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The Student Movement Volume 107 Issue 18: "Ain't I A Woman?": AU Students Reflect on the Feminist Movement

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“Ain’t I A Woman?”

AU STUDENTS REFLECT ON THE FEMINIST
MOVEMENT

WOMEN'S
HISTORY
MONTH



Photo by Marcel Mattox

Humans

HUMANS

Interview with the WEAAU President

Interviewed by: Grace No 03.09.23



Photo by Jea Erazo

As you might know, Women's History Month started this March, a month meant to remember and celebrate all of the many accomplishments made by women throughout history and a way to uplift an often marginalized identity. I interviewed the president of WEAAU (Women's Empowerment Association of Andrews), Kyra Wirsz (senior, Behavior sciences). She shared her plans for the club and the events coming up for this month as well as her reasons for advocating for different feminist issues through WEAAU.

What made you decide to run for President?

Well, I was an officer last year during second semester. I really enjoyed the community of working with the other girls and I wanted to take a bigger role. And then last year Caryn Cruz (senior, political science) asked if I would be interested in being president, and I was absolutely terrified. It's a big responsibility obviously,

but I did want to be more involved, and this is definitely more involved. It was scary but it's been a really good experience to work together with everybody in a team.

What are the events that you guys have planned for Women's History Month? Is there a specific theme for this year?

We went with the theme 'Phenomenal Woman' based on the poem by Maya Angelou because we really wanted to highlight a lot of phenomenal women throughout history. We also have a co-curricular series this month. For the co-curriculars, it's going to be every Tuesday in March and we'll have a different female faculty member speaking about different points in the history of the women's movement and feminist movements—so first wave, second wave and third wave to current. So yeah, those are the big things we have planned this month for our co-curricular series.

What would you say are the most important takeaways for you in celebrating Women's History Month?

I think it's a really great opportunity to highlight the achievements of women throughout history and to kind of take that as a stepping-off point to continue progressing into the future and empowering women of today—just thinking about all the progress we've made throughout history and how much more there is to be done as we're going forward.

How can we as students best honor Women's History Month?

It's great to have times of the year for specific marginalized groups and bring attention to those! But I think when we have themed months, we tend to overlook these ideas when the month is over. It's important to continue that all the time, like all year round. So I think one of the most important things about Women's History Month is to take the educational opportunities and learn about women's empowerment and all of those kinds of things, and not stop it on March 31, but instead use that to continue throughout the year and just be contributors to progress.

Were there any events or a point in your life that particularly inspired you to get more involved with women's empowerment movements?

Yeah, for sure. I played a lot of sports growing up. And as a girl playing sports, nobody cares to even show up to games. So we'd have games or practices, and just seeing the level of disrespect to our set practice times compared to the boys was disappointing. I remember being in middle school and wanting to play basketball

and stuff, but the other guys in the gym wouldn't let the girls play with them sometimes, or they'd only let the pretty girls play with them. Just seeing the discrepancies in how people are treated and things like that growing up was a big factor.

Sports is definitely still a huge issue that I think about a lot, and I know that on our social media right now we're posting every single day about different women's media. And our social media coordinator, Maya, has posted that there's a podcast of three women who are all professional athletes, discussing their experiences in sports. I think that's so interesting.

How do you think students can kind of get involved just every day in terms of just doing small things to learn more about feminism and combating stereotypes?

I think going out with a lot of intention, since I think just being intentional and being aware of the things happening around you and not just letting those things brush off. People make comments or trends centered around negative stereotypes of women that can cause real damage to people. So calling out the little things [is important]—it might seem stupid and insignificant in that moment, but those things build up over time. And a lot of times, little comments like that are rooted in much deeper issues, and thoughts about women in general.

Who is a woman either in your life or a celebrity that inspires you?

Aidy Bryant! She's so funny and a really powerful fat woman. That's really inspiring for me; it's good to see representation in media of that side of things. I think a lot of times, when we think of powerful women in the media, they have to be essentially very conventionally attractive—so usually very thin. So she has a show called “Shrill” about her experiences as a fat woman living in LA and being in the public eye, which I love.

What does feminism and Women's History Month mean to you personally?

Growing up as a woman, you learn really quickly what the world is like for women and how people are going to treat you and expect you to behave. [It's important] to have a month to bring attention to specific things like intersectionality in the feminist movement and trans inclusion and all of those kinds of things. I want us to be a very inclusive space, and that's really important to me within the movement as well.

What are some of your goals for the club for this year?

