



Written by on October 20, 2010

## Rev. Jesse Peterson's BOND Celebrates 20th Anniversary

Change, hope, optimism, community organizer — words usually associated with Barack Obama — more ably describe Reverend Jesse Lee Peterson, if a man is judged by his actions and not by rhetoric.

On Saturday, October 16, in Los Angeles, Reverend Peterson celebrated the 20th anniversary of the organization he founded, BOND, the Brotherhood Organization of a New Destiny. BOND's mission of "Rebuilding the Family by Rebuilding the Man" has not only defined the success of the organization, but also established Reverend Peterson as the moral leader for black Americans.



BOND's vision statement affirms that its mission is "to help men and their families, particularly in major urban areas, find spiritual and personal freedom through our personal development programs and community outreach and renewal efforts."

For 20 years Jesse Lee Peterson has provided the leadership to make his organization a unique success. It has delivered a promising future for young people's lives, and that is truly change we can all believe in.

Reverend Peterson himself is an example of a life turned around by the very values and lessons he teaches. Born in Comer Hill, Alabama, he spent his early life at a former plantation where his great-grandparents were slaves. He grew up with rage toward his mother and father, but for the last two decades has been teaching responsibility to young black men.

At the speaker's rostrum Reverend Peterson recounted his personal journey from rage to responsibility: "I had resentment in my heart. I resented my father and mother. I resented my mother who tried to keep me away from my father. My father, because he was so weak, he didn't know how to take care of me.... That resentment ... turned back on me because you become what you hate. You take on the spiritual identity of the person that you hate."

Only through personal introspection and the power of prayer was he able to let go of that anger and permanently replace it with forgiveness. What followed in his life was permanent peace and understanding. His personal story became a mission.

To change society for the better, he believes, one must begin with the individual. It is a renewal that is spiritual and inward. It is also the hardest path to take, but it is the path Reverend Peterson has chosen. Throughout history people have looked toward government mandates to change society, for that is the easy path. Politicians pander to the masses and render empty promises; false community leaders do the same and further impoverish their followers; and unscrupulous dictators follow the same path to increase their power.

"You cannot control a moral people," Reverend Peterson once stated in an interview. "You have to keep



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them immoral in order to control them.” He recalled growing up in Alabama, picking cotton on a plantation. Back then black Americans didn’t rely on government. Families, neighbors, and churches would help. Work and responsibility were intertwined along with respect for the elderly.

He added, “The purpose of BOND is to rebuild the family by rebuilding the man. I believe that if we can get men to turn back to God and love what is right with all their heart, soul, and might and get married before having a family, then a community can change.”

“I started BOND because I realized that, not all, but most black Americans were suffering because they had anger because their fathers aren’t around. They are relying on the government, and they are following the so-called black leaders who are setting them up in order to use them for their own personal gain. If I could get them to understand that, [and] if they could overcome their anger, then they can’t be controlled by their outer environment.”

He shared with *The New American* magazine a valuable lesson BOND has taught to young black men: “They have learned to judge people based on character and not color.”

Once young men appreciate the content of a person’s character, especially their own, they can make great strides in life. Peterson has been richly rewarded by lives he has dramatically touched. The tangible success of BOND’s far-reaching influence was evident by the remarks of the people who have been touched by Reverend Peterson’s wisdom and moral leadership — from his faithful radio show listeners to the young men who graduated from BOND’s programs to the many who received wise counsel to put aside the anger in their hearts and embrace forgiveness.

Scott Stewart is a shining example of a young man whose life was transformed by becoming a BOND program graduate. He was an angry youth when he first encountered Reverend Peterson, but his anger was overcome by forgiveness, which engendered continued success. After completing the BOND program, he graduated from high school, attended Princeton University, earned a law degree from Stanford University, and is now employed with a law firm in Washington, D.C.

Almost unbelievably these days, Peterson can add: “I’m proud to tell you that we have done it without one penny from the government. Not one dime. We never asked for a dime from the government. It’s people helping us to help others.”

Now that mission is expanding. Last month the doors of a new BOND Academy for Boys and Girls opened, where the three Rs of education are emphasized, along with patriotism, and learning a valuable trade. “It’s time to take the kids out of the public school system. It’s not about education, not about God, it’s about corrupting their minds and their hearts and turning them away from the family,” he warned as he explained BOND’s vision for the next 20 years.



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If the next 20 years are as successful as the past 20, the next anniversary celebration should be even grander than the present one, and BOND's 20th-anniversary banquet was highlighted with live music, an inspirational video presentation, speeches, and a keynote address from singer and actor Pat Boone.

In attendance that evening to present an award to Reverend Peterson was Art Thompson, chief executive officer of The John Birch Society. In his remarks he noted the motto of the Society, "Less government, more responsibility, and — with God's help — a better world." He informed the audience that the Society has just instituted "an award for individuals who really exemplified that motto and take ... the influence that they have way beyond the norm. One of those individuals we felt should be the first recipient of this award is Reverend Jesse Lee Peterson."

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Barbara Coe, founder and president of California Coalition for Immigration Reform, was also in attendance. In her introductory remarks for Reverend Peterson, she stated, "Most importantly, this man does not just talk, he walks the walk every day of his life and works tirelessly to provide disadvantaged young men the support that he was denied, to become productive, loyal, law-abiding American citizens. In short, he uses his life's lesson to achieve his God-given goal."



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