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The Student Movement Volume 107 Issue 14: Week of Prayer, Wind Symphony, and Working at WAUS: Another Week at AU

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Week of Prayer, Wind Symphony, and Working at WAUS

ANOTHER WEEK AT AU



Photo by Dawson Par

Humans

HUMANS

Andrews University Social Justice Club: Sara Santana

Interviewed by: Timmy Duado [02.02.23](#)



Photo by Uccitly Caballero

This week, I got to discuss the Andrews University Social Justice Club with Sara Santana (junior, psychology) and dig deep into reasons why the club was started, how they impact the campus, what their purpose is, and what some future events may be.

Why did the Social Justice Club start?

The Social Justice Club is young, only formed around two years ago by the Social and Behavioral Sciences Department. The club's primary purpose is to keep people aware and informed of issues in our present world, build a stronger community for

behavioral science majors and minors, and promote networking opportunities within sociological and anthropological fields.

What does the club do on campus?

As I talked about in the previous question, SJC was mainly made for the social sciences, thus the name; however, we still need to include other social issues surrounding students on and off campus. Depending on the officers and current issues, we plan events like forums, Tuesday choices, and mental health days for members and non-members throughout the fall and spring semesters.

What are some things you are looking to change or bring to campus?

Bringing awareness to specific issues, especially in the social sciences, is one of many things we want to get to campus as the Social Justice Club. Not only that, but being able to build a community between members and AU students around campus. We also want students to feel more comfortable talking about current events at Andrews and worldwide.

How can others help with the purpose of your club?

One way to support the purpose of our club is to simply be aware that we are an active club and just be on the lookout for new events. (Make sure to follow us [@ausocialjusticeclub](https://www.instagram.com/ausocialjusticeclub) on Instagram!) Another way to help us with the purpose of our club is to suggest events and ask us if we can bring specific changes around campus—since that technically is the primary purpose of our club.

Do you have any events coming up this semester?

We'll post the dates of our upcoming events on our Instagram page. Our next event should be sometime this February, so watch out! We will be having a "We're Not Really Strangers" themed event for the students—either members or non-members—to get to know each other and themselves. We also decided to do that as one of our events to prompt people to reflect on themselves and get their minds off schoolwork for a bit.

We also have merch coming up pretty soon! All members are getting a sweatshirt designed by our very own graphic designer, Uccitly Caballero (senior, psychology) and we made extra orders if people who are not current members of the Social Justice Club want to buy them as well. Our design is different from previous years, but we are all very proud of it and hope everyone likes it too. We are also teaming up with WEAAU and the Social Work club on an event, so be on the lookout for that as well.

Any other broader goals in mind?

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we had everything up in the air until this spring semester regarding events and merch. However, some of us are starting to write up a better plan for next year with events with different clubs on campus and our events throughout the semester. This semester will be more of a test trial to see if people are interested in certain circumstances, and we'll make sure to accommodate more members next year. Because we are still a very young club, we don't have as many members as we hope to have, but we are hoping that by the end of the semester, we will be able to persuade more and more people to join our club next year.

HUMANS

Honors Thesis Project: Alexander Hess

Interviewed by: Anna Pak 02.02.23



Photo by Anthony Isensee

This week I talked to Alexander Hess (senior, English) to learn more about his Honors Thesis project including his project inspiration, the planning process behind his research, challenges he's faced, and tips for future students doing similar projects.

Can you give us a short summary of your Honors Thesis Project?

For my Honors Thesis, I'm exploring the impact of racism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity on Black love as manifested through Beyoncé's 2016 "Lemonade" album. By analyzing three songs— "Don't Hurt Yourself feat. Jack White," "Daddy Lessons," and "All Night" —and their accompanying music videos, I dissect Beyoncé's three step journey of working through her husband's infidelity and the broader systems of oppression that hurt all of us. Those three steps are 1) parodying patriarchal masculinity as a means for "healing" from her brokenness and exposing the toxicity of patriarchal masculinity, 2) realizing that violence and apathy are insufficient modes of healing by reflecting on the broken relationships within her own family, and 3) embracing an alternative gender/sexual politic grounded in love and mutual care. Through these steps, I assert that Beyoncé not only diagnoses how these systems of oppression teach us self-defeating ways of being and loving, but also maps a course to recovery.

What inspired you to choose this topic?

One of the things I love about being an English major is that I am essentially trained to apply complex theoretical ideas of human identity and art to the things I read, watch, and listen to. As any of my friends or family will tell you, I'm obsessed with Beyoncé, so choosing "Lemonade" as the focus of my project was a no brainer. However, in a lot of the critical responses to "Lemonade" I had seen, very few consider what Bey says about masculinity and patriarchy (two of my other favorite research topics). So, with my project, I wanted to utilize my passion for topics of masculine gender performance and sexuality and broaden conversations about "Lemonade."

What is the process behind your planning, and where are you at currently?

Once I decided on my topic, my amazing advisor, Dr. Vanessa Corredera, provided me with a list of books on Blackness and masculinity to start building the theoretical groundwork for my project. While doing this academic reading, I rewatched and relistened to "Lemonade" to determine how I could apply the things I was reading to my analysis. Once I had that groundwork to build off of, I started writing! Currently, I'm planning and drafting the final portion of my thesis, on "All

Night," and reading articles that specifically talk about "Lemonade" and Beyoncé. So far this school year, I've spent about sixty hours researching and writing portions of my project!

What is your favorite thing about your Honors Thesis?

As I mentioned earlier, I love my research because it gives me the opportunity to write about the things that I'm passionate about—primarily Beyoncé and gender/sexuality. In many ways, "Lemonade" is the perfect artifact because it's a goldmine of symbolism and Black history/culture. Every time I watch the visual album (which is quite frequently), I discover something new. Because of how complex the album is, I could genuinely write multiple theses on this album, which sometimes makes it hard for me to stay focused and not go down rabbit holes!

Have there been any challenges thus far? If so, how have you dealt with them?

Overall, I would say that the largest challenge I've had is staying motivated. I'm someone who doesn't work super well with long term deadlines, so when I started researching during my junior year, it was hard for me to stay dedicated to my project and not procrastinate. One of the main ways that I work on overcoming this is by breaking my project down into smaller, more digestible pieces. For example, I completed two of the major parts of my project by writing them as final papers for English classes, essentially allowing me to kill two birds (thesis writing and class assignments) with one stone.

What are tips or recommendations you have for future students doing their Honors Thesis?

Building off of the last question, I would recommend using every opportunity you have to apply your research. Since many of us have to complete final projects for our classes, see if you can somehow make your final project a portion of your research! Additionally, when you are completing your research, remember that no one knows *your* project as well as *you* do. You are literally the expert on your specific topic, so (while still being humble) use that to your advantage.

Is there anything else you would like to comment on about your project?

This isn't specifically about my project, but, if it isn't already on your radar, you should totally come to the Undergraduate Research Poster Session on Friday March 10! At this event, my peers and I who have completed research will be giving short poster presentations and answering any questions you might have on our research. Plus the Honors Department provides food and co-curricular credit, so win win!

HUMANS

Meet Reagan McCain of WAUS

Interviewed by: Nora Martin 02.02.23



Photo by Reagan McCain

I sat down this week with Reagan McCain (sophomore, history) to talk about her experience working at WAUS, Andrews' public radio station. WAUS runs classical music for 24 hours every day at 90.7fm and hires student workers to announce at the station on weekends.

How did you end up getting this job?

My good friend Grace No (junior, English)—she has been working at WAUS longer—told me about the job last year. It piqued my interest, but it was too late in the school year to do anything with it. I applied this fall, got hired in the winter, did a little bit of training, and now I'm set up and working this semester.

What do you do?

I am an announcer; I announce the pieces that just played, announce the pieces

that are coming up, and read the ads. I also try to add a little personal flair here and there when I can, just to keep things interesting. That's what I do for four hours every Sunday. I usually go in and set up during breaks in the program, and then I just switch out with whoever was on the shift before me.

Is that how long a typical shift is, four hours?

Some people work more than four hours, but I don't yet. I am still new, and I feel some pressure of the responsibility of it. You know? I'm the only person there, watching the antennae, making sure the timing is correct, and making sure nothing else goes wrong. It's still kind of nerve wracking for me—every single time, I get a little heart attack before I am about to speak. But I haven't died yet!

What is your favorite part of the job?

Probably saying that I work as a radio announcer. It's kind of a niche job, and I think it's cool that I get to say that I'm on the radio. You know, a *public figure*. Although, I am kind of irrationally afraid of getting undue attention, and so I never say my full name. Just, "I'm Reagan, and you're listening to WAUS 90.7 FM."

What is your least favorite part of the job?

The anxiety that always comes before I speak live. I'm still not used to it completely—even though I don't speak that often (on average, 4-5 times in one hour), I still feel uncomfortable with the music terms. So often I will think that I know them, but then in the moment I look at the script and I have to admit to myself that I do *not* know them. Honestly most of the free time in between each announcement I spend looking up how to pronounce people's names and the terms that go with their pieces. I'm still new, so I'm still getting used to it.

Would you recommend this job to other people on campus?