Yeah, I definitely want it to be a community where anyone can come and feel safe—

not just cisgender and heterosexual people, but women of all shapes and sizes and backgrounds. We even have tons of male members too, so just everyone. I know it's called the Women's Empowerment Club, which sometimes turns people away, because they're like, "Oh, I'm not a woman" or "I don't I don't identify with this," but I think it has potential to be so much more than that, and that's what I want for the club.

HUMANS

What is Feminism to You?

Interviewed by: Caryn Cruz 03.09.23



Photo by Public Domain

I asked over a dozen students on campus from various backgrounds and experiences about their perception of feminism and how it relates to them. I also pressed the question about whether or not they felt included in mainstream feminism as it currently stands today. I noticed, for one, how many students were unwilling to answer (which left me with only ten responses). A certain hesitancy seems to exist in openly addressing such a controversial topic on campus. Despite the reluctance, however, I'm grateful for the responses I received. There is a lot of insight to be gained from asking about, and sharing, viewpoints on topics that should continually be discussed, such as feminism. These were the responses I received:

Mahal Tio (sophomore, graphic design)

Feminism to me is a lot of different things! It's justice, it's support, it's a safe

community, and accountability. I would define it as uplifting everyone so that all genders have equal rights and opportunities.

My relationship with feminism is that I try to put in the effort daily to become a better person by practicing the mindset of equality for both genders. My hope is that my actions are showing my beliefs! I put my efforts into being aware of the changes that need to be made. I think having that awareness is one of the key factors that will lead to equality between genders. This means accountability (for men and women), identifying inequalities, and educating yourself on what feminism actually is!

I think that I've felt excluded from mainstream feminism in the fact that it mostly focuses on white women and their accomplishments. I especially see this in history and within the media. The accomplishments of Filipina women, or even other races, do not get the full attention they deserve. It would be nice to see that change as we progress.

Ashley Ramos (junior, health science)

Feminism to me means advocating and working towards providing equal opportunities, rights, and freedoms for all individuals. Society places a lot of false stereotypes on feminism, such as equating it to "disliking men" or trying to strip men of their rights. I believe it is important to remember that feminism is about creating an equal playing field for everyone.

I consider myself a novice when it comes to my knowledge about feminism. Learning about feminism can feel a bit intimidating at times because there is an endless amount of history and literature to read. However, I find it important to continually educate myself on feminism and find ways to actively implement that knowledge in my daily life.

Jonathan Lutterodt (business management, sophomore)

I think feminism is supporting and advocating towards women in their aspirations towards equality. I don't have much of a relationship with feminism nor am I that associated with it, but I do agree with its core values. Although modern feminism has kind of shifted in its goals and values, I think that at its core it still holds the same ideals that I support.

Since I'm not a woman, I haven't associated with it much nor have I cared much to dive more into it, so in that sense I haven't felt excluded from any conversation, efforts, movements, or feelings, etc.

Brandon Alvarez (junior, business and biochemistry)

Growing up in a family filled with such strong females and a heavy feminist influence (aka my sister), my perspective on feminism was definitely shaped by what I saw in the household. Many of those same ideas and values I still hold to this day. However, I think that sometimes the true definition of “feminism” is misinterpreted a lot and suddenly people who don’t fit the “feminist” mold [become] the victims of cancel culture.

Nick Zimmerman (junior, business)

I believe feminism can be a great tool to advocate for gender equality, and for creating a more just and equitable society for all genders. At the same time, I believe the delivery of this message can sometimes be unclear as it often feels like an all-or-nothing game. The goal of becoming more aware of feminist ideals, and recognizing the challenges of gender inequality and discrimination, are worthy goals we should all pursue. I think it’s valuable to work towards this, while also remembering not to polarize this topic and make others feel excluded for having minor issues or confusions with the overarching philosophy of feminism (something I believe is all too common with the current movement).

Valerie Akinyi (senior, political science)

To me, feminism is two things: survival and hope. The prospect of creating a world where people have the opportunity to live fully and to be understood in their totality, regardless of sex or gender, gives me hope.

In regards to having a relationship with feminism, this is like asking, “How do I relate to myself?” I can’t conceive of myself without feminism. It is the necessary lens in order to make sense of my identity and my experiences with others.

As a Black woman, I think mainstream feminism pushes a specific way of being and a specific kind of femininity which can exclude Black women and people of other identities. The experiences of white women are often talked about as if they are the sole experience of all women. But that’s not true. By relying on this sole perspective, the realities of so many different kinds of people are ignored. It robs true feminism of its revolutionary potential.

