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Contact: Cheryl Duncan  
[cheryl\\_duncan@earthlink.net](mailto:cheryl_duncan@earthlink.net)  
201-332-8338

## **WORLD LITERACY CRUSADE GIVES YOUTH TOOLS FOR LEARNING Christian Minister Spearheads Literacy Effort Offering Real Solutions to Education Crisis**

Older generations may have learned it another way but often to today's kids the three Rs of school are "rude," "rowdy" and "unRuly." That's not the case for the many students of the World Literacy Crusade (WLC), however. The after school tutoring program, which enjoys celebrity support from the likes of Isaac Hayes and Edward James Olmos, offered tips to parents and children to make schoolwork easier and more enjoyable just in time for back-to-school.

Baptist minister the Reverend Alfreddie Johnson, Jr. founded the program in Compton in 1993 to address illiteracy in the inner city. Since then affiliates (chapters) of World Literacy Crusade have sprung up in major U.S. cities, like, Memphis, Miami, St. Louis and Houston as well as in Ghana, Greece, Canada, India and Australia. In total WLC has 27 chapters that have reached more than 15,000 children, teens and adults since it began.

Parents often volunteer for the program—or even start programs—as a way of contributing back to World Literacy Crusade for helping their children. In addition to supporting the children's participation, parental involvement instills in their youngsters the value of community service.

While his movement has participants from all faiths, the Christian minister referred to the scripture, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

"This statement tells us that the spirit of God is bound up in words," Johnson stated. "In order to embrace God's spirit, one must get the full conceptual understanding of each and every word he or she encounters."

Johnson came across the Study Technology, developed by author and humanitarian L. Ron Hubbard, in the wake of the Los Angeles disturbances sparked by the police beating of Rodney King. Study Technology stresses the importance of understanding the meanings of words and symbols and liberal use of the dictionary in studying texts. Hubbard wrote that not knowing the words in their materials can cause students to give up on studying a subject or to even quit school entirely, and explained how to overcome the problem. (See sidebar, "Learning How to Learn.")

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**3209 N. Alameda ✎ Compton, CA 90022 ✎ 310-537-2273**

WLC takes a comprehensive approach to learning through the Master Learners Program, which teaches literacy, communication skills and how to formulate one's own personal values for success in life. Using the revolutionary Study Technology and the Smart Way phonics and language arts program, the World Literacy Crusade can teach a child of any age to read and write in as little as three months. And after just three months of instruction, 57 percent of program participants increased their reading aptitude by an average of 2.5 grade levels, according to a 2003 assessment.

Statistics show that we remember 90 percent of what we teach to others and only 10 percent of what is lectured to us. The highly interactive program allows children to be both student *and* teacher, or tutor, of his or her peers.

Johnson found that as youth begin to truly understand the things they read, they become excited about learning as their worlds expand. Other bad behaviors fall off as well. Eighty-seven percent of the adolescents associated with gangs and drugs who complete the program no longer participate in illegal activities and have not had a subsequent arrest. The minister has literally gotten gang members to give up their guns to become tutors.

The World Literacy Crusade offers an alternative to drug-based models that place educational labels such as "learning disabled," "hyperactive" or "attention deficit disorder" on children. Ritalin, Prozac or any other drugs are never used on children in their programs. Instead they isolate the actual study difficulty a child is manifesting and get it resolved with Study Technology.

World Literacy Crusade can help those wanting to start an affiliate literacy program in their area. "Our dedicated volunteers are key to our success," said Dr. Hanan Islam, executive director of the program. "We have materials and successful strategies that we can share to help them launch a program in their communities."

People can reach World Literacy Crusade, which Johnson calls "the greatest grassroots movement of all time," at 310-537-7723, at [www.worldliteracy.org](http://www.worldliteracy.org) or at [info@worldliteracy.org](mailto:info@worldliteracy.org).