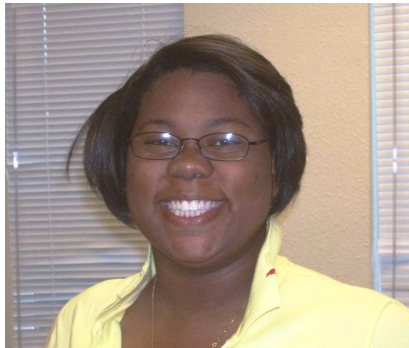




Dear friends and supporters of Bayshore Christian Ministries,



My name is Kiana Willis and I am currently a senior at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia by way of Mesa, Arizona. This is my second summer as a member of the ICL (Internship for Christian Leaders) team. I say member but I probably mean to say that I am but a screw in the body of the BCM machine. You would never believe that this small (well, maybe medium) blue and white bed and breakfast-like building would create such a rift in what I considered normal. But, hey, what is normal in the body of Christ?

I began my slow trek from Atlanta in the summer of 2005. Following God's word and a prompting from my friend who was also an intern last year, I ignorantly packed my bags and headed to East Palo Alto. As a Sociology major who was not sure about becoming an Education major, I thought that a summer teaching would give me a clear yes or no. If I didn't get an answer then hey, who wouldn't want to spend a whole summer in the bay area? Nice weather, cool places to visit, room and board and fun in the sun! So I watch a lot of Laguna Beach... Anyways, my parents were not so sure about my California dreams so they packed their bags and came with me in order to be parent private eye investigators. They approved and left but not before giving me a code word, "just in case something goes down."

After an exhausting training, I still felt unprepared for my own class. I had experienced a whole week of training; speaker after speaker and I was still in "La La Land." That first day of SAIL (Summer Adventures in Learning) I woke up nervous and anxious, unsure and somehow excited. The first five minutes before the kids came in I took out my cell phone, checked the time and tried to figure out how to escape but still get paid for the first two weeks! Then the whistle blew and the kids lined up. They called my class and I looked at their faces and faked some excitement to fool them and hopefully myself. My class came in, sat down and stared at me. All of a sudden something clicked. The room went blank. At first I thought I was experiencing a mental blackout. Reviewing my life, I thanked God I was saved and braced myself for a hard fall. But then the lights flicked back on and I opened my mouth and the divine power of God took over. Me? I really had nothing to say. It became natural, second nature to be in the classroom. I wanted an answer and I got one on the first day of SAIL. From that moment until now, I have known that my place is in education. While this is a part of the reason I came back for a second summer, it is a small particle in comparison.

Remember when I said that BCM was a machine? I meant that it was a big monster with large teeth and claws and fire breathing powers. It stomps through East Palo Alto grabbing children and grown ups. Sometimes I like to refer to it as a swirling vortex that sucks people in. Regardless of the analogy, BCM is contagious and it grabs hold of you and in an instant you find yourself in love. BCM offered me the opportunity to grow. Not to grow into what they wanted me to be, not to groom me into their idea of Christianity. No, they urged each and every one of us to grow into who God has called us to be. I not only found my ministry, but I found a part of myself that I thought was lost. It wasn't just the interaction with the kids that created a rift in my reality, it was the availability of the staff, the comfort of my fellow interns and the divine blessing that God has drenched this place in. I didn't think that the impact would be so hard two summers in a row but my Daddy always says, "You think you know everything, Miss Willis, but you don't."

There are a few ministries that allow you to be you and have the understanding that you cannot be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good. BCM builds relationships; they feed the need before trying to use scripture as a way to condemn and injure the injured. They teach kids and adults that Christianity is fun and that we are all flawed striving for the mark. They have created an open atmosphere.

In your prayers please remember me and ask that God implant this same spirit of relationship over spiritual government in my life. Pray that every seed planted at Bayshore Christian Ministries will be watered and that every dream comes true. Pray for the staff who are constantly pouring out of themselves and the volunteers who are opening their hearts and minds and making themselves available to be used. Finally, pray for the summer interns of 2007, that their lives be changed and that they be transformed and sucked into the vortex. If I am here, I might as well have company.

Thank you for your prayers, support, love and attention to Bayshore Christian Ministries. Trust me, we love you back!

Still in the vortex,

Kiana Willis