Anna Pak (freshman, psychology)

In a simple sentence, feminism is advocacy for women’s equality. However, feminism is also the inherent shared experiences and the respect for differences that women may have across gender, background, identity, and knowledge. In a world where women commonly find themselves in unjust situations, feminism

provides a way to uplift voices and uphold values. Personally, I believe that although the concept of feminism has been distorted more recently by women who take the movement too far in a way that harms the actual meaning, the essence behind feminism continues to persevere and empower women.

Ian Neidigh (sophomore, chemistry)

Feminism encapsulates a belief that women are equal to men and should be treated as such. The feminist movement started with bold ideas and fought hard for women's rights, but modern-day feminism seems to redefine itself as an anti-men club—and being that I'm a man, well, let's just say I'm not welcome.

Alexander Hess (senior, English)

I would say that my relationship with feminism is relatively positive; however, that hasn't always been the case. When I was younger, I remember hearing the stereotypical description of feminism as “man hating” and that feminism is dangerous. However, after having learned a lot more about the history and diverse forms of the feminist movement here at AU, I am much more comfortable with calling myself a feminist. For example, various forms of feminism—like Black feminism and queer feminisms—play a key role in my own scholarship as an English literature student. So, in conclusion, feminism is extremely important to me both in my academic and personal life.

For me, I generally associate “mainstream feminism” with white feminism. So, building from that definition, I would say that I personally—as a white, cisgender man—have not felt excluded from mainstream feminism. However, I know that many of my peers, who are not afforded the same privilege that I am, have felt extremely excluded from mainstream feminism in that it often seeks to achieve equality for white, cisgender, heterosexual women and does not actually question the harmful structures of patriarchy, rape culture, and heteronormativity.

Johanna Rivas (junior, global studies and Spanish)

I portray feminism to be a way of encouraging women to go for what they want and stand up for what they believe. It is not to degrade males or think they are less capable than women, but to create a community who believe that women can do it. There have been arguments about the equality of men and women—but that's the problem: we keep comparing and competing instead of finding ways to balance each other. In high school, I was the only girl to try out for the co-ed soccer team. It wasn't because girls weren't allowed, but because the guys took over and girls were too scared to try out. I really wanted to do it, so I put in the work and pushed myself

through the hard workouts, and I made the team. Fortunately, everyone knew I worked just as hard to be there and did not exclude me. Instead, they made me feel part of the team. I had the support from my girls, and they came to all my games. Feminism is about believing that women have every right to go for what they want to accomplish without any kind of judgment.

It seems like our diverse campus also has many diverse opinions on current social issues. Conversations on feminism and what exactly it might mean to be a feminist are especially brought into our attention during Women's History Month, and everyone's individual experiences can impact how they feel about different social movements. It's always interesting to hear other people's viewpoints on our campus, and hopefully reading these responses will encourage us to open up more honest conversations about feminism with each other.

HUMANS

What's Your Major?

Interviewed by: Nora Martin 03.09.23



Photo by Public Domain

I asked 10 students this week what their majors were, and why they chose them. Take a look and see if your major is listed here!

Graphic design. I picked it because I wanted to do a job that would allow me to do visually creative work—I also want to work with brands and help them work on their marketing.

Karla Torres (*junior, graphic design and Spanish*)

I am majoring in exercise science, pre-pt. I chose it because I am interested in classes revolving around the human body—especially biomechanics—and also because I knew I wanted to become a physical therapist.

Trista Braithwait (*sophomore, exercise science*)

Speech path. I had family members who recommended it, and it seemed like the correct choice.

Siobhan Conyne (*junior, speech pathology*)

I'm majoring in mechanical engineering. I picked it because I like working with math, and also working with my hands. It's a good combination of both.

Braeden Peterson (*sophomore, mechanical engineering*)

My major is biochemistry. I picked it because I want to go into the medical field, and biochemistry is a good preparatory major for that.

Kamillie Hernandez (*sophomore, biochemistry*)

English. I picked my major because I realized in high school that it's very important to connect with people, and I felt that English gave me the skills necessary to connect with people all around the world. I also chose Spanish because it was a way for me to connect with people even more.

Terika Williams (*senior, English and Spanish*)

I'm majoring in electrical engineering. In the future, I want to work with electrical cars and stop reliance on fossil fuels.

Guilherme Martins Dos Reis (*sophomore, electrical engineering*)

It's very versatile. You can get a job doing just about anything—research, teaching, as an actual lab technician, and it's also a good applied major for medical school.

Beatriz Martins (*junior, medical laboratory sciences*)

I picked my major because I found that I enjoy working with computers and helping people with computers, and I think programming is fun. Also, it makes money.

