

THE BETTER HOUR

Documentary Film,
Book, Gatherings,
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New TV Documentary “THE BETTER HOUR: The Legacy of William Wilberforce”
To Appear Nationwide on Public Television in February, 2008 for Black History Month

Preview Screening and Student “Speak Out” for Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday
held at Wilberforce University, January 14th

WILBERFORCE, OHIO. In time for Black History Month, a new one-hour television documentary, *THE BETTER HOUR: The Legacy of William Wilberforce* (www.thebetterhour.com) will appear nationwide on public television beginning in February, 2008. The national launch and preview screening was hosted on January 14th, the week prior to Martin Luther King Jr. day, at Wilberforce University (www.wilberforce.edu), the oldest private historically black college in America. The event included a student “speak out” on modern day forms of slavery and residual effects of American slavery.

Wilberforce University was named after the British Parliamentarian William Wilberforce who led the 20-year fight that brought the 1807 abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, whose 200th anniversary was last year in the U.K. and this year in the U.S. (Effective date of U.S. legislation was January 1, 1808.)

Shot in high definition, *THE BETTER HOUR: The Legacy of William Wilberforce* is an engaging documentary, rich with content and commentary, that can inspire people with the remarkable story of William Wilberforce. He used his position as a British parliamentarian to launch 69 organizations for the betterment of society and end the trans-Atlantic slave trade—a business that was key to the country’s economic strength. The film was funded by the John Templeton Foundation. (www.templeton.org)

Once, everyone knew the name William Wilberforce. Frederick Douglas said, “Let no man forget the name of William Wilberforce.” A quarter century after Wilberforce’s death, Abraham Lincoln said, “Every school boy knows the name of William Wilberforce.” Yet “few Americans today understand why, or even know Wilberforce’s name,” explains executive producer Cullen Schippe.

“This film does an outstanding job of bringing into sharp focus how the passion, persistence and actions of one man changed the course of history and worked to rid the world of the great evil of trafficking in human life,” says Marshall Mitchell, executive vice president of Wilberforce University. A student “speak out” was moderated by former U.S. Congressman and Wilberforce University President, **Rev. Floyd Flake**. Panelists included the film’s co-executive producer Cullen Schippe; Lesogo Serlong, cited as “one of top 10 students of South Africa;” Brenda Wilberforce of Liberia, the 2007 senior class president at Wilberforce University; and 16-year-old Zach Hunter, author of *Be the Change* and founder of “Loose Change to Loosen Chains,” with open microphone session to follow.

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The film focuses on a politician who, over time, developed strength of character in the service of high and seemingly unattainable goals. This film highlights William Wilberforce's drive and love for humanity and reveals how he and his colleagues worked tirelessly to end the slave trade, even as it represented a large portion of the British economy. In Wilberforce, we see character and a sense of justice for all join together to bring into the world what the English poet William Cowper described as "the better hour."

Wilberforce's compassion, self-discipline, and respect for others offer lessons for a contemporary audience on how to change the world for the better—peacefully and definitively. In the world of politics William Wilberforce's political career is a case study that not only merits attention, but also can inspire others to see the potential for great good in a political life that is built on strength of character rather than expediency. "Wilberforce," says WTIU Public Television Executive Producer Steve Krahnke, "shows us that it is possible to join a religious faith with political will—not as a means to convert unbelievers, but as a means to help make the world a better place for everyone regardless of his or her beliefs."

Narrated by Avery Brooks, the film features interviews with leading authors, historians and public figures from both the U.K. and the United States, including the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Rowan Williams, Wilberforce expert Kevin Belmonte, historian James Walvin, Newton Scholar Marylyn Rouse, Wilberforce University president, former Congressman Floyd Flake, and author Eric Metaxas, among others.

TWC films in association with WTIU and directors, Phil Cooke and Brian Mead, produced the program. Cullen Schippe, Executive Producer and writer of the film, has more than 35 years experience producing educational media for the classroom and for broadcast. In 2004 he retired as the publisher for Music, Religion, and Social Studies for Macmillan/McGraw-Hill.

The Heartland Film Festival selected the film as a featured documentary in October 2007. The DVD will be available at ShopPBS.org on January 31st.

THE BETTER HOUR is a division of Essentials in Education, a non-profit organization that enriches education for students. There is also a BETTER HOUR CONTEST for high school students funded by the John Templeton Foundation. Registration ends on January 31, 2008. Winners will be recognized in a ceremony in Washington in May, 2008. Recently, the Bible Literacy Project, another division of Essentials in Education, was featured in a cover story in TIME Magazine on April 2, 2007. Its textbook, "The Bible and Its Influence," is being taught in 168 schools in 35 states.

Wilberforce University was founded in 1856 as the first private historically black college and is named after British Parliamentarian William Wilberforce. The University is comprised of two colleges or divisions, the Arts and Sciences Division and the Professional Studies Division. Within each division are multiple majors designed to meet the diverse and dynamic needs of the world in which we live.

http://www.wilberforce.edu/academics/col_maj.html Academic excellence, social responsibility and empowerment are the foundation stones of the Wilberforce academic program. The University offers a variety of majors in Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts degrees. #####