Absolutely. It's a super fun job. You also get to develop some marketable skills: public speaking, very clear diction, regulating your speed, and general professional responsibility. When we're on a shift, we are usually the only people in the office. We have to make sure that all of the machines are working properly, that nothing is going wrong, keep it clean, that sort of thing. I think working for the radio station is a very unique opportunity.

Arts & Entertainment

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Currently: MrBeast

Solana Campbell 02.02.23



Photo by Kayla-Hope Bruno

This week, a rather surprisingly controversial piece hit the internet: a MrBeast [YouTube video](#). In the video, titled “1,000 Blind People See for the First Time”, MrBeast, a YouTuber popular for these kinds of challenges and giveaways, pays for a life-changing surgery for 1000 blind people. The surgery is a simple, 20-minute laser process that removes their clouded lens and replaces it with an artificial one. People who were unable to work or drive because of the progressing blurriness of their surroundings were finally able to see again, and clearly.

The short, less than 10-minute video features people from all corners of the world and includes randomly placed “donations” from MrBeast to the people he’s helping. For example, he gives one guy \$10k, pays \$50k toward another guy’s

tuition, and donates a Tesla to someone who never thought they would be able to drive.

At first glance, the YouTube video seems to be a fantastic idea: MrBeast is changing these people's lives by offering them a life-changing surgery completely free-of-charge! What could people on the Internet have a problem with now? Well, in the first few minutes of the video, the doctor performing the surgeries offhandedly mentions that "half of all the blindness in the world is people who need a 10-minute surgery." That's right, *half*. It makes you wonder about our current healthcare system and how many blind people could get a quick and easy treatment, if only they had the resources to do so.

The video's release has since been discussed over and over by Twitter, with opinions ranging from "I think its safe to say that MrBeast is probably the best content creator on the platform right now. Good on him for doing all that he does." to "There is something so demonic about this and I can't even articulate what it is" ([click for tweet](#)). Of course, what is likely the most controversial piece of the puzzle is that A) so few know that this surgery exists and B) the surgery is not available to the mass public due to a lack of universal healthcare. In fact, his video has started a widespread discussion about the broken state of the current US healthcare system.

There's a portion of the video that causes a lot of unease to me and I wasn't really sure why. In the very beginning, MrBeast tells a woman (on camera) that she is going to receive the surgery free-of-charge *and* that he will be giving her \$10k in cash. He opens a briefcase of \$100 dollar bills in front of her and she immediately screams. In the next few minutes, we see footage of the woman crying, rolling around on the floors, and expressing her joy. It was strange and made me feel a little uncomfortable. This [tweet](#) helped put my thoughts into words: "The only way these people were able to see was through the monetization of their experience. Absent the viewer, *without the spectacle*, they wouldn't be afforded the procedures. Resources and the technology exists, they just wouldn't receive it without the entertainment. Hellworld." Without the spectacle. Because that is exactly what this YouTube video is: a spectacle. A chance for these people to be seen receiving this care. A chance for us to watch them cry and praise MrBeast for his good deeds. It feels a little...dystopian.

In fact, one could argue that MrBeast's video illustrates something called [poverty porn](#), which is, "any type of media—written, photographed or filmed, that exploits or fetishizes poverty to garner sympathy or support for a cause. These types of media are circulated to promote an emotional response in the viewers and are

often laced with financial gains through donations for the ‘cause’. Poverty porn perpetuates a certain narrative and stereotype of what poverty should look like.” Poverty porn is often conducted by objectifying a subject and exploiting their pain. Too often, media makers neglect to focus on those providing the care, such as the way MrBeast does not mention the identity of the doctor performing the surgeries or the program he asks viewers to donate to, [See Intl](#), even once. Diana George, who has written lots on the topic of poverty porn, is quoted in this [article](#): “poverty porn leads to charity, not activism: donors, not advocates. Poverty porn fails to produce both a deeper understanding of the issue of poverty *and* the necessary structural changes that must occur to effectively address it. Instead, poverty porn says that material resources are the problem and the solution, where poverty can be addressed through a simple phone call or monthly donation.”

It’s like the Bible verse ([Matthew 6:2-4](#)): “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in *secret*. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Even Jesus knew that publicizing our efforts to help others can cause more harm than good.

Whether you think that MrBeast’s video is amazing or problematic, these questions still have to be asked. Is he doing these good deeds for profit or out of the kindness of his heart? Is it okay to support a video like this, or do these productions cause more harm than good? I’m sure the people whose blindness was cured would rather have a surgery today thanks to MrBeast’s donation than wait years for systemic healthcare system change to offer them the chance, but is it really ethical that they have to be recorded and broadcasted in order to receive care? I’ll let you decide.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

In a World of Fascination: The Thematic Musicality of the AU Wind Symphony Concert

Bella Hamann 02.02.23



Photo by Randy Ramos

It was below freezing the night of January 28.

Shivering, I made my way over to the Howard Performing Arts Center; I had known for a couple months that the next Wind Symphony concert would feature a piece from one of my favorite films. I was happily surprised, however, because not only did I thoroughly enjoy the song I came to the concert for, but the other musical selections complemented the finale beautifully.

The first half of the concert started with a selection of pieces performed by the Southwestern Michigan College Brass Band. I especially enjoyed two of their performances: “Farandole from L’Arlesienne Suite” (1872, Bizet), a song that I

played in high school and had forgotten about until I heard it performed (although, I played an orchestral arrangement, but nevertheless). The one I liked most, however, was entitled “Blue Rondo a la Turk” (1960, Brubeck), because it was played in 9/8 time, a quite difficult time signature and one that I particularly enjoy listening to.

After the intermission, the AU Wind Symphony took the stage. They started off strong with “Strike Up the Band” (1927) by George Gershwin, who is in my top 5 of early 20th century composers. Clear, crisp, and in cut time, the first song propelled the concert forward to the next piece, “Huapango” (1950, Moncayo), a song which the conductor, Byron Graves, said was based on the musical genres of southern Mexico. There were parts of this piece that were akin to dancing in the middle of a plaza, surrounded by butterflies below a cloudless sky.

Next was a suite entitled “In the Forest of the King” (La Plante, 2000). Comprised of three separate movements, this selection switched between themes of playfulness to somber reflection to mischief. Then came “The Incredibles.” Composed in 2004 by Michael Giacchino, the soundtrack of the classic Disney-Pixar film was the recipient of multiple awards and was Grammy-nominated. Almost immediately I was on the edge of my seat and only leaned back after the music ceased. From a primary motif that jumps from one key signature to another, to the massive jazz elements intertwined with its never-ceasing quest for a continuous propulsion into imminent danger, it was a hold-your-breath kind of performance, and, as suddenly as the penultimate composition came to a sudden halt, the long awaited finale instantaneously transported me to an alternate dimension.

The finale was none other than a symphonic arrangement of the soundtrack of “Howl’s Moving Castle” by Joe Hisaishi, one of my all-time favorite films and one of the best possible ways to end the evening. As the notes left the stage and traveled upwards to the balcony where I sat, I could not help but imagine that I had gone to that faraway land of steampunk cities and magical meadows, and that the waltz which I had heard an infinite amount of times was yet again gracing me with its gift of wonder and fascination. That’s the thing about a well-composed film track: not only does it transport you, but the idea of lingering onto one thematic element of a location is unsatisfactory. You must move forward, sailing along with the stories of bravery, sacrifice and the mundanity of life that makes Studio Ghibli films as iconic as they are. The song seemed to end as quickly as it started; it was not until after the thunder of applause began that I realized the concert’s final song had been ten minutes long.

It was still below freezing when the concert ended the night of January 28th, but as the doors opened to the brittle outdoors, I was no longer cold.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Where Do I Find God - Part III

Anonymous 02.02.23



Photo by Joshua Earle on Unsplash

This is not an argument built with facts and statistics. It's not an essay to be graded. It's not even an attempt to point fingers or blame anyone. This is simply my story.

I was ready to quit the faith. My whole life I had been conditioned to think a certain secular way, but a tiny part of me was always trying to push back against it. I held the smallest sliver of hope that Andrews would prove to have the answers. But for what? Was it even worth it? Maybe I should stop fighting and just go with the flow of whatever river I'm in. Stop thinking for myself and just stay quiet. Be a chameleon.

But that's not how I am. So I ranted, vented, and let off all the steam that was boiling from within. In front of people that I didn't think would give me answers. And I was right. They didn't give me answers. They were incredible listeners, and

they gave me questions instead. Why should the behavior of other people color your personal faith? What does the Bible say about faith? Have you read the Bible cover to cover? Why do you look towards sinful beings as examples when we have Jesus as an example?

And then, all of a sudden, it clicked. Of course, I was just looking at it from the wrong angle. Just like how I judged any ideology back in high school, I was trying to look for its fruits. Do the people that follow this ideology exemplify something I like? Are they good humans? Are they effective, are they capable, do they share the same values I have?

But the Christian faith says that we all fall short of the ideal, and that piece wasn't included during my analysis. Factoring that in, I realized I was reading the wrong data—I wouldn't find my faith with humans. I would find it from God Himself.

In "Steps to Christ" Chapter 3, "Repentance," Ellen White writes, "The impenitent sometimes excuse themselves by saying of professed Christians, 'I am as good as they are. They are no more self-denying, sober, or circumspect in their conduct than I am. They love pleasure and self-indulgence as well as I do.' Thus they make the faults of others an excuse for their own neglect of duty. But the sins and defects of others do not excuse anyone, for the Lord has not given us an erring human pattern. The spotless Son of God has been given as our example, and those who complain of the wrong course of professed Christians are the ones who should show better lives and nobler examples. If they have so high a conception of what a Christian should be, is not their own sin so much the greater? They know what is right, and yet refuse to do it."