T Bruggemann (*senior, computer science*)

I picked my major because I've always had a passion for physics.
Yoel Kim (*junior, physics*)

Arts & Entertainment

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Currently: The Idol

Solana Campbell 03.09.23

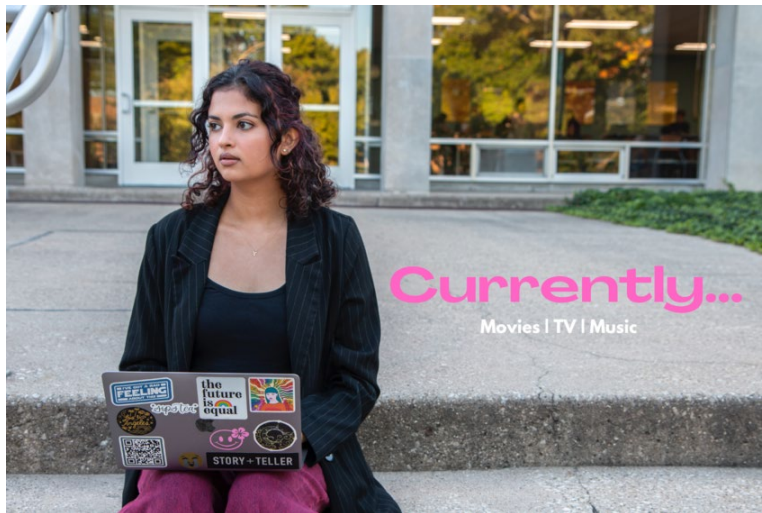


Photo by Kayla-Hope Bruno

This week's Currently will be covering a piece of media that has *not even been released yet*, but the series has already been so hotly debated that I had to cover it. Let's break down "The Idol," an upcoming HBO Max TV series that is a collaboration between huge music artist The Weeknd and "Euphoria" creator Sam Levinson.

I remember the first time I saw "The Idol" announced on Twitter. I was excited, as I'm a big fan of the art direction and production design that goes into "Euphoria"

and I was sure we would get to see an even bigger budget, slightly aged, version of it. While the storyline of “Euphoria” has gone slightly awry in its most recent season (WHAT HAPPENED TO KAT???, AND MCKAY??), the beauty of the show onscreen cannot be denied.

“The Idol” promised to be a tale about an upcoming music superstar, played by Lily Rose Depp, and her complicated relationship with a manipulative cult leader, played by Abel Tesfaye of “The Weeknd” fame. Recently, The Weeknd has taken a more artistic and thematic approach to his music, with his most recent album “Dawn FM” including “radio announcer talk” by Jim Carrey and a complicated public relations rollout that included multiple costumed live performances at award shows. Most of you can remember seeing a swollen, bandaged, The Weeknd, even during his Super Bowl halftime show. His fame has given him the opportunity to have more of a creative license and he ran with it.

This is why I was so excited to see him bend into the world of TV, and not just any TV, the world of “Euphoria” TV, where costume, makeup, and symbolism are king. It felt like a flawless collaboration, one that audiences were excited for and that would send Abel Tesfaye another level up in stardom. However, the show slowly collapsed. Although HBO Max still has not released an official date for the show’s release, it was initially supposed to fill their post-House of the Dragon TV slot, meaning it would already be out right now. Obviously, that isn’t the case, so Rolling Stone took it upon themselves to do some investigating, resulting in one of the most notable journalistic exposes of this year: “‘The Idol’: How HBO's Next 'Euphoria' Became Twisted 'Torture Porn.’”

Twitter went wild. My entire home page was tweets about “The Idol,” Sam Levinson, or The Weeknd for several days. I don’t want to go into detail about, more specifically, the scenes Levinson wanted to include but wasn’t allowed to since they were *too explicit to film*. Please take my word for it—it’s twisted, it’s disgusting, and abhorrent, and it doesn’t give women any kind of room for opinion. If you were to simply watch the show when it comes out, you might wonder at the disgusting portrayal and lack of female agency in the story. However, as Currently likes to do, it’s imperative to understand the story behind it.

Originally, the tale of “The Idol” was the story of a female pop star who overcame powerful men and an enigmatic cult leader to find her own pathway (the story of many women in the industry and an increasing theme in real life, with both Taylor Swift and Megan Thee Stallion taking back their power from the men in the

industry who manipulated them). It was set to be directed by [Amy Seimetz](#), known for shows like “Atlanta” and “The Girlfriend Experience.” In fact, she directed all but the last episode before she was ousted by [The Weeknd](#) in favor of Sam Levinson having more direct control. It turns out the Weeknd thought the show focused too much on Depp’s female character and wanted to drop the “feminist lens.” Even more, he wanted a show that was all about him. One source, a member of the production team, shares, “What I signed up for was a dark satire of fame and the fame model in the 21st century,” but since the changes, “It went from satire to the thing it was satirizing... It was like sexual torture porn.”

