

Andrews Celebrates Martin Luther King Jr.

Onleilove Alston speaks on biblical justice

[Agenda](#) | Posted on January 26, 2015



by Jenna Neil

On Thursday, January 15, Onleilove Alston, a faith community organizer and contributing writer for Sojourners Magazine, spoke for Andrews University’s 2015 Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration. Her topic was “The Biblical Call to Justice and African Roots of the Sabbath.”

Alston is known for her activism for justice and the poor after firsthand experience with poverty, foster care and homelessness. During her presentation she talked about Biblical justice specifically from Isaiah 61. She began by reading verses 1–4 and asked students to consider what the scripture was saying about God’s justice, a personal walk with God and several other areas.

“Nothing I can talk about,” she said, “can compare to what God says in His word.” Speaking of the recent events in Ferguson, Alston continued, “Do you think God has anything to do with justice? There’s our version of justice and God’s version. We need to use the Bible to examine God’s version of justice.”

As part of her talk, Alston used three examples of how the justice of Isaiah 61 was portrayed. The first was from Matthew and the reverse Exodus, or a return to Egypt to remember the first exodus. The second was Dr. King’s poor people’s campaign, specifically Resurrection City, a shantytown for the poor located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The poor people living in Resurrection City rose up in the spirit of God with the support of allies to change their lives. The third and final example Alston used was from her own life.

“The young people where I grew up were starting to reach out,” she said. “They were changing the way things had been between the government and the people.”

Alston, who grew up in East New York, Brooklyn, wasn’t raised in the church. At the age of 10, she started to read the Bible and pray. She was converted while attending a local Baptist Church four years later. Alston has a degree from Penn State University in human development and African-American studies and two master’s degrees, one in divinity from Union Theological Seminary, New York City, and the other in social work from Columbia University School of Social Work, New York, New York. She is currently the interim executive director at Faith in New York and a workshop facilitator, speaker and writer.

For more information about Alston, visit emergingvoicesproject.org/onleilove-alston.