Ouch. I realized two things: I was a hypocrite, and I had to look to Christ himself. So with the help of those who listened, I took the second step of my long journey. I started reading the Bible. And it changed everything.

I started with the gospels, reading about Jesus and learning who this man was—really learning about who He was by His words and actions. This wasn't me sitting there having some other person tell me about it. I was there, present, discovering God for myself. Not for a class, not because someone told me to, and not because of social pressure. I always wanted answers, but I never looked in the right place. And even reading and studying brought more questions than it did answers. There's so much I realized I didn't understand about the Bible—and there's still so much I don't understand even now. But just reading it for myself was everything.

Growing up amidst a science-centered culture back in high school, I was always a skeptic, since the scientific method demands everything be tested. So I won't say reading the Bible immediately changed my life and the sky opened up and angels started singing. I had a tough time changing my mindset from the one I grew up with. "Miracles" for me were just statistical improbabilities, still within the bounds of reason. "Demons" and "demonic possession" for me were simply ignorant superstitions/edited videos and mental health issues that were misunderstood since medieval times. Prayer for me was a roundabout way of saying words of gratitude for a positive mindset. God wouldn't actually answer prayers, would He? Would I hear some booming voice across the universe call my name and tell me He existed? I've never had a supernatural experience, and I've certainly never felt the presence of God with me. The "presence" for me was merely music playing with my emotions or other people giving me a sense of community that I misconstrued with something transcendent.

As you can see, I had a lot of work to unlearn such a mindset. I'm still working on it today. But what I wanted to share was that prayer is the second thing that saved me. In any personal relationship, you learn about the other person through conversation. While studying the Bible is like listening to Him speak to you, prayer is like you speaking to Him. I could do it anywhere. At any time, in any place, I could personally connect with the Creator of the universe, the being that spoke the world into existence and who transcends reality.

I kept at it for days, weeks, and months. Dedicated studying, praying, and never giving up. I had gone through so much, so I wasn't ready to just quit at the first sign of hardship. It wasn't worth going back to emptiness and meaninglessness, but the process took a lot of time. It also wasn't enough until a couple experiences changed me.

Starting with this phrase: "No one will ever truly understand you."

Those words are burned into my memory. Someone spoke these words to me at a time when I didn't feel understood. At the time, the words hurt, but in the end, they are true. No human can ever fully understand another human; while I would normally fall into despair at the hopelessness of human connection, this realization pushed me in a different direction. One of my biggest gripes with life is that I don't feel understood. I'm kind of a weird person. So a lot of times, people don't get me. But at that point, I realized that only God will really get me. And it's the biggest comfort in the world that someone understands what you're going

through—and beyond that, they’re on your side. Once I thought those thoughts, I actually cried. Just laying in my bed one night, imagining the sheer loneliness of life being dissipated by one being. I can talk to the one person who’ll understand my strange thought process, and He’ll know what’s best for me and will be there for me every step of the way. Everywhere I looked, humans failed me, but God was always a real one. I finally found my foundation.

My life has been one of transience and temporality, people coming and going. I’m like a ship drifting in a foggy sea; other ships appear out of the fog to intersect my path but never stay by my side in the long term, disappearing back into the fog. When life’s tables turned for me at Andrews, I gained so many friends and I even had the opportunity to enter my first relationship. It was terrifying. I was aware that I would be committing to another human being, but I didn’t know if they were the one, or if I was capable, or if our relationship would succeed. I had all these insecurities with connecting with another person, but someone encouraged me to take a leap of faith, and that’s when another piece of the puzzle fit.

I finally felt what a leap of faith was for me—letting go of my reservations and desire to have things in control and be assured and totally secure in everything. Like I said, that was terrifying. I was leaping in the dark, really. I didn’t really know if God existed and certainly couldn’t prove it. I don’t know if I’ll ever remove all the skepticism I have that’s so ingrained in me. But regardless of what you hinge your beliefs on, you’ll always have to take a leap of faith; no human can say for sure that they fully understand the world and its meaning. I’ll always be taking a leap of faith for the rest of my life. I think that’s just part of the process, because it’s called faith for a reason.

Time passed, seasons changed, and I finally got a chance—from a totally unexpected decision I made—to enter an authentic Christ-centered community. At that place I learned for the first time what a group of people held together by Christ could do. This was one of the greatest and most enlightening experiences of my life, and after years of searching, I finally saw the fruits of a Christian life and community. I found something special about Christians that non-Christians couldn’t do, and the people there *showed me* what love looks like. Remember when I said, “The church only gave me comfort, but it never gave me depth”? I learned instead that a Christ-centered community can give depth surpassing most secular communities—and following Christ certainly offers *real* ideas to deal with *real* life, suited especially for all the grittiness that accompanies life. It’s almost funny how I only got to experience all of that after I nearly gave up and started a whole journey

with the acceptance that I may never experience God. Yet, at the same time, my struggle makes complete sense. God was trying to push me to discover Him in my own way and establish those seeds before showing me any fruits. He knew what I wanted, but gave me what I needed.

Shortly after, I got baptized. That's not the end of my story, but the end of that chapter. There is so much more to come.

I don't know how long it'll take for me to believe in individual miracle events, but what has helped me the most is stepping back and seeing the larger overarching story of my life. I have done things I never expected to do, and I have become someone I never expected to become. I can only attribute that to some larger unseen force nudging my life in certain directions behind the scenes. If I told my younger self just a few years ago what I would do, he would probably scoff at me. Some things only made sense years later, and I'm sure decades in the future even more things will make sense. I just have faith that there is some kind of greater purpose for all of the messy chaos that is existence on planet earth.

I would say something inspirational here at the end and rally for some cry for action, but that's not why I'm writing this. This is simply my story, and I want every reader to just take from it what they will and make their own decisions on how to respond to it. But to those who are like me and can relate to parts of my story, I do have a message:

You are not alone.

By Andrew Pak

This has been a three-part personal story from an Andrews University student. You can read part 2 [here](#). If you'd like your own narrative, creative work, or art piece to be considered for publication, please send it to tjhatra@andrews.edu.

News

NEWS

Getting Unrealistic with Pastor Snell

Interviewed by: Gloria Oh [02.02.23](#)



Photo by Dawson Par

Last week during Week of Prayer, our news writer Gloria Oh sat down with Pastor Debleaire Snell to discuss his sermon series “Unrealistic Faith”.

What aspect about college students made you choose to serve them?

Knowing that you can be a part of the spiritual development of the next generation. I spent four years at Oakwood, and then I spent two years at Andrews. And all those years had a lasting impact, especially spiritually, on who I became. Students are like clay, still molded and formed into who they will become. And I gain a lot of joy from making a positive impact on the spiritual aspect of the person in that journey.

Why did you choose "unrealistic" as the week of prayer topic? In other words, why did you think this was an especially relevant topic for people in the stage of life you described?

The theme is actually based on the book I released last year, *Get Unrealistic*, which I wrote out of the need to challenge our church in the area of faith and belief in God. There are times when we start dreaming big, praying big, and thinking big, someone, sometimes even a pastor, would say, "Okay, that's cool, but we've got to be realistic." As I wrestled with that tension, I realized you can't be a realist and a believer simultaneously. Faith is not realistic, belief in a God that you can't see, hear, touch, or detect through empirical means—all of this is unrealistic. We try to make faith have a practical element to it, but the truth is that Scripture is not about being practical. It wasn't practical for Moses to walk the open sea, it wasn't practical for Joshua to expect the sun to stand still, and it wasn't practical for Peter to step out on the boat and walk on water. It wasn't realistic to use two fish and five loaves to feed 5000 people, or expect Jesus would rise from the tomb when Jesus died. And that's what drives the content this week. If we're going to operate in faith, we cannot allow ourselves to think according to the norms and the axioms of this world. Those things need to be influenced by our faith.

Wow. That's deep. Did you have any of those unrealistic experiences during your time at Oakwood or Andrews that helped you put faith in God?

There are just so many different things, but one experience comes to my mind. It was my second year at Oakwood, and I had come to the end of my financial resources in terms of school, whether that be pell grants, financial aid, or taking as many loans as possible. It was the last Wednesday night of the school year, and my financial advisor had to come and tell me I should take out a semester to work. At the time it was customary to share a testimony with the person next to you at the end of church, and I was trying to be positive and hold it together. And there was this tall and older gentleman sitting near me. As we started sharing testimonies, I said I was thankful to God for the time I had spent at Oakwood for the past two years, which has been an amazing and growing experience, although I won't be able to make it much further and take a year out. As I shared that I was praying God would allow me to have the resources to get back to school, the gentleman looked at me strangely and asked, "Do you know who I am?" I was confused. Then he proceeded to say, "My name is Mark Washington." He was the director of financial aid for the university. He said he was impressed by the spirit of my testimony, and offered me to come to his office and find a solution to my problem. So I went and

met him. Although my advisor said there was nothing much we could do, he was able to connect some dots and open up doors to resources. That helped me finish my last two years, and it all happened because of randomly sitting next to him.