WOW. During Women’s History Month, no less. I’ll admit, I thought we were finally reaching a new rhythm in the industry—one where women’s stories were maximized and emphasized. One where women were encouraged to tell their stories the way they want to. It’s heartbreaking to discover that a show on so many of our tongues, and one that will likely still be streamed, would choose to go down this direction. For me, it really makes me question what we consider art and who we consider artists in today’s world.

After all, Levinson has been praised by the industry for “pushing the envelope.” The nudity featured in “Euphoria” broke records and he has been highlighted as an industry mover-and-shaker, someone who does things that are fresh and new. His art direction and cinematic style in “Euphoria” has certainly pushed the envelope by bringing us a drugged-up kind of glamorous take on high school, and “The Idol” promised more of that. But the most recent headlines beg the question: “Is pushing the envelope always a good thing?” Just because something is new, fresh, and innovative doesn’t make it a good thing. Change and growth can take place in a negative direction too, and can we really call Sam Levinson a genius just because he’s willing to bring his twisted mental fantasies to life?

The strongest pushback to critiques of the show is that “this is real life.” Young and vulnerable women often get taken advantage of, especially in big money industries like music and film. Shouldn’t we be portraying those things? For “Euphoria,” many of the situations can be “real life.” Kids in high school suffer from serious drug addictions and the politics of high school such as those that play out between Cassie and Maddy don’t feel too different from reality. But, I want to argue that just because something bad happens “in real life” doesn’t mean we need to watch and expose ourselves to it. It doesn’t mean we need to spend money to create it, either.

During the Agora this week (check out my [News article!](#)), Professor Elizabeth McCree mentioned how, during her time as a prosecution and defense attorney, she has been exposed to all kinds of traumatic stories and children or people who were severely traumatized. During the pandemic, she underwent a brain scan that discovered her brain had *changed* due to the trauma she was exposed to. Although the things in the horrific cases she was handling didn't necessarily happen to her, the constant exposure to the traumatic experiences of those around her actually *changed her brain*. She realized that she had to take steps to protect her brain and distance herself from such intense trauma (she was spending 5 days a week in court on various cases and her exposure to the trauma was almost constant).

We don't know exactly yet what exposure to TV can do to our brains, especially TV featuring a man's most depraved ideas. But we can certainly assume that it won't have a *positive* effect on our brain matter. I think it's time for the industry to take a step back and realize why it matters which stories we choose to tell—and which *parts* of those stories we choose to *show*. Violence and sexual assault, drug use, etc- they are all realities of our world today, but that doesn't mean we need to expose ourselves to depictions of it any more than we must. TV certainly shouldn't be a place where men are encouraged to let their worst, most violent, ideas play out on screen for anyone to see. Personally, I hope HBO thinks twice before releasing this show and I know I'll certainly be thinking twice before watching it. What about you?

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Faculty Art Exhibition

Ysabelle Fernando 03.09.23

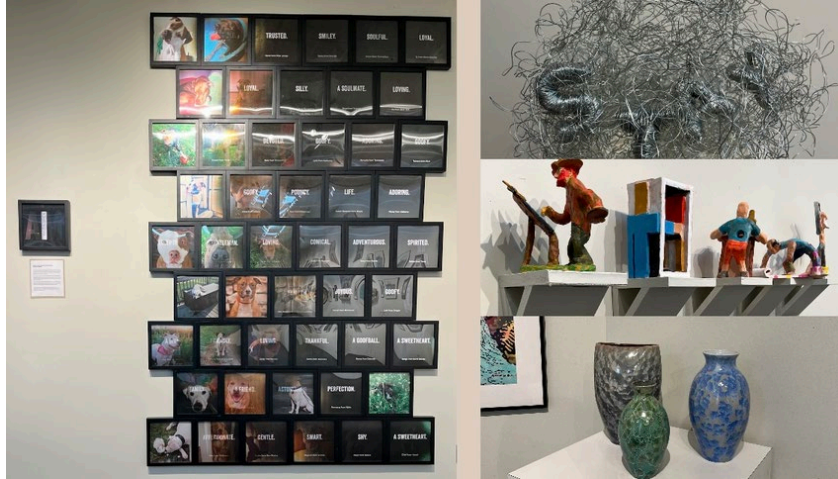


Photo by Kayla-Hope Bruno

The Art Gallery located on the second floor of Harrigan Hall is currently showing a Faculty Art Exhibition. From sculptures to ceramics, and photography to paintings—all artwork displayed were created by faculty of Andrews University. The exhibition had its opening on February 13, 2023 and will continue until March 24, 2023. I highly encourage students to browse through the gallery and see what the faculty have created and chosen to display for the AU campus to enjoy.

