and loud weeping mixed when members of the World War II and baby boom generations stood to confess their sin of opening the doors to pornography, promiscuity, false religion, adultery and abortion in society. Cindy Jacobs, president of Generals of Intercession, urged the youth to forgive their parents, pastors and teachers.

"Forgive us for being a judgmental, legalistic, critical generation," she pleaded. "We have criticized fun of your music, your piercings and your tattoos. We have looked on the outward person instead of what's inside."

Young people responded by kneeling or prostrating themselves on the ground. Mostly in pairs they repented for their rebellion against authority, for sexual compromise, for destroying themselves with drugs and alcohol, and for going through the motions of religion.

Jeremy Jansen, 20, a tall young man with medium-length hair and two lip piercings prayed in a group of three.

"It's hard to break through the bondages of the older generation," he admitted. "Sometimes I feel held back because of the extremeness of my generation."

Ahn notes that there is an "extreme spirit in the DNA of this current generation" and told Charisma that he believes they are willing to sacrifice even their lives to expand the kingdom of God. Lyrics from a song echoed his belief as

several Jumbotrons across the Mall carried the words: "It's no sacrifice to give our lives to the One we love."

Organizers said many reports had come back from churches across the country about youth who were fasting in preparation for The CallDC. The noticeable abundance of water bottles and lack of food at the gathering demonstrated what Jacob Schultz, 19, sees happening among teens.

"Kids are taking fasting seriously because they're ready for a change in their schools," he said.

Throughout the day announcements directed people to resource tents where they received free books and a CD-ROM, titled Live the Call. A Web site, , features Christian music, a prayer room and practical helps for living out the challenges presented at The Call.

Many youth groups arrived with their own designer T-shirts, but one group in particular stood out in the crowd. The 80-member group wore slouch hats and bright red polo shirts with the slogan "Australians Answering the Call." One member, Jill Turner, explained that the hats and the horsemen logos on their shirts represented the Australian Lighthorse Brigade, an 800-member unit that fought for the liberation of Jerusalem in World War I.

"Many in that unit were just teens, but they had an incredible breakthrough spirit. We believe God has given us that same spirit," Turner said, "That's why we're here today—to fight side by side."

The Australian group raised more than \$300,000 to come to the United States. "We're very passionate about seeing God change [the United States]," said Casey Mitchell, 14. "If America gets changed, other nations will change also."

During the group's stay at a local church in Lanham, Maryland, their rented van and \$50,000 worth of CDs were stolen. The

Australians had hoped to sell the CDs to help cover the cost of their trip. They prayed for the person who stole it and said that miraculously the van, as well as the CDs, were recovered a few days later.

Jason Blean and his fiancée, Lori Hesterman, said their lives were most affected by the reconciliation segment of the event.

“It’s like two generations ready to enter the promised land. We need what each other has to offer—the wisdom of the older generation and the energy of the younger,” Hesterman said.

Many agreed that the experience of seeing two generations coming together spiritually was one of the most emotionally charged parts of the day. Bill McCartney, founder and president of Promise Keepers, asked fathers to kneel and symbolically wash their children’s feet by kissing them.

“I ask you to humble yourself and embrace the generation coming up,” McCartney urged. “As you kiss the feet of your son or daughter, kiss one foot for their generation and the other foot for those who have been denied their fellowship through abortion.”

All during the day hugs and tears could be seen as members of one generation embraced the other. A time of challenge and commitment called students to pledge themselves to sexual purity through the ministry of True Love Waits.

The day’s well-known speakers included ministers Benny Hinn and Bill Bright; Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan.; and Darrell Green of the Washington Redskins. Even with performances by Christian music artists Michael W. Smith and Rebecca St. James, the atmosphere remained one of a solemn assembly rather than a celebration or festival.

Minh Chau, 18, from Manassas, Va., was one of several young people who helped plan The CallDC. The brochure he and others on the committee designed called for a revolution to occur on

the Mall.

"Our definition of revolution is when people take personal responsibility for a cause they are willing to die for," Minh said. "Everything else is just a campaign."

Michael Brown, president of the Brownsville Revival School of Ministry in Pensacola, Florida, challenged people to begin a revolution of love, compassion, holiness and sacrifice.

About 4 p.m., the threatening clouds finally gave way to rain as a downpour caused some people to scatter to find shelter. Most, however, stood in the rain listening to the testimony of Craig Scott, the teen-age brother of Rachel Scott, who died in the Columbine High School massacre. He urged those present to kickstart a revolution by touching other kid's hearts.

