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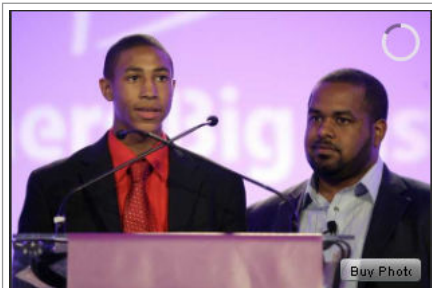
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RELIGION

## White House aide brings his message -- and his 'little brother' -- to Miami



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Joshua DuBois made post-election headlines when Barack Obama asked him to lead a 25-member council of religious and nonprofit leaders that advises the president on policy, but he spoke of a softer subject in South Florida this week: his relationship with his "little brother," 15-year-old Aidid Brayboy, whom he has mentored for nine years.

"I can launch a political campaign or raise a million dollars, but in the grand scheme of things, I can never do anything more meaningful than talk to Aidid," DuBois told 400 members of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America at the InterContinental Hotel.

"If you talk to Barack, he will tell you the same thing, I know. The time he spends with his little girls -- like the time I spend with Aidid Brayboy -- is the most important thing we can do to heal this world."

DuBois, a 26-year-old Pentecostal pastor, heads the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. His mission is to connect faith-based groups to administration goals such as fostering economic recovery through job and financial-responsibility training, reducing abortions, encouraging responsible fatherhood and improving interfaith relations.

The council, an extension of an office created under former President George W. Bush, includes two Floridians: Nancy Ratzan, a Miami attorney and president of the National Council of Jewish Women, and Joel Hunter, pastor of a Central Florida megachurch. The national president of Big Brothers Big Sisters, Judith Vredenburg, is also a member.

Groups such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, which matches 260,000 kids with adult mentors each year -- including 3,725 in Miami-Dade and Broward counties -- are integral to many of those goals, DuBois said.

"The president thinks there is no more important institution than the family," DuBois said in an interview. "At the end of the day, it's all about the little moments."

Aidid, who flew to Miami from Boston for the speech -- and to join his "big brother" on an airboat ride in the Everglades -- agreed.

"Everybody needs a positive role model in their life, someone to lead," he said.

The two met when DuBois, then 17, signed up as a freshman at Boston University to become a Big Brother. Their relationship began with movies, museum trips and meals together, and continued through DuBois' graduation with a degree in political science, graduate work in public affairs at Princeton and jobs with U.S. Reps. Rush D. Holt of New Jersey and Charles Rangel of New York.

"If we just sat there and did absolutely nothing, I still had a good time," Aidid said of their bond, which has taken him to New Jersey, Washington, D.C., and Chicago.

Kids in Big Brothers Big Sisters programs are recommended by their parents, schools or social service agencies and come from poor families, have a single parent or have a parent who is in jail. The four-day Miami conference included workshops on topics such as racial equality, fundraising and Hispanic mentoring.

Alana Messinger, who came from Flagstaff, Ariz. to gain skills for her job as a grants administrator, said the address by DuBois and another by state Sen. Dan Gelber were motivating.

"It's wonderful to have such big names on board with the work we do," said Messinger, 29, whose office worked with 330 children last year.

DuBois, a single Nashville native with a girlfriend of five years, became politically active as a student in Boston. Holding a sign that said "No More," he stood on a sidewalk during the winter of 2000 for 41 hours to protest the acquittal of four New York police officers who had shot to death an unarmed Guinean man named Amadou Diallo.

A friend he met during that vigil invited him to Calvary Praise and Worship Center, a small Pentecostal congregation in Cambridge, Mass., where DuBois soon became an associate pastor and still preaches on occasion.

It was in 2004, while watching Obama's much-hailed speech at the Democratic National Convention on TV, that DuBois set his sights on working for the future president. One of Obama's lines struck him in particular: "We worship an awesome God in the Blue States."

He tried and failed several times before landing a job on Obama's Illinois state senate staff. Impressed by his work (part of his job was to address faith issues), Obama named DuBois religious affairs director for his presidential campaign.

DuBois pushed for Obama to speak at the Saddleback Civic Forum on the Presidency, which evangelical pastor Rick Warren hosted at his California megachurch in August. Gay rights advocates complained when Warren was invited to give the invocation at the inauguration in January.

"Obama's message is that we all have common values, even if we disagree," DuBois said. "I'm so hopeful about what this administration can do to really strengthen individual families and communities."

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