Here is the list of faculty featured.

Daniel Weber (*Assistant Professor of Photography*)

Medium: Photography

Dave Sherwin (*Assistant Professor of Photography*)

Medium: Photography

Diane Myers (*Associate Professor of Graphic Design*)

Medium: Digital Art

Zech Ray (*Adjunct Professor of Art*)

Medium: Painting

Rhonda Root (*Assistant Dean of College of Arts & Sciences, Professor of Architecture & Interior Design*)

Medium: Oil on Canvas

Herb Helm (*Professor of Psychology*)

Medium: Watercolor

Greg Constantine, (*Professor Emeritus, Visual Arts, Communication & Design*)

Medium: Ceramics

Brooks Bouwkamp (*Studio Manager of Ceramics*)

Medium: Ceramics

Alyx Halsey (*Assistant Professor of Ceramics*)

Medium: Ceramics

Doug Taylor (*Assistant Professor of Graphic Design*)

Medium: Mixed-media

Stephanie Elkins-Bates (*Associate Professor of Art History*)

Medium: Ink technical pen on vellum

I spoke with Alyx Halsey, the staff member in charge of curating the exhibition. I wanted to gain some insight into the process and ideas that went into setting up and displaying the faculty exhibition. I found out that each piece was intentionally placed. Pieces were displayed in ways that were sure to catch the viewer's eye from the hallway and direct people through the gallery in ways that made visual sense. She chose to pair works together that complemented one another or created a narrative or dialogue. I think her intentions were fulfilled as the bright colors of the pieces closest to the entrance of the exhibit really drew me into the gallery. As you step on into the gallery, one piece after the next continues to draw you to them. The variation of artwork is immense so students have much to look forward to.

The piece that really stood out to me upon walking through the exhibit was the wall of framed portraits of dogs. But not just any dog. Pit Bulls. The artist behind this work is Diane Myers, an Associate Professor of Graphic Design. As a lover of big dogs, I found her work to be quite moving and held an important message to society. I asked Professor Myers about her work and here is what she had to say.

What is your medium of art in which you express your work?

As a graphic designer, I have a lot of different mediums I like to work in, but for this piece I chose digital to combine the text and image supplied by the dogs owners. I had to work with a special printer in New York that is able to do the lenticular printing I wanted for the final piece. I've never done this type of printing before, but the printer was great to work with and even printed a few smaller test prints for me before I submitted all of the final pieces. I've always been drawn to letters and type, so a lot of my personal work incorporates type in some way.

What inspired you to create this piece?

Curiosity! I was hearing a lot in the media about the Michael Vick dogfighting investigation and I personally didn't know any Pit Bull type dogs, so I started doing research on the breed. I was in grad school at the time so I spent months reading up on the breed's history and how much the perception and misinformation had changed over the years. When I found out that not too long ago, these dogs were once considered "America's Dog" I knew I wanted to try to show that in my work by having one dog represent each state. I needed input from owners, so my project turned into a collaborative piece, where I first had to find owners in each state, then convince them to participate in my project and send me an image and word!

I was overwhelmed and inspired by the responses—I got thousands—as owners shared so many amazing stories of their beloved dogs. Many were rescued from bad situations, now thriving and living in loving homes. So many owners thanked me for doing this project, and even if their dog didn't get chosen to represent their state, they were still glad they could share their story, and I read every single entry! I still followed the Michael Vick dogs, which were evaluated individually and most went on to become therapy dogs, work in schools with children, and just get to live out the rest of their lives as a normal dog.

What memorable responses have you had to your work?

My work was part of a group show in Massachusetts along with other artists in a gallery in a community center. The curator told me a little girl was walking by, saw my work on the wall, and immediately ran up to see it closer. She quickly ran out of the gallery, got her parents, and dragged them in to share it with them. This warmed my heart, as I was hoping this work would be approachable to all ages and while these dogs are big and not for every family, hopefully I could educate a bit and have people see these dogs without the stigma often attached to them. The feedback from the curator solidified my hope, and I enjoyed hearing how others interacted with and enjoyed the piece as well.