That's a really cool story. And even though you experienced all those guidance, is there still something you wished you had known or experienced before you graduated college?

Yes. In Matthew 6, Jesus says do not worry about your life, what you eat, what you drink, all that stuff. One thing I realized is that all the things I worried about—whether or not I'll find the right wife, whether I'll be hired, whether I'll make it as a pastor, any school needs—were all such a waste of energy! It was a wasted stress, because God ordered my steps. Everything was planned and assigned for a particular season at a certain intersection. So that would be my answer, because sometimes we get really worried about life: grad school, job, affording life, finding the right person, or whatever in our lives. But I think that doubting is an absolute waste of time if you are on the course that God has planned for you. Worries and anxiety only serve to bring discouragement, because one day, you will look back on it and tell your younger self not to worry about all that stuff. God already has His plan.

Thank you for your advice! I think many people will find it relevant. But I think a lot of those worries come from disappointment. You mentioned that disappointment, specifically regarding people, is inevitable in the faith journey, and I think college is when we all experience that. But would it not be the same for God? Why should we maintain high expectations towards God and wait for the unrealistic experience? In other words, why should we have expectations of God or the church despite the disappointment it can cost?

I have high expectations for God, not necessarily for people. Jesus did not commit himself to any man because he knew what was in there. At the end of the day, people are destined to disappoint you and fail you because we are all finite beings. No person can supply all your needs. No one can make you happy.

But God works through circumstances, and people often become the mean. In your case, it was through the financial director that you experienced the unrealistic experience. So I think it's a bit hard to distinguish or remove that human aspect from faith, because we're human.

I agree with that, but I think it's more so understanding the roles. God uses people, but people are conduits. God is the source. The person who is the conduit in one season of life may not be in another. But the one constant, no matter what season of life, is God, who oversees and orchestrates all things. God used the director of financial aid in one season of my life. That's the last conversation I ever really had with him, except to say thank you. God has used other people in my life at different points in time, but it was God behind all scenes to send help and supply along the way. We all know there have been people who, at one point, were very helpful but then, at another point, very destructive. There are just times when people let you down because people are all faulty. That's why my expectation and faith ultimately have to be in the God who does not fail and does not change.

Now, part of our disappointment with God comes, depending on where we set our beliefs. In my book, I talked about how real faith is not wish-based but word-based, because I think a lot of spiritual disappointment comes when we establish expectations that are not based upon things that God said. God's actions are based on the promises of Scripture, or the things he has revealed through vision or dreams like Joseph. And yes, there were disappointing circumstances during the fulfillment of that dream. But God ultimately fulfilled that promise he made through Joseph's vision. So I believe our expectations have to be based on Scripture, not our wishes or desires, because that's where the disappointment lies.

That answer brings up my next question. Pastor Snell, what led you to believe in the Scripture?

Hmm, I've never been asked that question before. It's a long story, but I'll keep it short. I didn't grow up in church. I joined the church when I was about 11 or 12. Coming from a world where some habits lead to results getting stuck in certain cycles, I was able to see in the Scripture a more excellent way that led to lasting peace, real joy, and contentment that does not fluctuate with circumstance. So my belief in Scripture is born out of my experience of coming from outside the church, without Christ, to find peace.

And the contrast between the two was very distinct.

Yes, and the Scripture really made sense. Sometimes, when you grow up surrounded by religion, Scripture may feel like a restriction, but when you come from a culture outside the church, you see the protection and the wisdom in everything God says.

And how do you think we should cope with tragic events as individuals with faith?

Tragedy is always hard. It is always painful. And faith doesn't take the ache out of pain. My wife and I went through a season before we had our first kid. We actually lost four kids through miscarriage before we got him. When you find yourself amid tragedy, you've got to go through the grieving process, whether it's a loss of a job, relationship, or a person due to death. They differ a bit on the surface, but it is the same at the core of the experience. Unlike what many believe, part of faith is actually allowing the grieving process because you don't get to avoid grief. All you can do otherwise is store grief, but it comes back in unhealthy ways. You have to go through the grief cycle, no matter what the loss is.

The other thing is, you have to guard the influences of your mind when you're in tragedy, because sometimes the pain it causes can move you away from faith. You have to make sure that faith is reinforced by the content you absorb on a routine basis by barricading your mind with the promises of God, the songs that encourage people, and with good people around you. And then, you have to wait on the Lord, which is one of the things the Bible says with great repetition. There are times when I don't understand why, but sometimes you have to be still and let it play out. Then I will see how God works all things together, although it's hard now. There's no way around the hard part; It has to be endured.

But how do you let the tragedies, like your miscarriages, play out? Because they are...lost.

Yes, we went through the grief cycle, but there were some promises we held on to, like Psalm 139. It's one of the promises my wife claimed, as it talks about how God blesses the barren woman and he fills her with children. During this process, faith looked very different for each of us. In my mind, there was never a world or a scenario where I would not have children. So faith for me was being willing to say even if my life's journey looks different from what I expected, I will accept it. For my wife, it was trusting the promise as it was something He planted deep in her heart in the way He spoke to her. Her faith was trusting despite the circumstance and claiming the promise in the Bible since the first miscarriage, second, third, to fourth. It looked like it just wasn't going to happen, but we had to let it play out.

God blessed us. My oldest son, he's 12 now. We named him Jaden, a name from the book of Nehemiah, and it means Jehovah has heard. Then we got our daughter, who's nine now. And even when we thought we were done, God added a third, and

he's my youngest. He had just turned eight, and it was definitely an experience in a place where things did not seem feasible.

Was there no disappointment with your first four?

Oh, heavy disappointment. It was an immense disappointment. It was a season of repeated grief.

Would you not call that disappointment to God?

Very much, very much. It was a time where I questioned God a lot. It was especially frustrating when I'll be seeing people getting pregnant when they wouldn't even want the kids, teens getting abortions, or when seeing my peers having kids, and things of that nature. But in the Bible, when you read Hebrews 11, it's filled with people with major disappointment. Abraham and Sarah, who did not have a child for a long time, or Elijah, who got so discouraged after Mount Carmel that he went under the juniper tree wishing for death, are a few examples. On the faith journey, nobody evaded disappointment, heartbreak, or hardship because, as mentioned during the talk, faith doesn't make you storm-free but stormproof.

So would it be fair for me to say that disappointment was present, but you still maintained your expectations towards God because when everything is played out, you can still see God's goodness behind all things?

Yes, and that's one of the hard parts. You've believed once, but it happened. You believed for the second time, but then it happened again. Believe and trust, and it happens again. You give it another try, and it still happens. One of the hard parts of faith is to believe and trust when you have that repeated disappointment because you believed and trusted the last time.

Thank you for your powerful words. I have some questions coming from the student body. The first question is: How do you pray for a future partner?

There's nothing wrong with expressing that desire for God, but I'll add that instead of just praying to find the right person, pray to become the right person.

Sometimes, we're ready to be married, but there's a difference between being ready and being prepared. Ready means having the desire to, but prepare means certain inward and outward traits have developed that now make you wife or husband material. So I think praying that the Lord will prepare me so that I'll be ready to take the next step when the person arrives is important. Another thing to pray about is that the Lord would show all of us how to be content in our given space of life, instead of treating being single as a curse. We all have to recognize

the work or focus each of us has to devote during our given season. Don't pursue a person; pursue the path that God has for you, as the Bible talks about how God orders our steps. He has everything assigned so that your road will bring you peace, joy, fulfillment, and spiritual anchor. Rushing or hurrying will not make God change his plan. If the person is supposed to intersect with you when you're 27, God is not going to push them up to 24. You just got to stay on that path. And if you stay on the path, God has for you, every person, every friend, every romantic partnership, every job or grad school. Everything will come in the right season.

But how would you know you're on the right path or that you are living right?

So I think part of it is seeking Him for direction. In Proverbs 3:5, it says that first, you have to trust in the Lord with all your heart. Number two, it says lean not to your own understanding. Number three, in all of your ways, in ALL of your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths or make your paths straight. So I think it begins with getting to a place where I trust God with all of my heart, where I'm willing to distrust myself and not lean to my own understanding. It is to say that I will set aside my preferences and what I think was right or how I was hoping it would happen, to supplant those things with God's leadership and direction. It is to acknowledge Him, seeking his direction over every decision. So like, even when it came down to my wife, it was a decision made after submitting myself to God that I'm done choosing according to looks or this or that or whatever interests, but that I need Him to shepherd me. It's not so much about the signs, the evidence and the burning bush. It's more so about our posture, whether we have complete trust in God, which comes in the form of distrust of self, and acknowledgment to God in every way. So ask yourself, am I trusting him with all my heart? Am I choosing not to lean to my own understanding and acknowledging him in all my ways? If you do that, the promise is, He will direct.

