

# Notes

International Adventist Musicians Association



## The Band Marches In

A joyful noise in the streets of New York City



*In the darkest hour of an unbelievable tragedy, a small group of Oakwood College musicians marched into the midst of a city facing the worst devastation on American soil since the Civil War. They appeared seemingly out of nowhere in the days after the September 11 destruction of the World Trade Center complex and with their playing of patriotic music provided a lift in spirit and hope for the future that only music could provide. The following story, penned by the National Review editor, Rich Lowry, appeared in the pages of the September 16 issue of that magazine.*

**W**hen I was walking back to my apartment yesterday, I heard the clangor of a marching band, getting closer. I walked to the corner of 14th Street and Fifth Avenue - where on Tuesday people had stood and watched the towers burn - and suddenly there appeared a small marching band, all black kids, in purple shirts, playing, *When the Saints Come Marching In*. They crossed Fifth, and people stopped to watch, smile, and clap.

It turned out they were from Oakwood College in Hunstville, Alabama. Someone had had the inspired idea to drive 24 hours to

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## The Band Marches In ... cont.

come here and raise a joyful noise in the streets of New York City. What a sight! A kid held an American flag at the front of the group, and a couple of others held shovels over their shoulders. After all the sadness, the prayer vigils and the candles, here was something clamorous and happy and resolute (and even a little martial). This is what we needed, even if no one had realized it until this noisy apparition appeared among us, conducting the normal business of a New York Saturday - walking our dogs, carrying plastic grocery bags, strolling idly toward brunch - but with the pall of downtown muting everything.

**T**he band headed to Union Square, where a makeshift memorial had been thrown up. Stragglers followed behind, and people parted to make way, clapping as the kids passed through, blowing on their trumpets, banging on their

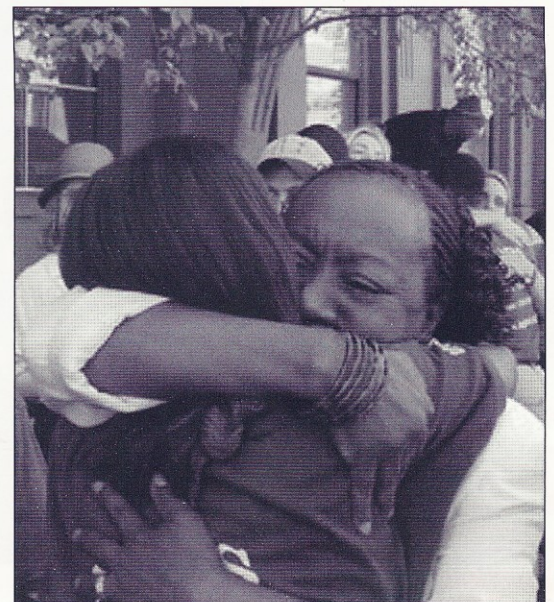
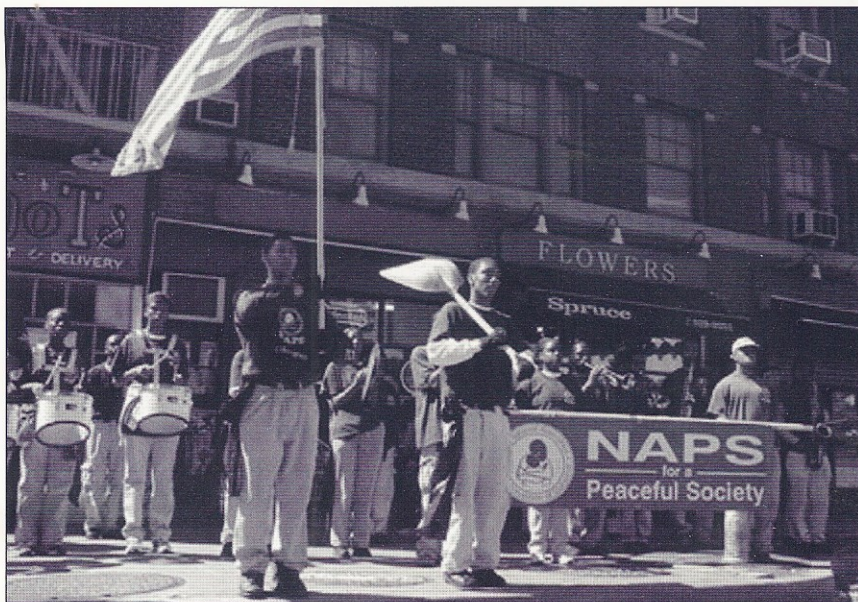
drums. When they got in the middle of the square, they played the *Star Spangled Banner*. One of those half-crazy black guys you sometimes see in New York, was waving a flag and practically jumping up and down: "You go, kids! You go, kids!"