Take the opportunity to go check out the exhibition and support our AU faculty in their creative work. Perhaps even tell them what you thought and encourage them to continue creating and sharing their work.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Music Seniors: A Day in the Life

Aiko J. Ayala Rios 03.09.23



Photo by Aiko J. Ayala Rios

It's that semester of the year that most seniors are terrified of: final projects, a thesis, a big exam to apply for graduate school, applications for jobs and internships, or all of them at the same time. Many college students spend lots of time and effort reaching this final step in receiving their degree and beginning to pursue their careers. Today I want to talk to you about the final task a senior music major must do to graduate (besides finals): a recital.

The music department requires all music students to do a recital project for their final year. This recital usually lasts 1.5 hours, and although they can invite other musicians to accompany them (usually a pianist), the main performer must be the student. Now, to prepare a recital of more than an hour, students must prepare a lot of repertoire that must be performed mostly by memory! Also, one month

before their recital date, they have to perform extracts from their program in front of various professors from the department at a “hearing” audition, to get the approval to perform. Finally, Music Performance majors have to do this recital project twice: one in their junior year and another in their senior year, although for their junior recital, it is not as exigent as their senior recital.

With this in mind, the Student Movement asks: what do seniors have to do to prepare for such an important performance project? Well, I chatted with some of the seniors that are now preparing for their recitals, to understand their actions, routines, practice strategies, and other things to consider when preparing for that event.

To start, I have noticed that most music majors, especially upperclassmen, tend to start their day early in the morning, with most rising between 6:30 - 7:30 am. For Simon Luke Brown (senior, music performance violin), his first stop would be the practice room, around 5:30-6:00 am, where he practices until the Cafeteria opens for breakfast. For other students, like Tyler Ninalga (senior, music performance piano), it depends on the day, the most important tasks, and the classes. In any way, the trend seems to be the same: to wake up earlier to start their days as soon as possible in order to have plenty of practice time.

Another thing they consider is how to balance the different aspects of their life, as well as deciding how to spend their semester. Grant Steinweg (senior, music composition) stopped taking his cello lessons to focus more on his composition recital and honors thesis. Another student who works mindfully on balance, especially in terms of mental and physical health, is Zoe Shiu (senior, music performance violin & psychology), who also shares her tips and experiences on Instagram: [@zoehyshiu](#) (feel free to check her account!). Also, some students will need more hours to focus on their repertoire than others, which is a very important factor to consider in organizing their schedule and daily routine. Most students practice between 12 to 25 hours per week, meaning they practice at least 2 hours per day (not including Saturdays).

In short, music students need not only mental strength but also physical resistance, as well as a strategy, to achieve their goal of creating an enjoyable presentation. Just so you know, the senior recitals are open to the public, and no tickets are required. Some of them even have a reception at the end, if you want some free snacks and beverages. Keep your eyes peeled on the different boards around the campus to catch more information and see which recitals call your

attention. You are more than welcome to come and support these students who have worked years to get where they are now. And for those who are performing their recital soon, from the Student Movement, we wish you the best of luck with your performances! (P.S.: Remember to sing, always! - Simon L.B.)

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Through the Paintings

Kaela McFadden 03.09.23



Photo by Public Domain

This is a short story written by an AU student as part of our Creative Submission series. If you would like a work to be published in the Student Movement, please email your submission to tjhatra@andrews.edu.

Ophelia woke to the sound of boots clicking on the marble floors. Slowly, she peeled herself off the hard bench. Where was she?

Clip clop clip clop.

They grew nearer.

She sprang to her feet, staying out of the security guard's line of sight. Still, the gruff middle-aged man paused at the entrance to the gallery. Ophelia tiptoed backwards until she felt the wall hit her back.

The security guard's flashlight darted over the benches, white busts, and portraits. Did he know she was there? She hadn't meant to fall asleep and overstay her welcome. The flashlight turned to the wall she was pressed against. Nowhere else to hide, Ophelia braced herself against the wall. Her fingers splayed out, accidentally tapping the framing of the nearby painting—the one she had fallen asleep studying.

A funny feeling flashed in her stomach as she shut her eyes. She couldn't be caught. She just couldn't!

Seconds ticked by, but the guard didn't grab her, nor did he shout.

"What is it, Clyde?" called a far away woman's voice.

The security guard *hmpfhed*, returning to the hallway.

"*Psst!*"

Ophelia opened her eyes to see the smiling face of the painted lady.

"He's gone."

The lady's hands shot out, muffling Ophelia's scream.