NEWS

New Recession Cracks Egg Economics Open

Andrew Francis [02.02.23](#)

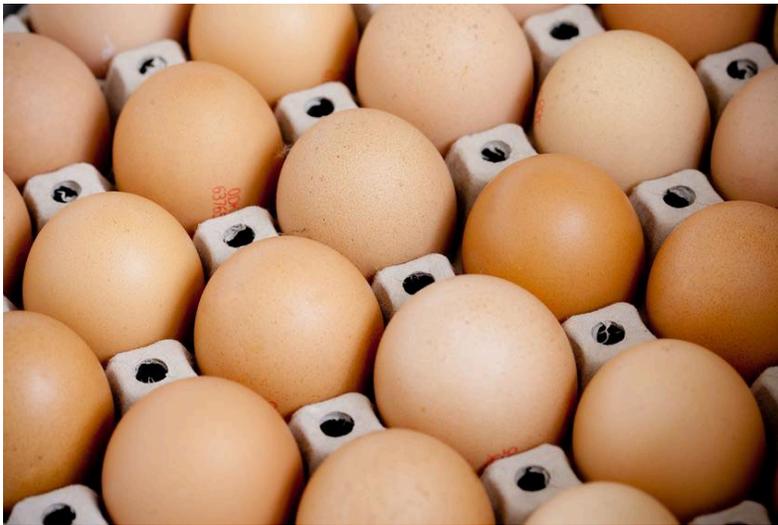


Photo by Mads Eneqvist on Unsplash

It is easy to enter the new year of 2023 with a sense of optimism and anticipation. New Year's resolutions and the slogan of “New Year, New Me” are circulating, as they do practically every year. Unfortunately, as we enter a new rotation around the sun, new catastrophes snap us back into reality. Instead of “New Year, New Me,” the adage of “history repeating itself” rings true with two spinoffs of recent national and global disasters in 2023. This year’s latest economic decline has already drawn comparisons to 2008’s Global Recession. Although we haven’t officially entered full blown global recession levels quite yet, [almost seventy percent of economists](#) of the World Economic Forum predict that a full recession will be declared this year. Already, big corporations like Amazon and Google have begun to lay off workers due to this rising issue. Coupled with this financial crisis is another global health crisis. Fortunately, it is not another Covid spike that has experts concerned, it is a bird infection known as the “bird flu” or avian influenza.

The bird flu typically infects wild birds through their intestinal tracts and can eventually find its way to domesticated birds. Although the bird flu [does not typically infect humans](#) directly, a big concern is how poultry and bird products such as eggs are being adversely affected. Experts have concluded that the disease's negative impact upon the egg and food economy may have started in Europe with flocks becoming susceptible to disease during the war outbreak between Ukraine and Russia last year. Having reached the United States as well as much of the globe, 44 out of 50 states have had reported cases of the avian flu within its flocks and poultry products.

Economists are now seeing that the bird flu is now connected with the possible economic recession. The original causes of the current economic downturn are all of the housing, employment, and global market issues that occurred during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 to mid 2021. The bird flu is now making the economy worse, because although the disease is not infecting humans directly, the prices of poultry products, with eggs in particular, have begun to skyrocket at local supermarkets. In the United States, egg prices have [increased sixty percent](#) in the past year, and wholesale prices in Japanese stores have reached historic highs.

One way global citizens are trying to deal with the shortage of the breakfast and baking staple is by acquiring their own chickens and flocks. New Zealand currently holds the top spot globally for the [most eggs consumed per person](#), and its stores have had a significant decrease in the amount of product to sell due to tighter farming regulations. People in New Zealand and across the globe have decided to scour the internet in search of chickens, feeders, coops, and food for their own personal chickens. What has become a grave concern for health, economic, and conservationist experts alike is that new chicken owners are not prepared for the care of a chicken. Chickens can live up to ten years and require several different specific needs to be able to live a full life. The answer to how best to overcome this agricultural and economic conflict is not clear and unfortunately may not be clear for a while.

NEWS

What's Happening in Peru?

Julia Randall 02.02.23



Photo by Public Domain

In the last 33 years, every former president of Peru has been investigated, and most have spent time in jail. On December 7 of last year, the then-current president, a former rural school teacher, abruptly joined the ranks of his predecessors [when he was arrested after](#) an attempt to dissolve Peru's congress, resulting in the sudden inauguration of the nation's [first female president](#), former vice president Dina Boluarte, which fueled political unrest.

Pedro Castillo became president in July 2021 after narrowly beating right-wing candidate Keiko Fujimori. Since then, corruption and “moral incapacity” accusations (which Castillo denied) from an unsupportive Congress had led to two separate unsuccessful [impeachment attempts](#). Peru experienced a high turnover rate of government officials, including five different prime ministers during Castillo's presidency. Public dissatisfaction also grew as his unstable presidency proved more moderate than promised by his campaign, and by November, protestors were calling for Castillo's resignation. He presented himself as the victim of attacks from political opposition, particularly from Congress. He

ultimately followed in the footsteps of his rival's father, Alberto Fujimori, the ex-president who [dissolved Peru's congress in 1992](#) in a military-backed coup (and who is currently in prison for abuse of power, among other convictions). Unlike Fujimori's actions two decades ago, Castillo's [attempt to replace Congress](#) with his "emergency government," viewed by some Peruvians as an "autocratic" play, brought his presidential career to a prompt end. Congress responded to the declaration by ignoring the order, successfully voting for Castillo's impeachment, and swearing in Dina Boluarte. Castillo was detained en route to the Mexican Embassy and investigation continues on the alleged rebellion.

Since the December 7 events, [protests](#) originating in southern Peru have spread across the country as Castillo supporters call for Boluarte to resign, prompting Peru to declare a state of emergency nationwide and close Machu Picchu as roadblocks affect access to the area. The arrival of the protests to [Lima](#) was met with nearly 12 thousand police. One march eventually dispersed during the confusion generated as a fire consumed a historic mansion in the capital city. Meanwhile, Boluarte criticized participants, claiming that the chaotic demonstrations were an attempt to overtake the government. In the aftermath, some 200 protestors were [detained](#) at a Lima university after taking control of the property.

While some blame the new president for a lack of control over the demonstrations, the European Union condemned the violence associated with what it declared to be an excessive usage of police force. As of January 30, 58 people have been [killed](#) in connection with the protests, only one of whom was a police officer.

With each additional death, Boluarte faces growing pressure to step down. While she has made no indication that she will resign, Boluarte, who had originally been expected to serve the remainder of Castillo's term which would end in 2026, has pressured Congress to approve earlier elections, stressing the government's responsibility to respond to the Peruvian people. On January 28, Congress rejected a proposal to [elect](#) a new government for 2024, but on January 30, lawmakers barely passed a motion to reconsider moving the election up to October 2023. Regardless, without increased support in Congress, the proposal cannot pass, meaning that the quickest route to a presidential election is likely Boluarte's resignation. This would give less opportunity for Boluarte to receive corruption accusations, meaning resignation could be a move that would save her from the fate of prior Peruvian presidents. For now, the country continues to face political uncertainty and waits to see whether Congress can approve sooner elections.

Ideas

IDEAS

Facing the End of the World: What Apocalypse Stories Teach Us About Humanity

Isabella Koh 2.02.23

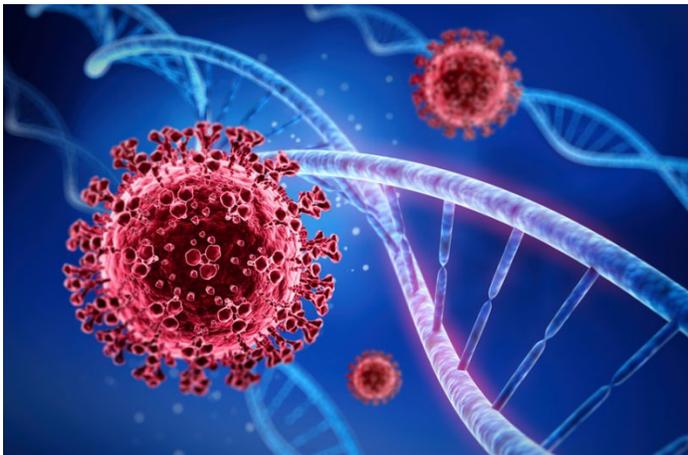


Photo by Public Domain

How would we face the end of the world?

Humans seem obsessed with that question. For centuries, they've turned the question around in their heads and worked out the infinite number of ways in which life as we know it might come to an end. It's a question religions, like Adventism, try to contend with, scientists try to prevent, and artists explore endlessly. It is that question that is at the core of the apocalypse genre.

There have been countless iterations of the “end of the world” in media. According to [“A Brief History of the Cinematic Apocalypse”](#) by Chris Nashawaty, one of the

first apocalypse films was a Danish production about a comet flying a little *too* close to earth, aptly titled “The End of the World” (1916). From giant comets to nuclear fallout, massive environmental destruction or a particularly vengeful artificial intelligence, humans seem to have a fascination with the catastrophic. Good money has been spent to watch killer aliens and zombie hordes—or a combination of the two, if it’s available.

But all of that takes place from a safe place behind the screen, tucked under the covers in bed. When we’re finished watching an episode of “The Walking Dead,” we can turn on the lights and queue up a comedy show. When a nail-biting ride through “A Quiet Place” comes to a close, we turn on some loud music and chat with our friends. Once you’ve explored the barren wasteland of “Fallout 4,” you can turn off the computer and grab a midnight snack.

That is, until we faced what felt like our own apocalypse. When Covid-19 hit, suddenly home didn’t feel like a sanctuary and screens didn’t feel like they were protecting us anymore. Our friends and our families were locked down and away from us. In those first few weeks and months, all of those fears and speculations about the end of the world suddenly felt much more real. Suffice it to say, when the pandemic hit, life as we knew it came to an end. That age old question echoed back at us, now with an overtone of truth: how would we face the end of the world?