"You might be the only Jesus Christ they know," Scott said.

A follow-up event to The Call was scheduled for Sept. 20 in conjunction with "See You at the Pole," a yearly assembly of students who gather at the flagpole of their local high schools to pray for revival. Youth all across America were asked to commit to a 40-day fast Sept. 20-Oct. 29, and to fast at lunchtime in order to pray.

The fast is an outgrowth of a challenge issued in 1994 by Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. Bright believes that the greatest harvest in U.S. history will start occurring before the end of 2000 if the church will take seriously the call to fast and pray.

Thousands of students were challenged while standing in the mud and rain to make The Call more than a one-day event by taking its message back to their cities and schools.

Amber Gardner, 16, of College Station, Texas, planned to do just that. "I've seen how many hurting people there are in my school. They're hungry for something, and they're trying to

fill it with substitutes for God. It's hard to witness, but I'm determined to take over my school for God," she said.

Organizers said the ongoing evidence of the success of The CallDC would not be measured by the tens of thousands who attended the event, but by those who would go on to answer the call to become a generation radically committed to God and to changing the destiny of their society. *

Sandra Chambers is a freelance writer based in Fairfax, Va., and a regular contributor to Charisma, covering news in the Washington, D.C., area.

Philosopher of the Revolution

Like a modern-day reformer, Michael L. Brown is stepping forward and challenging the church in this generation to "wake up, stand up, and act now or run the risk of becoming a mere historic curiosity and an irrelevant sideshow."

Brown, the president of Brownsville Revival School of Ministry in Pensacola, Florida, has written a 5,000 word publication—Jesus Manifesto: A Call to Revolution—in conjunction with The Call event, held Sept. 2 in Washington, D.C.

"[Our society has] come to a breaking point where we must have a revolution, or it's over for America," Brown says.

Brown points to the counterculture revolution of the 1960s as the beginning of a sudden, steep moral decline in this nation. "The last generation's counterculture of rebellion has become this generation's establishment of revulsion," he says.

He calls attention to a 1997 survey conducted by George Barna

that compared the church and the world on 152 different items and found virtually no difference between the two.

“Rather than seasoning the world like salt and brightening the world like light, we now smell and taste like the world, and its darkness is snuffing out our lamps,” Brown says.

In an interview with Charisma, Brown emphasized that the church needs to recover what it really means to follow Jesus.

“New Testament faith itself is a revolutionary faith. We need to realize that Jesus did not come to establish a lovely Sunday morning religion. He came to establish the kingdom of God—to break the power of the enemy, to set captives free,” he says.

Although the current generation of U.S. young people has more material goods than any other young American generation has had, Brown believes they have a deep longing for meaning and purpose in their lives.

“There’s a generation out there that is ready to be radical, ready to be crazy, ready to do anything, ready to break the rules,” he says. “And if we can take that zeal and channel it into holiness and passion and love for Jesus, then we can change society.”

Brown became a Christian in 1971 during the Jesus Movement and describes himself as being a “heroin-shooting, LSD-using, rebellious, Jewish rock drummer” at that time. Referring to a church that slept through most of the 1960s and 1970s, Brown says that their failure to preach a message of repentance and holiness caused many of the people saved during the Jesus Movement to fall away.

The revolution that Brown is now calling for will turn the church, as well as society, inside out and upside-down, he says.

“It’s not a revolution of guns or bombs or violence or hatred, but a Jesus revolution that will be fought with the message of the gospel, with the love of God, with the power of the Spirit, with radical holiness, with sacrifice, compassion and courage. And it will impact society in a lasting way,” he emphasizes.

Brown challenged the tens of thousands who attended The CallDC to follow a call different from the world’s for the sake of this revolution. He hopes to enlist Christians all across the United States to do the same.

Says Brown: “Fellow-soldiers, holy servants of the risen Lord, blood-bought disciples of the Master, heed the call. It’s now or never, time to put up or shut up. Either we take a stand once and for all, or forever we hang our heads in shame.

“History is eagerly anticipating our next move. This is the hour we have been waiting for. So, on with it—by life or by death. The revolution won’t wait.” * Michael Brown

The entire text of Michael L. Brown’s The Jesus Manifesto: A Call to Revolution is available on the Web at .