A Hispanic woman hugged one of the girls with the group, and pressed \$20 into her hand. "I really want to hear *Battle Hymn of the Republic*," she said, when the band paused in between songs. Next, *Amazing Grace*, played softly, just on the horns. Then, everyone sang *God Bless America*, without the accompaniment of the band, which eventually turned around and headed out of the square, drums blazing, one black lady making a point of hugging every member of the group that she could. A black guy approached the one white member of the group - walking in back, not playing an instrument - and extended his hand, saying emphatically, "THANK

YOU!"

The band headed down University Avenue, playing *America the Beautiful*, a wonderfully bizarre sight, marching the wrong way down the one-way street. Car alarms went off as the band passed. Each step of the way, people paused on the sidewalks and applauded. People peered out of the windows of stores and restaurants. More people followed along. "I don't know where they're going, but I'm with them," someone said.

**T**hey turned out to be headed to Washington Square Park, a short walk away, where another spontaneous memorial had been erected. The members presumably gone forever arched into the middle of the park, past the candles and the missing posters up on a fence, and played the *Star Spangled Banner* again. A Hispanic woman hugged the kid carrying the flag, and





buried her face into his neck and began to sob and sob. She was inconsolable, bleary-eyed, her nose red with crying. She was carrying a couple of flowers and a color photocopy of a family - with one of its members presumably gone forever.

The kid with the flag eventually stood back in his place. Other band members hugged the lady, who - may God comfort her - was giving off waves of heart-rending grief. The kid holding the flag began to cry, and as his eyes filled with tears, he hoisted the flag higher with both his arms. Then, the band's leader - an older, take-charge-type - consulted with one of the locals about how to find the next park, and off they marched.

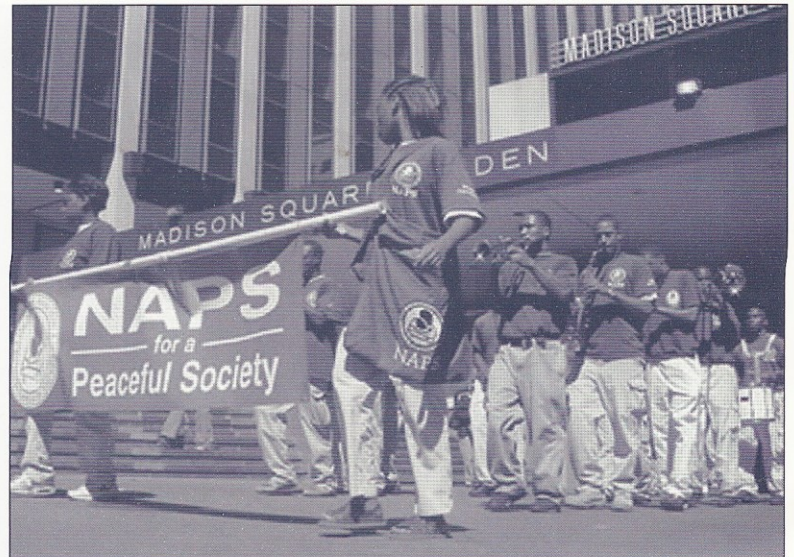
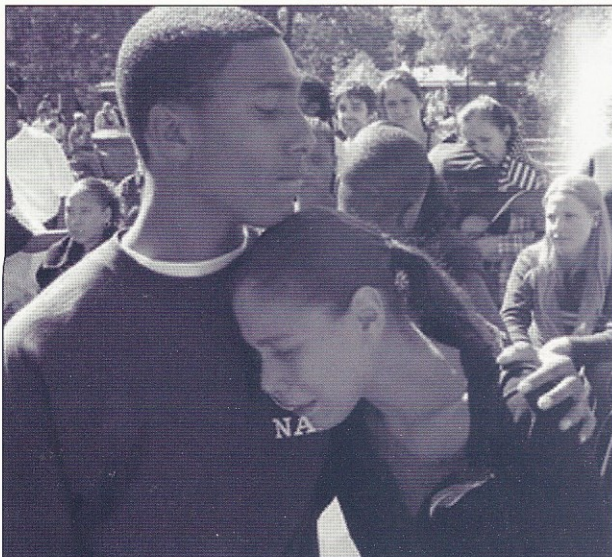


**T**hey were part of a group called National Association for the Prevention of Starvation. I know nothing about the group except that its website says that, "NAPS takes its marching band on

all of its major projects to minister to the spirit of the recipients of its aid." Yesterday, they ministered to the spirit of New York.

