

Woman on the Front Lines

Patricia Bailey-Jones had led mission trips to nearly 100 nations the year she read an article about Angola—a country in southern Africa that just ended a bloody, 27-year civil war in 2002. “That article gripped me,” she says. “In it a father took his [5-year-old] daughter to a hotel and offered her room to room for sex to foreign businessmen. The spirit of God stood up on my inside, and I was compelled to do something.”

That compulsion has since led her to Angola three times. On her most recent trip last spring, she distributed laptops and materials donated by U.S. churches and businesses to build better bathrooms at the largest school in Angola’s capital, Luanda. “We love you, and these laptops represent people in America who love you,” Bailey-Jones told students at Vida Abundante (Abundant Life) School, which is run by area pastors and educates more than 5,000 students in the poverty-stricken suburb of Boa Vista; the name, ironically, means beautiful view.

“You have to believe in your future and your prosperity,” she continued. “Your pastors and teachers believe Jesus has a plan for your lives. Where you are right now is not where you will always be. God has a perfect plan for your lives and we, along with other Christians and companies in America, are investing in your lives through the new bathrooms and computers.”

For the founder of Master’s Touch Ministries International based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Angola is just one of dozens of places around the world in need of the gospel. Through the last 27 years, Bailey-Jones has ministered in more than 120 countries despite dangerous conditions or the nations’ hostility to Christianity. “God showed me a while ago that anything of worth involves risk,” she says.

A wife and mother, Bailey-Jones is part of a new generation of

African-Americans who are meeting spiritual and practical needs on the foreign mission field. Although the number of black missionaries is still lower than that of other ethnic groups, the level of engagement is rising, especially among independent ministries, says James W. Sutherland, founder of Reconciliation Ministries Network, an organization that seeks to mobilize African-Americans in missions.

"I think it's the Lord's will that each ethnic church takes its global responsibility," says Sutherland, a white Presbyterian scholar who is praying that God will raise up 5,000 African-American missionaries, a figure that would roughly match the percentage of white foreign missionaries.

"There are incredible difficulties [in the African-American community], but the reservoir of spirituality in the black community is huge. They read the Bible more, they go to church more, they believe in God more, they pray more. In most measures, they excel in common areas of spirituality. They have this huge reservoir that needs to be released."

Waking a Sleeping Giant

At Vida Abondante, Bailey-Jones tells the students they are their nation's future. "Angola belongs to you," she says. "You will make Angola better and be part of stabilizing this great nation. You will make Angola the head and not the tail."

She believes Jesus is Lord over Angola, but she doesn't have easy answers for the nation's challenges. Angola is one of the leading oil and diamond producers in sub-Saharan Africa, but its people are among the poorest on the continent.

The nation has been embroiled in war of some kind since 1961, when guerillas began fighting for independence from the Portuguese. A year after the Portuguese Colonial War ended in 1974, the Angola Civil War began—displacing 4 million and leaving 1.5 million dead after nearly three decades of fighting.

In addition to her own work in Angola, Bailey-Jones wants to help wake what she calls “the sleeping giant” of missions. “After the civil rights movement we dropped the baton,” she says of African-American Christians. “My husband and I both know we are called to the disenfranchised. We are determined not to become desensitized, so we make at least four missions trips a year. I believe there are many African-Americans who are also called to this mission field but haven’t taken the step as yet.”

Sutherland estimates there are between 300 and 500 African-Americans involved in cross-cultural missions—a fraction of the 43,000 Protestant missionaries sent out from the U.S. That figure belies the importance of the Great Commission among black churches, he says.

Before the 1970s, most African-American churches focused their resources on addressing the staggering needs created by slavery and Jim Crow segregation.

Racism also played its part. In the 18th and 19th centuries respectively, George Lisle and Lott Carey gained their freedom from slavery and became the earliest known black missionaries, serving in Jamaica and Liberia. But later missionaries experienced discrimination from predominantly white missions-sending organizations.

David Cornelius, director of African-American mobilization for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) International Missions Board, says that between 1845 and 1880 the SBC supported 61 black missionaries. But from 1880 until 1960 there were none. Though not a formal policy, he says, “It was understood that blacks were not to be appointed to serve as missionaries overseas with this convention.”

In February, the U.S. branch of Serving in Mission (SIM) acknowledged a similar policy, apologizing to African-Americans for denying blacks missionary status in the early

20th century to comply with the rules of colonial governments in Africa.

Some African-Americans answered the call to missions even without formal support, says Cornelius, who was a missionary in Nigeria for 25 years before he returned to the U.S. in 1993 to help the SBC recruit African-American missionaries. Since then the number of black long-term missionaries has grown from three to roughly 50.

Cornelius and others say the cry for black missionaries has gotten louder in recent years. "There are so many wide open doors [for black missionaries] that are no longer there for Anglo Americans," says missionary Peggy Rayman, founder of Georgia-based Africa on Fire.

Rayman, who is white, believes African-Americans will lead the final thrust of global evangelism. Her conviction is so strong she has spent the last 10 years mobilizing and training African-Americans in foreign missions.

Observers say slavery and the civil rights struggle have uniquely prepared African-Americans to minister cross-culturally. "What African Americans are beginning to become aware of is that they have tremendous credibility in many parts of the world," says David Cashin, Ph.D., a professor of intercultural studies at Columbia International University, which hosts an annual conference focused on mobilizing African-Americans in missions (ciu.edu/missionsstrategy). "An Anglo goes to northern Europe to preach the gospel, and he gets completely shut down."

Cornelius says a Russian pastor's wife once told him: "We see how black Americans have gone through the struggle, and we observe the joy with which they worship, and we want to learn to be able to worship like that."

