

INVEST

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Contributes \$3M to Fund Scholarships for Black Students



F aith and justice are inextricably linked. A profession of faith calls for compassion and a willingness to speak up against injustice. For more than 78 years, UNCF has engaged in this work to provide high quality educational opportunities for students and has worked with faith leaders, policymakers and the education community to fight for equity in education.

In that spirit, UNCF began partnering with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) during FY 2022. The church contributed \$3 million for scholarships to support Black college students for three years.

“Black students will go to college with \$3 million in scholarships funded by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” LDS President Russell M. Nelson announced in a joint news conference on June 14, 2021, with UNCF and others.

“Together, we want to make a difference,” Nelson said.

UNCF President and CEO Dr. Michael L. Lomax hailed the news. “I’m particularly excited that I am here today on behalf of the United Negro College Fund to join in partnership with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ... in these three bold and important initiatives that will do so much to end the sense of marginalization and separation and pronounce our commitment to cooperation, partnership, shared humanity and love.”

In addition to the scholarship funds, the church announced it was donating \$6 million in humanitarian aid over three years to inner cities in the United States, and as well as a fellowship to send up to 50 students to Ghana to learn about Black American and African history.

The partnership between UNCF and the Church became a reality thanks to the commitment and work of the UNCF San Francisco Area Office and Rick Kopf, communications director, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Northern California. Kopf has served on the UNCF Leadership Council for the San Francisco Bay Area for more than 20 years.

“I have always admired UNCF and readily accepted the invitation to serve on the local Leadership Council. I firmly believe in UNCF’s mission to provide support for minorities seeking a college education. That is the key to long-term success in helping our young people to become contributing citizens,” said Kopf.

Kopf recalled how for several years he and UNCF Western Region Vice President Monica Sudduth explored possible ways that UNCF and the church could work cooperatively. “The church emphasizes the importance of education and sponsors several institutions and programs of higher learning,” Kopf noted.

Kopf engaged UNCF leadership, connecting the organization with LDS leaders which resulted in the church’s \$3 million contribution to UNCF.

“The scholarship funding from the church’s contribution is proving to be a worthwhile investment in helping students to fulfill their college dreams,” Sudduth said.

“Receiving this scholarship will allow me to continue chasing my dreams. Your earnest investment in my future goals will not be forgotten. Thank you again for your generous and thoughtful gift,” said Morehouse College student Kevin Washington, Jr.

Benedict College student Gabrielle Lowe said, “This will help to take away some of the financial burden that continuous education has put on myself and my mother. It’s a relief to have these funds coming from this amazing partnership to help me achieve my future career goals. Thank you again for your gracious generosity.”

“This scholarship will help lighten any financial burdens and allow me to be able to focus more on school, continuing to succeed and also continuing to serve my community,” said Utah Valley University student Deborah J. Colimon.

UNCF works tirelessly to ensure better futures for thousands of students like Kevin, Gabrielle and Deborah. And, thanks to donors like the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Investing in Better Futures® is what UNCF does.