*Rich Lowry*

*Reprinted with permission from the September 16 issue of The National Review*







# Songs Help Soothe New Yorkers

## Huntsville Group Travels to Stricken City

Charlotte McIntosh of the Birmingham Post-Herald

While distributing food to hungry villagers in Sudan several years ago, Anthony Paul got his first lesson in the power of music. After leaving the food, Paul and his team led the villagers in a song before departing. As they left for the next village, the famished children put down their peanut butter and biscuits and followed Paul's group, continuing to sing. "We realized it was more than food. The music did something for their spirits," Paul said.

On the weekend following the World Trade Center attacks, Paul once again was amazed by the soothing effect of music. But this time, it wasn't African children who followed his group. It was hurting New Yorkers. "As soon as we played the first note, we realized we were onto something very important," said Paul, a professor of biology at Oakwood College in Huntsville.

With a full 12 hours of planning, Paul and 32 students, including some from nearby Alabama A&M, departed for New York on Sept. 13, two days after the attacks. They didn't know exactly what they'd do, where they'd stay or how they would get gas money for the trip back, but they knew people needed help. "We decided action needed to be taken. We saw the hurt

on people's faces," said Jamar Clayton, a 19-year-old Oakwood sophomore.

Traveling is not unusual for the group, a chapter of the National Association for the Prevention of Starvation, which journeys throughout the country and the world distributing aid. Since Paul's Sudan experience,

members in York, looking for a place to stay Sept. 14.

After sleeping in the basement of a Bronx church, the group rose at 5:30 a.m. to drive to the rubble of the World Trade Center. Although police were limiting traffic into Manhattan, for some reason they allowed the group to drive straight to the attack site. The

members took their shovels, hoping to pitch in with the recovery efforts, but found the area saturated with volunteers. "Once we got up there, we realized we couldn't do much," Paul said.

Instead, they pulled out their saxophones, trumpets and drums and began marching away from ground zero and through the streets of lower Manhattan. For the next 8½ hours, the loosely organized

marching band zigzagged from park to park, making frequent stops to hug the wide-eyed, wondering observers. As they moved through the area, spreading patriotic tunes and hugs, the caring became contagious. "Everyone started hugging and consoling each other and comforting each other," Paul said. The odd sight caught many New Yorkers off-guard, especially when they learned where the group lived.



the group incorporates some form of music into their efforts, whether they're constructing houses or distributing food.

On the evening of Sept. 13, the group loaded its caravan of two vans and a trailer and started the nearly 24-hour drive to New York. During the drive they used a cell phone to call former NAPS



"When they found out we were from Alabama, they started crying and laughing. They couldn't believe it," Paul said.

Journalists from the National Review, The New York Times, and Newsweek also were intrigued by the sight. Rich Lowry, editor of the National Review wrote: "After all the sadness, the prayer vigils and the candles, here was something clamorous and happy and resolute (and even a little martial). This is what we needed, even if no one had realized it until this noisy apparition appeared among us, conducting the normal business of a New York Saturday - walking our dogs, carrying plastic grocery bags, strolling idly toward brunch - but with the pall of downtown muting everything . . .

"People peered out of the windows of stores and restaurants. More people followed along. 'I don't know where they're going, but I'm with them,' someone said."

Clayton carried a flag in the procession. "There were cards on a wall the size of a billboard. It was nothing but missing people. They were all ages and races. 'People ask you, 'Have you seen my brother?' but

there's nothing you can do," he said. "It makes you feel uneasy. I hugged them and let them know we were there for them. That was the best you could do."

On Sunday, the band and followers took to the streets again, this time targeting fire-houses. They didn't have a plan or a map, but after visiting one house, firefighters directed them to another. One group of fire-fighters fed the group and another gave them gas money for the trip back to Alabama. At 4:30 p.m. Sept. 15, after nearly 16 hours on the streets, the 32 marchers started the drive back. Although weary, most students didn't sleep on the return trip, instead reliving their experiences

of the past two days. They arrived at Oakwood at 7:30 a.m. Sept. 16, just in time for classes.

"All the people wanted was a little love and a hug," Clayton said. "Before, you'd think, 'You can't just go up to someone and hug them.' We saw strangers hugging each other." Perhaps the weekend was summed up best by a New Yorker watching the band. "It took some Southern hospital-

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## Oakwood College and NAPS

NAPS was launched in 1978 by concerned students and staff at OC for the purpose of providing food, clothing and shelter for the needy. It now continues this ministry on a national and global scale with chapters in eleven states and in seven countries.

It has had a life-changing affect on both those it has served and those who have participated. All are volunteers, including those who lead out as officers. Dr. Anthony Paul who serves as president of NAPS is also chair of Department of Biological Sciences at OC.

Although NAPS is not officially part of the college, Oakwood is often identified as its home and as such has received considerable favorable publicity over many years because of its ministry.

The marching band is an official part of the group and participates in all of its major projects.

ity to show New Yorkers how to love each other," Clayton said, quoting an unidentified New Yorker.

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