Now, almost three years later, we stand at an uneasy distance from the devastation that followed the spring of 2020. But as life keeps moving and artists keep creating, the apocalypse narrative has taken on a deeper meaning. As far-fetched as the stories may seem, they carry a new sense of reality, weighed upon by our recent history.

On January 15, HBO released the first episode of its highly anticipated TV adaptation of the video game “The Last of Us.” The premise of the show centers on a species of *Cordyceps* fungus that mutates and infects humanity, turning them into zombie-like creatures who strive to spread the disease to others. The viewer follows Joel (Pedro Pascal), a seasoned survivor, and 14-year-old Ellie (Bella Ramsey) as they fight to stay alive. In just the first few episodes, the show doesn’t hold back in channeling the fear, anxiety, and devastation that results from the outbreak of the infection. The viewer is led through the early stages of the disease’s discovery, then are immersed in the aftermath of a paranoid, locked-down government regime that operates with force over every aspect of human life. Human rights are neglected in the face of safety. Protests and rebellions are

answered with violence. In the struggle to stay alive, existence becomes solely about making it to the next day. It's either this or the dangerous, wide open outside world, and many choose the "safety" of the former.

Another HBO show, released in December of 2021, was adapted from Emily St. John Mandel's novel "Station 11." The overall story tracks the aftermath of a mutated "Georgia Flu," which unexpectedly spreads and kills people en masse, bringing society and the world to a screeching halt. The first episode features a glimpse into a hospital of masked and panicked patients and staff, all of whom are eventually doomed to die. A grocery store is raided, colorful cloth masks cover faces, and the whole world is forced into confinement. Then, twenty years later, the remaining humans must learn how to build a functioning society once again. At the center of the show, there is a mystery, tied to a young woman's eerily predictive graphic novel. Mandel's characters range in backstory and purpose, but the series leads the viewer through their lives as the end of the world arrives, then passes.

There have been countless pandemic-based apocalypse stories created throughout the history of film. These two shows, which were created and filmed during and after our real, worldwide pandemic, take on different meanings than they might have three years ago. Designed for an audience that understands the feelings of isolation, despair, and fear mixed with infection and death, it's easy to feel like they're hitting a little too close to home. It's hard to see and relive those feelings—to imagine another pandemic that ends the world.

But the truth is, apocalypse stories aren't just about the disease, or the bomb, or the aliens that set the world on fire. Usually, the narrative doesn't end when the virus is unleashed, or at the moment the singularity occurs.

The stories exist to tell us about the survivors.

These narratives ask us: when the world ends, who do we become? What parts of humanity persist in the face of despair? How do we rely on ourselves and each other to face the end?

In the beginning of "The Last of Us," Joel is reminded by his partner, Tess, that simply existing in the system doesn't mean he's truly living or happy. His ties to his remaining family are what give him a purpose for living, and his responsibility to (and eventual love for) Ellie keeps him pushing forward. Navigating a world in which infected, mutated humans threaten to end one's life at any moment, he still finds reasons to go on in the people who surround him. Despite being a future

based on the zombie apocalypse, the story is still about Joel and Ellie and how they keep each other alive when everything else is falling apart.

Likewise, in “Station 11,” a main character, Kirsten (Mackenzie Davis), who loses her support system to the flu, eventually finds a traveling acting troupe that becomes a second family. They perform Shakespeare together in the scattered towns that still exist, showing that life isn’t complete without moments of escape, artistry, and community. In the creation of a new society, humans still find ways to connect with and care for one another. Although plenty of darkness remains throughout the show, it often reiterates the importance of seeking out moments of light.

In each of these instances, there is a refusal to let life become meaningless. As much as these shows are stories about terrible fungus-like zombies and strange killer cults, they are also about hope and community. These apocalypse narratives tell us what their authors believe the core of being human really is. Perhaps it’s that we survive best when we can depend on each other. Or that we seek meaning in what we do—how we live. Or maybe they show us that survival is important, but it isn’t all there is to life.

Covid-19 is a worldwide event that will go down in our memories and the history books. It won’t be forgotten quickly, especially because people make art out of life. Already, there are countless documentaries and series that tackle the pandemic. Well-known TV shows and films like “Grey’s Anatomy” and “Glass Onion” have even addressed it directly in their scripts, performances, and costuming. In the future, I can only imagine how many more productions will take inspiration from our past.

As harrowing and frustrating as it can be to relive those experiences, I think there is still value in these stories, in the ways that they go beyond the pandemic and give us insight into humanity. There is something meaningful in the memories of that time, as well as in the shows, movies, and games that replicate it: how we learned to care for each other, seek meaning in the face of the unknown, and go beyond simply surviving. Granted, there may not be a positive discovery experience in every apocalypse show you watch, but I do think that there’s something worth looking for. What kinds of survivors are we? What kind of people are we? How would we face the end of the world, and how might what we learn from that be used by us in the present?

As for the shows? I definitely recommend the watch. Maybe just watch with a friend. With the lights on. Don't say I didn't warn you.

IDEAS

I Knew You Were Trouble: On Ticketmaster's Judiciary Hearing

Nora Martin 02.02.23



Photo by Public Domain

Following a disastrous Taylor Swift presale event and overwhelming online backlash from fans, media giant Ticketmaster (more specifically, its parent company Live Nation) was brought to court under [charges of violations of California's Unfair Competition Law](#). The corporation's greatly-anticipated judiciary hearing was held on Tuesday, January 25, with Swift fans peacefully protesting just outside the building. While Live Nation and TicketMaster have long been accused of monopolizing the ticketing industry, a highly publicized flurry of system crashes, 'service fees,' and empty-handed fans led to roughly [50 plaintiffs](#) suing Ticketmaster for \$2500 for every violation of the Unfair Competition Law. A variety of witnesses—including business competitors,

musicians, and antitrust experts—testified against Live Nation, arguing that its long term monopoly has been deeply detrimental to both fans and the industry.

Jack Groetzinger, CEO of Ticketmaster competitor SeatGeek, [claimed](#) that Live Nation, an entertainment company, controls the market by retaliating against venues that move their primary ticketing business away from Ticketmaster. This leads venues to lose revenue from Live Nation concerts, greatly incentivizing them to prioritize Ticketmaster as the primary method for managing ticket sales. Clyde Lawrence, a musician from the band Lawrence, claimed that Ticketmaster often serves as the venue, the promoter, and the ticket vender for many touring artists. This complete control over the market allows them to charge exorbitant service fees; which, according to Lawrence, can lead to the company claiming 70% of each ticket sale. [Lawrence also stated](#) that Ticketmaster collects an additional 20% commission of revenue from musician merch sales held at the event, in addition to their revenue from alcohol, parking fees, and concessions. He called for more transparency in future Live Nation business practices. In response, Live Nation CEO Joe Berchtold argued that Ticketmaster is not responsible for setting most service fees; that they are, instead, set by the venues. When further questioned about the many venues that Live Nation either owns or has long-term contracts with, Berchtold responded that those venues made up a relatively small percentage of the whole.

Senator Klobuchar, chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee on Competition, Policy, Antitrust, and Human Rights, told [NPR's Morning Edition](#) that she feels optimistic about the outcome of this hearing. "...from there [the hearing], we can do bills specific on ticketing. There are [senators] interested...on the fees, on the fact that they [Ticketmaster] try to lock in on these multiyear contracts. All of those things are ripe for legislation." Klobuchar, and many Taylor Swift fans, all hope that stricter monopoly legislation will be extended to ticketing and other industries in entertainment as a result of the hearing. Indeed, the [Department of Justice](#) has purportedly already begun an antitrust investigation into Ticketmaster.

I, like most event-goers in the United States, have bought from Ticketmaster. I hate it. I hate the layout of the website, how they progressively layer on 'service fees' with no explanation of where they're going (come on, a service fee for an online payment service? Who's serving me?), and I hate how everything, *everything*, is through Ticketmaster. From local comedy shows to big-name concerts to mini golf (!), basically every ticket that I buy is through Ticketmaster. Through the venues that Live Nation controls, Ticketmaster has effectively monopolized the market.

Their association with some of the biggest names in entertainment allows them the luxury of drastically inflating prices however they choose. This practice has consequences not only for us, the consumers, but also the artists—smaller artists who must sell cheaper tickets must dock their own prices to account for Ticketmaster fees. In addition, as Lawrence explained, they also are docked for their merchandising sales, while Ticketmaster (and Live Nation) can collect on parking fees, drinks, and concessions. This situation, frankly, is unfair and predatory. I hope that in time we will see less of a tight-fisted market control and more diversity in the market—until then, there is little for myself or anyone to do but wait for the results of the hearing. We could maybe even attend a Taylor Swift concert in the meantime. That is, if anyone can manage to get a ticket.