Despite the ministry opportunities, African-American missionaries say many black churches don't prioritize foreign

missions. Although her denomination has planted churches in 62 nations and has been involved in foreign missions for nearly 100 years, Church of God in Christ (COGIC) missionary Mother Lee Van Zandt says few members know of the church's global outreach.

"I think if [churches] knew better they would do better," says Van Zandt, who has helped plant 70 churches in Brazil since 1996. "Our mission department was always called Home and Foreign Missions, and I think ... those who were involved made the decision to focus on home missions."

She sees some hopeful signs, however, in the missions outreach of COGIC Presiding Bishop Charles Blake, who founded Save Africa's Children to assist AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa. "Bishop Blake has a heart for missions, and I really believe there will be greater awareness about missions [under his leadership] and even a greater commitment to missions," Van Zandt says.

Bailey-Jones notes that the combined wealth of the African-American community is greater than that of some African nations, but many black churchgoers don't realize how much they have to give. "We are consumers and, so far have not been charity driven," Bailey-Jones says.

"Bishop Charles Blake ... has said that the African-American community must become [to Africa] what the Jew is to Israel. ... I believe that we as African-Americans are at a time in history to make a supreme difference in missions."

On her TV program *Until All Have Heard*, which is broadcast on Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), Bailey-Jones says she intentionally includes clips of her missions work in order to raise awareness about the impact African-Americans are making on the mission field.

"I want these broadcasts, which include missionary work such as this work in Angola, to bring the nations close to African-

American Christians as well as the entire body of Christ," she says. "No one should have an excuse for [not] getting involved personally and financially in the Great Commission.

"Jesus didn't make a suggestion or give an option. He said, 'Go!' When will the last command He gave us become our first priority?"

Called to Reach the World

A native of North Carolina, Bailey-Jones says her call to missions came after she prayed a dangerous prayer at age 21. "I was dying of an extreme heart condition which appeared when I was 15 years old," she says. "I had the heart of an 89-year-old woman, and I had an extremely enlarged heart with a murmur.

"I [told] God if He healed me I would go wherever He wanted me to go and do whatever He wanted me to do. When I got saved, I never looked back."

She graduated from New Life Bible College in Tennessee in 1982 and two years later was one of the first graduates of Victory World Missions Training Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma. But she says veteran evangelists T.L. and Daisy Osborn helped her discover her call to reach the nations.

"These missionary generals of our time who spent over 40 years working in Africa visited my Bible college and called me out," she recalls. "T.L. Osborn said, 'I see nations in you.' At the time I didn't know he was calling out my prophetic destiny.

"Daisy took me under her wing and trained me in how to go before heads of state and carry myself on the missions field. I learned from Daisy that the anointing knows no gender and that is how I burst through the doors onto the mission field."

Bailey-Jones later discovered that her own ancestors had been missionaries to West Africa, sailing on a ship belonging to

the American Colonization Society in 1739. "When I learned about my history I realized that the work I am doing is something I was born for," says Bailey-Jones, who wrote her first book, *Our Unclaimed Inheritance*, about African-Americans in missions. "I believe your place of assignment is your place of purpose."

In recent years, Bailey-Jones has focused most of her attention on the 10/40 Window, a region between the 10th and 40th parallels north that includes North Africa and the Middle East. It is the world's most populated and least evangelized area.

A single mother until she married attorney Daryll B. Jones two years ago, Bailey-Jones says she often prays that God will send her to the places He needs her the most, and through the years she has ministered in some tough nations, including war-torn Uganda. In countries such as Kuwait, Egypt and Sudan, she says thousands of Muslims have come to Christ.

While in Angola in 2005, Bailey-Jones wrote *Women Risktakers* to challenge women to help reach the world around them. The book's proceeds are being used to help free child prostitutes in Angola.

"Eighty percent of the people who suffer in the world due to improper health care, a lack of education and economic depravity are women and children," says Bailey-Jones, who advocates on behalf of women, children and refugees through Global Justice Ministries, a ministry her husband founded.

"God is raising up a mighty army of women from all walks of life all over the world who are educated, entrepreneurs, skillful and strategic and who live according to purpose," she adds. "I have the privilege of meeting these women as I travel the world, and now I've established Sisters Empowering the World (SEW), where women can come together to bring the light of Christ to a hurting and dying world."

In addition to SEW, Bailey-Jones founded the Global Leadership Training Center in 2004 to train Christians to reach the nations. Manuel Domingos, an Angolan pastor and leader of Vida Abundante, is one of its graduates.

“I had a dream in 2003 to go to America and then my bishop saw an advert on TBN in 2004 about Dr. Bailey-Jones’s mission school, and I attended in 2005,” says Domingos, who assisted Bailey-Jones and her team in Angola. “I came home after the missions school despite the difficulties in my country because I have purpose in my life and my family is here. I am using what I learned to help my church and ultimately my country.”

Even six years after a peace accord was signed in Angola, thousands of dangerous mines still dot the roads and railways, a situation the government doesn’t expect to be fixed for years. Meanwhile a severe humanitarian crisis has pushed thousands of children into human trafficking and sex work, with young girls frequently sold by their parents for food or money.

Despite the challenges, Bailey-Jones believes she is right where she’s supposed to be when she’s on the mission field. “I am called to the poor,” Bailey-Jones says. “I know that. ... I always wanted to be a voice for the voiceless. My husband says, ‘You think the world is your backyard.’ And I tell him, ‘It is.’ “

Janet Sebastian is a freelance journalist based in Johannesburg, South Africa. If you would like to support these missionaries, send a tax-deductible gift to Christian Life Missions. Contributions can be made online at or mailed to P.O. Box 952248, Lake Mary, FL 32795-2248.