

**Chino Hills 55+ Club**  
**General Meeting February 28, 2020**  
**President's Report, Black History Month**

Since this February is Black History month, Susanne provided a presentation of Whitley Phipps, a renowned black vocal artist, pastor and gospel singer. He was born in 1955.

Phipps was initially inspired by a man he met on an Amtrak train from Baltimore to Philadelphia who looked like he needed a friend. Phipps asked to sit next to him and learned that the man's name was Chuck Colson. Colson was an important man working for Richard Nixon who was involved and sentenced as part of the Watergate scandal. After his incarceration, he devoted his life to Prison Fellowship, the largest prison ministry in the world. Colson encouraged Phipps to start visiting prisons with him. Colson would speak and Phipps would sing. It began from there.

Statistics during this time noted that 60% to 70% of all those who ended up in prison are children of those who were previously incarcerated. A key concern surfaced, which was to break the cycle of incarceration among the children of these previous prisoners. Also, in the US 60% of all black boys who don't graduate from high school will be in prison by the age of 30. Phipps, after consulting with experts, came up with two clear facts:

1. The density of caring adults in a child's life must be increased.
2. Interactive tutorial academic support makes a difference

As part of his legacy, Whitley formed the U.S. Dream Academy to give children who have had a family member behind bars support and other "black at-risk youth". The Academy focus is on three pillars, which are: Dream Building; Academic skill building and character building. Whitley says, "Just the computers themselves are not going to transform the lives of these kids," and "The most important part of our program is really the caring, loving adults who surround them."

His Academy which has been operational for over 20 years provides mentoring, academic tutoring and exposure to computers and the Internet

He and his program, to date has garnered the following awards

- Excellence in Mentoring for Program Leadership Award, MENTOR
- Oprah's Angel Network \$100,000 "Use Your Life" Award.

- Grammy Award nominations in 1988 and 1989
- 2005 MMP Fall Leadership award, \$100,000
- Philanthropist of the Year, National Center for Black Philanthropy, Inc.

To summarize, Susanne recommended that all of us should listen to this man's wonderful music and honor his contributions to his ministry.