IDEAS

Ron's Gone Wrong: The Implications of the Stop W.O.K.E. Act

Bella Hamann 02.02.23

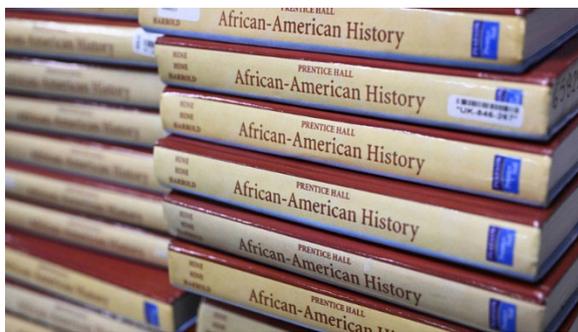


Photo by Public Domain

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/23/politics/ron-desantis-florida-ap-african-american-studies/index.html> If irony was ketchup, we'd all be eating French fries.

This was one of the first thoughts to cross my mind as I was reading up on the most recent news involving the current governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis. Known for being a potential GOP presidential candidate in the upcoming 2024 election, DeSantis has been involved in Florida state politics for over a decade and has held his current executive position since 2019. Since his election, DeSantis has been active in ensuring economic growth within Florida, has supported some environmental regulation, and has even advocated for financial literacy courses to be taught in schools.

However, DeSantis has also been the forerunner of various governmental decisions that not only sparked statewide discussion, but national inquiry as well. Some of the legislation that he has supported include [HB 5](#) (which bans abortions in Florida after 15 weeks and was signed into law at an evangelical rally in Kissimmee); [SB 1028](#) (which bans transgender women and girls from participating in select sports' competitions at both high school and college levels in the state); [HB 1557](#) (more commonly known as the "Don't Say Gay" Bill); and [HB 7/SB 148](#), or the "Stop W.O.K.E. Act."

To further understand the implications of such types of legislation —specifically, the latest implications of the "Stop W.O.K.E. Act"— it is fitting to have both an understanding of what the legislation entails as well as proper knowledge of a recent event in Florida that the state's department of education claims is a "vehicle for a political [agenda](#)."

Firstly, the "Stop W.O.K.E. Act" (HB 7) was signed into law on April 22, 2022. The title of the bill is a play on the slang term 'woke,' which is usually associated with being aware of social prejudice and discrimination. In the bill, however, W.O.K.E. is an acronym, and it stands for "Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees." This bill contains an extensive list of prohibited concepts and topics that cannot be taught or learned in educational settings. Some of these concepts are ideologies suggesting that one race is superior to another, that individuals are inherently racist in regard to their background, that morals in and of themselves are determined by racial background, and the list goes on. Of course, these ideologies in practice are abhorrent and should not be implemented in any circumstance, ever. That being said, by signing into law that which can and cannot be discussed, HB 7 demonstrates how blatantly avoiding addressing how and why abhorrent things in recent years still happen —such as the harsh reality of an increase and acceptance of white supremacy ideologies— is to deny that they exist at all. How can something exist if it is unknown?

The truth of the matter is, these harsh realities do exist. And because they still do, they need to be talked about. In the case of Florida educators and collaborators attempting to do so, the outcome resulted in a rejection.

The rejection in question was that of a trial run of an AP course in African American Studies, created by academics who collaborated with the College Board, a well-known organization who not only develops AP courses, but also develops standardized tests, such as the SAT. This implies that the scope and influence of the College Board is both expansive and quite impartial on a political level. If the organization were politically biased, it would make sense for them to pick and choose which states to offer their services, since as a nonprofit they would have the ability to do so. Hence, it is not necessarily an alarming situation for an AP course to be created and/or introduced, since it is nationally commonplace and happens simultaneously in different states. This reality disproves the notion that the African American Studies course is—specifically in Florida—imposing an agenda on students in the attempt to utilize school curriculum for political purposes.

So, what exactly *was* in the curriculum that was considered a violation of the “Stop W.O.K.E. Act”? In its [syllabus](#), the goal of the course is to “examine the diversity of African American experiences through direct encounters with authentic and varied sources.” This being the desired outcome of a class of this nature, one can only assume that the information covered throughout its instruction is extensive and spans quite a lot of material and viewpoints, seeing as African American culture and history is, in and of itself, expansive and diverse. So again, not a surprising outcome in terms of content.

Although the academics who helped create the subject were adamantly insistent that there was “nothing particularly ideological” about it, many broad topics of this AP course were addressed by the Florida Department of Education as unacceptable, including the concepts/subjects of reparation, Black Lives Matter, and “abolishing [prisons](#),” just to name a few. However, one *specific* topic came under fire, entailing only a *hundredth* of all the subject matters discussed in the course, and that was the subject regarding Black Queer Studies.

Said DeSantis during a press [conference](#) in January: “(The course is) a political agenda...when you try to use Black history to shoehorn in queer theory, you are clearly trying to use that for political purposes.” Additionally, DeSantis remarked in a broad connotation at the beginning of this year that “[We](#) (Florida) reject this woke ideology. We seek normalcy, not philosophical lunacy...we will never

surrender to the woke mob. Florida is where the woke goes to die.”

This viewpoint in itself is one of the most ironic parts of the entire situation. By claiming to reject an ideology in favor of what DeSantis claims as normalcy, Florida, by default, became the very thing they swore to destroy: a vehicle for a political agenda.

There is a fine line between what should be personal opinion and what should be public policy, and in Florida, this line does not seem to exist. It is absolutely okay to have differing opinions; however, simply because opinions are different—especially if historical context is involved—this not make it excusable to censor discussion on what may be disagreeable. This censorship prohibits the expansion of knowledge and inhibits critical thinking skills in the wide array of social and cultural issues that the “Stop W.O.K.E. Act” and others like it may address. Not only does this act hinder *educational* progress in Florida, but it also hinders *social* progress with various demographics such as ethnic minorities and the LGBTQ+ community, because the impact of a lack of access to knowledge is, ultimately, a lack of concrete and substantial change.

Legislation and legalities, burgers and fries, bread and circuses. At the end of the day, it could be supposed by some that as long as we live in blissful ignorance of what is happening around us, nothing will ever need to change or even be mentioned, because we would all be asleep to its occurring. Each one of us has a choice to make with what we decide to discover; and I, for one, refuse to live in a lie, and will be very much awake, on the go, and ironically using ketchup.

Pulse

PULSE

Rutgers University Poet and Professor to Speak for Environmental Fridays

Desmond H. Murray [02.02.23](#)



Photo by Nancy Crampton

Evie Shockley, Rutgers University Poet and Professor, will speak for Environmental Fridays this upcoming Friday, February 3, 2023 via Zoom. The series was begun by chemistry professor Desmond Murray, who is inviting us to come and see the presentation. This will be episode four of the Environmental Fridays series and will be held at 9:30 am EST. It will be focused on African American Nature and

Environmental Poetry. Everyone is welcome, and it is free to all. This includes students, community members, and professionals alike. We are very excited about her presentation and hope you will join us!

Guest Speaker Bio:

Evie Shockley is the Zora Neale Hurston Distinguished Professor of English at Rutgers University. Both a scholar and a poet, she has published the critical book *Renegade Poetics: Black Aesthetics and Formal Innovation in African American Poetry* and several poetry collections, including the Hurston/Wright Award-winning books *the new black and semiautomatic* (which was also a Pulitzer Prize finalist). Her honors include the Lannan Literary Award for Poetry, the Stephen Henderson Award, the Holmes National Poetry Prize, and her work has appeared twice in the *Best American Poetry* series (2015 and 2021). Her new poetry book, *suddenly we*, will be released in March 2023. If you are curious, some *samples of Shockley's poetry can be found [here](#)*.

The Zoom Meeting link can be found [here](#).

Meeting ID: 840 7511 3359

Passcode: **172320**

Contact Dr. Desmond Hartwell Murray at murrayd@andrews.edu if you have any questions. For more information about Environmental Fridays, view our website at <https://www.theenvironmentalfridays.com/>

PULSE

Sex Education in the Adventist System

Zothile Sibanda 02.02.23

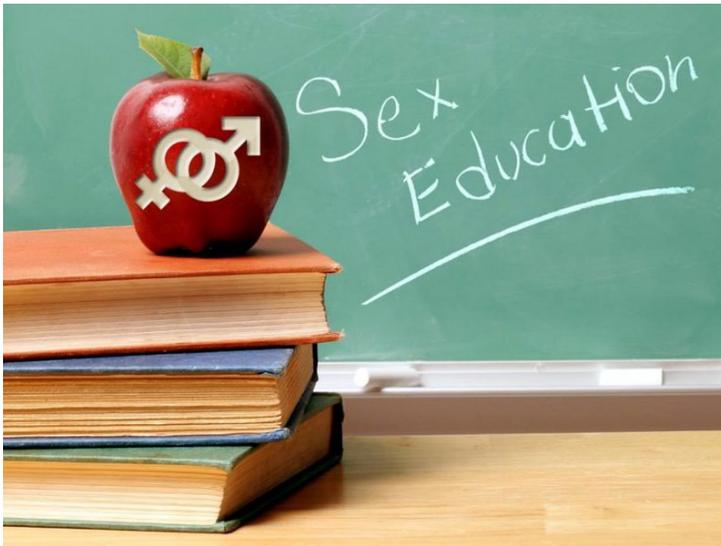


Photo by Public Domain

The “Birds and the Bees” conversation was something I was told my parents were supposed to have with me. I probably heard the analogy on TV, and to this day, I don’t understand the connection the phrase has with sex education. Growing up in an Adventist and ethnic home, anything sexually related was never spoken about and wholly avoided. All of the “sex-ed” I got from my family was, “don’t have sex” and “stay away from boys.” Pretty straightforward, one would think, until I look back and realize how devoid of information it was. At my Adventist junior high school, when our teachers gave us “sex education,” they separated the girls and the boys while preaching abstinence without really getting into what sex was. During the following years, we were pretty much only shown the anatomical perspective of childbirth and the life cycle. The way that many church schools have tried to avoid having a straightforward conversation about it prompts me to wonder: if we didn’t

get our sex-ed from our schools, where did we get it from? Friends? TV? Online? It worries me for the future, because there is no boundary between the internet and what a child can access. So, who will they turn to if their schools aren't sufficiently educating them? The internet.

