



OAKWOOD UNIVERSITY CHURCH HONORS NBA LEGEND

MAGIC JOHNSON

BY RAMONA L. HYMAN

And here I am,” said Earvin “Magic” Johnson Jr. at the Oakwood University Seventh-day Adventist Church in Huntsville, Alabama. “I used to be a point guard for the Los Angeles Lakers, had those little shorts on, and I was doing my thing. I was happy, but I wasn’t fulfilled, so now I am the point guard for the Lord.”

“Magic” and his wife Earlitha “Cookie” Johnson make no secret their calling to walk boldly and compassionately into the worldwide vineyard as God-centered entrepreneurs and change makers, “following God’s leading.”

On May 14 the Oakwood University church honored the couple with the 2016 Humanitarian Award. Carlton Byrd, senior pastor of the church, affirmed the Johnsons’ unwavering support of and commitment to underserved communities. “Brother ‘Magic’ and Sister ‘Cookie’ have done so much,” said Byrd. “It is important for our young people to be . . . exposed to people who are making a positive difference.”

Byrd stated that the Johnsons have made an “indelible contribution” to America and the world. In 1991, the Johnsons inaugurated the Magic Johnson Foundation. Byrd shared that the foundation has three priorities: HIV and Aids awareness, scholarships, and community empowerment centers. Currently, “the foundation . . . serves more than 250,000 individuals each year,” said Byrd. “The foundation’s impact, moreover, is far-reaching.”*

Joined by Magic Johnson’s family members, including his parents, Earvin Sr. and Christine Johnson, the couple was

welcomed home. “So happy to be back home,” said Cookie, a native of Huntsville. “It makes me feel so good to be here . . . God has tremendously blessed us,” Cookie added. “Thanks for appreciating us. Our mission is to give back to those [in need]. . . We know God has blessed us.”

And in an effort to pass on the blessings, Johnson donated \$500,000 to the Oakwood University Church Family Life Center and created a \$50,000 scholarship in his mother’s name for students attending Oakwood University.

During the Saturday event, the National Basketball Association Hall of Fame legend announced the scholarship, and provided a narrative of his Christian journey from point guard for the Lakers to a God-inspired businessman. Raised in a Seventh-day Adventist home, Johnson expressed his appreciation

for his Adventist family. “My family has gone to this beautiful university. My mother made sure my sisters had no choice but to go to Oakwood,” he said, “and as a result, many of my family members were blessed to attend and graduate from Oakwood.” Johnson said the scholarship was given in appreciation for the university’s contribution to the education of his family.

The Johnsons were truly at home on that Sabbath afternoon at the Oakwood University church. “I feel at home,” said Johnson, adding that Byrd inspired him. Announcing the half million-dollar gift, he said, “I believe in that man, [Dr. Byrd], and the work he’s doing.”

The Johnsons are making a marked difference on the world stage; they are remarkable models of Christian evangelism. They are, indeed, ambassadorial “point guards for the Lord.”



“Magic” and “Cookie” Johnson with
Pastor Carlton Byrd
Photo by Ocie Maddox



Magic Johnson is surrounded by
children at the Oakwood University
church on May 14.
Photo by Ocie Maddox

Pastor Carlton Byrd presents Earvin “Magic” Johnson Jr. and Earlitha “Cookie” Johnson with the 2016 Oakwood University Humanitarian Award on May 14, 2016.
Photo by Ocie Maddox

*The Magic Johnson Foundation, according to the foundation’s website, “works to develop programs and support community-based organizations that address the educational, health and social needs of ethnically diverse, urban communities.” These services and businesses include scholarships, HIV/Aids education and testing assistance, “high quality” restaurants, theaters, sports teams, and the ASPIRE television network. ▼



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