Something I have realized, especially in these recent years, is that although most Adventist schools may refrain from going "in-depth" about sex, they push the point that abstinence is the right way. This practice is what enforces purity culture and all of its arguably detrimental effects. The sole emphasis on abstinence is a harmful explanation of sex, because it doesn't answer any questions a kid might have; it just shuts them down. Church schools seem to be so hesitant to be clear about the different ways to practice safe sex, and I feel the reason is that they feel that being clear with their students will prompt them to have sex, which isn't the case at all. Becoming more knowledgeable on a subject does not necessarily guarantee that our youth will seek out first-hand experiences on it. Teaching the different practices for safe sex, like getting tested for STDs and learning about the different types of birth control, doesn't have a direct correlation with teen pregnancy.

I interviewed two students of Andrews University, who will be kept anonymous. They attended public and private schools, and here are their responses:

"Having been in the Adventist education system for a good portion of my academic career and growing up in the church as a pastor's daughter, I can confidently say that our education regarding sex is severely lacking. Oftentimes, our questions in health class were answered vaguely with flowery language and Bible verses rather than addressing the issue head-on. We were taught about menstrual cycles, the sanctification of marriage, and the importance of preserving our purity until we had a wedding ring on our fingers. Nothing else. It wasn't until I transferred to a public school during my 6th and 7th-grade years that I finally got real answers to my questions. Such as what sex exactly was, the hormonal changes that come with hitting puberty, and how to practice safe sex. While I was still a ways off from being the appropriate age to become sexually active, it was important for me to learn how to practice safe sex in advance. I believe that this open, honest, and safe communication that I received from my educators during those two years helped a lot more than my Adventist school or my parents' "birds and the bees" talk (which consisted of nothing but various Scripture verses). While our faith holds many standards and beliefs when it comes to the subject of sex, we should not be afraid to discuss it openly. How can we expect our youth to understand and abide by the

principles of our religion when we are too afraid to even explain these principles properly to them? Remaining silent on such matters does more harm than good in the long run and will continue to leave many Adventist youths lost and in the dark when it comes to such matters.”

The second student had some thoughts to share as well.

“I would say my experience was very informative. We were all required to take a health class and they would talk to us about puberty and sex health that was more of informing you rather than shaming you. We were taught different birth control methods, and how you should use at least two methods to prevent pregnancy and STDs. Essentially they acknowledged what we were exposed to and didn’t want us to get into a situation. They also explained the emotional health/damage that comes with hookup culture, so they weren’t just like, ‘here, have sex guys.’ It was like you should probably wait so you’re not emotionally traumatized—but if you do participate, don’t get pregnant or be unsafe.”

Moving forward, church schools should be able to communicate the realities of sex without feeling as if they are “encouraging” the behavior rather than educating their students. In our Adventist culture, it is normal just to let the teenagers figure it out themselves as they grow up, but having a guide from mentors in their lives could be most beneficial. It seems as though educators are shying away from the inevitable fact that adolescents are now constantly bombarded with sex in the media. It may be healthiest for the church to teach their youth about sex education, as opposed to the media the world. This could guide teenagers and push them away from misinformation that could hurt them rather than help them.

Week of Prayer: Get Unrealistic

Amelia Stefanescu 02.02.23



Photo by Dawson Par

All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28.

Andrews University's Week of Prayer takes place every semester. Every day that week, students are invited to Pioneer Memorial Church to partake in a seminar by a guest speaker, making this an opportunity to commune with God daily.

This week of prayer's speaker was Pastor Deblaire Snell. He is the author of six books, including "Almost Home," "New Normals," "Leap Year," and "Making Christianity Great Again." According to the [Oakwood website](#), his favorite text is 2 Corinthians 5:17, which states, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Pastor Snell chose the title "Get Unrealistic" as the focus of his seminars. The reason for this title, he explained, was because faith is not realistic. It is not physically graspable, and in order to get ahold of spirituality, we must ourselves

become unrealistic, let ourselves believe in the unbelievable. Pastor Snell encouraged us to realize that not everything makes sense, but God is the one who makes and made sense. Many people go through life saying they are faithful, but they always have backup plans aplenty, justifying that it makes sense to have a safety net. While common sense is very important, you should not elevate it above God. People plan, but God has His own way of doing things, even if it means overriding human plans. This week of prayer was full of examples of spiritual bravery and personal experiences of steadfast faith. One of the most notable ones was the story of Jairus. The way pastor Snell presented it showed us that God keeps us watching others be blessed to show us His power. He also replayed this idea that we have to be intentional in documenting what God has done in our lives. Humans have a natural reflex to discard good memories and focus on the bad, but we should never forget the numerous times that God has kept His promises to us.

“I felt the speaker was very engaging, his message came back full circle. It was very structured and relatable to people our age,” says Ashley Ramos (junior, health science). “For future Weeks of Prayer, I would say it’s important to continue to put a lot of thought into the speaker and their message because it really paid off this time.” The only criticism she had about the experience was that it needed to be made more clear when it was time to stand or sit down—as many have noticed, the audience was very lax in this aspect. When asked what should be improved for next year, Valerie Akinyi (senior, political science) commented on reducing the altar calls at the end of sermons. “It makes me feel like they only care about the numbers,” she remarked. The calls for baptism, according to her, are very frequent and may seem insistent to the students.

All in all, the students much appreciated the message shared by Pastor Snell and learned how to “get unrealistic” to be able to enjoy God’s presence in their lives to an even better extent. We are thankful for a week of spiritual learning and a wonderful message which taught us to never stop rejoicing and to live through faith rather than through sense.

Last Word

LAST WORD

Knock Knock

Gio Lee 02.02.23



Photo by Gio Lee

Knock Knock.

A small pause. *Gio, calm down.*

Knock Knock.

The bed creaks. *Whew.*

With hands shaking and legs trembling, I creep through the door. There—
Grandma’s lying on the bed. She jumps after seeing me in delight.

After a moment of silence, I finally speak.

“Hey Grandma. I’m back. How are you? I feel like it’s been forever since I’ve been
with you. ”

Unable to see Grandma after four years, I pour out topic after topic. Even though Grandma is able to listen to my words, she stutters—unable to speak. As I was about to start a conversation with her, loud footsteps approach the room.

“Hello, I forgot to ask you to sign in for us before you came into your grandmother’s room.” The nurse waits as I write down information on a sheet with other names and dates on it as well. She thanks me and says, “Your grandma has been doing much better. She still can’t quite talk and move a lot, but she’s been in gleeful spirits after hearing you were coming from the U.S.”

She finally leaves and it’s just me and my grandma again. Grandma tries hard to write something on a post-it-note but her fingers begin to stiffen from writing too much. I would never know if this was my last moment with her. So I tried to reminisce about all the times we had together, like when she took care of me in Korea while my parents were at work, or how she taught me Korean in the U.S. to always remember our culture, or the stories she told about my dad’s childhood.

Grandma was just like my mom.

She taught me my first words.

She taught me my first steps.

She taught me how to love.

Tears trickle down my face and splash on my grandma’s hand as I keep remembering how this could be our last time.

“I’m sorry,” I say. She nods her head with disagreement as tears drip from her face knowing this could be our last encounter.

After two hours pass, the nurse comes back into the room saying, “Sorry, I’m going to need to change your grandmother’s IV.” That’s when I realize it’s time to go. I pray for Grandma before I leave and raise my body to leave the room.

Just as I was about to open the door, my grandma grasps my hand. I mutter, “Grandma, is something wrong?”

She shakes her head and pushes herself on me to say something.

She creeps near me to lean in while her mouth stutters to say the last words I ever heard from her, “*Saranghae.*” (I love you).

Tears stream down my face as I hug Grandma one last time. People stare as I carry my body and cover my face with my two drenched hands. Soon enough, I arrive at the subway station to go home.

The subway announcement comes on saying, "Seoul Station. Seoul Station." I leave my seat, get off, and trudge along the sidewalk to arrive home. I head straight to my bed, drowning thoughts about Grandma in my sleep.

I wake up the next day with an alarm near the telephone.

Ring Ring.

"We are sorry to tell you that Mrs. Lee has just passed away; we will still have her at the hospital and it would be great if you could come as soon as possible."

The call stays on with a repetitive beep.

I quickly put on my dad's slippers, and run in my pajamas to the subway station to take me to the hospital. Once I arrive, I catch my breath and walk slowly trying to remain calm.

Knock Knock.

A small pause. *Gio, calm down.*

Knock Knock.

The bed is still.

Just a long silence.

Tears.