"Hush. You're safe."

"What are you? How are you talking to me?"

The painted lady laughed, looking over her shoulder to an older woman holding a platter, hidden in the shadows. "The girl doesn't know her gift."

"Never jumped into a painting before, I reckon," replied the gravelly voice of the old woman.

"I'm Judith," said the young lady. "And you are a jumper."

"A jumper?"

"Yes, a painting jumper. Truly an incredible gift!"

Ophelia's breath caught. Could it be?

She turned sharply, surveying the room. To one side was the gallery. To the other, the deep depths of color, closer than ever before. Ophelia reached to touch the red velvet curtains. The sleeves of a blue dress covered her arms—a blue dress in the ancient style similar to Judith's. Ophelia touched her locs; they twisted back into a regency updo similar to Judith's red hair.

"How can I—"

The young lady shrugged. “I haven’t run across a jumper in years. They are quite rare.”

Ophelia’s fingers curled around the portrait’s frame. A once in a lifetime opportunity lay before her. She bounced on her toes, ready to explore.

“I wish you the best,” Judith called as Ophelia leapt from the painting, back into the gallery.

In the distance, the guard’s footsteps trailed away from the exhibit.

It was time to play.

Such a big museum. So much to explore. But how long did she have? Curiosity burned within Ophelia as she ran through the exhibit, passing the portraits and paintings she’d admired all day, never once dreaming she possessed the ability to jump into them.

She chatted briefly with a nun and played in a blooming field along a riverbank with a sweet woman named Magdalene. A grumpy marble bust yelled as she darted past.

Leaving the museum’s Italian exhibit, Ophelia ventured into one of her favorite rooms—an exhibit housing African American art. She felt at home, sitting with older women as they quilted. A baby cried in her mother’s arms and a man plucked away at his guitar, serenading the quilters. She dove into another exhibition where she sat at the edge of a vibrant, dream-like Nile chatting with the people bathing in the river.

Art came to life. She’d roamed these halls throughout her childhood, but jumping into them brought new depth to her understanding of the art. She could listen to the characters, explore the vast landscapes, and closely study the details. Each brushstroke. Each piece. Each style. It was all at her fingertips.

She spent hours weaving through the African-American art before wandering through the other cultures—Middle-Eastern, African, Native American, Southeast Asian and more. Each new exhibit with unique styles opened up a whole new world for Ophelia. A world made of colors, paints, clay, and wood.

As she was strolling through the Korean exhibit engrossed with the displays, a shadow passed through the doorway.

A hand clamped around Ophelia’s wrist. *The guard.*

“I’ve got you now, thief!”

She screamed, yanking away. His hands were rough, but she twisted out of them

and ran. He lumbered after her as she raced for safety.
She needed a painting. She needed to jump.

Careful not to hit any of the pieces, she darted into the Chinese art exhibit. Not having time to be picky, she jumped into the blue ink of a beautiful white teapot. Hidden behind the swirls of flowers, Ophelia, outlined in the same blue, trembled as the guard prowled.

He searched in every nook and cranny. He'd even looked directly at her teapot, but still he found nothing. He hurled curses and threats.

Ophelia slumped behind the flowers, her dream fading into a nightmare. Trapped in a pot with nowhere to go, she curled up to wait out the storm.

"Hey, miss," a gentle voice called.

Ophelia's eyes blinked as she sat up. Where was she? What had—The teapot!

Her eyes darted back and forth, searching for answers.

"It's okay. You're okay," soothed the woman who cradled Ophelia in her arms on the bench.

She smiled, waiting for Ophelia to re-orient herself. Somehow, they were back in the Italian exhibit filled with portraits. Judith hung nearby with that old woman still slinking in the shadows.

"What happened?"

"You fell asleep," the kind woman answered. "Must've been some dream you were having. I found you shaking like a leaf."

Ophelia noted the woman's uniform. Another security guard.

"Jane! Did you find the thief!" rang a gruff voice from down the hall.

"No, Clyde!"

The woman, Jane, smiled knowingly, lowering her voice so only Ophelia could hear, "You certainly aren't a thief. Just a kid who fell asleep."

"How did you—?"

"You have some paint on your face," Jane laughed. "Now let's get you home before I have to pull you out of another dream."

As she led me out of the exhibit, Ophelia turned back one last time.

Judith winked.

Writer's Note:

This setting is loosely based on the Detroit Institute of Art. While I have never been there, I

wanted to honor my home city. The art pieces mentioned were ones I found in their online gallery. Judith is from “Judith with the Head of Holofernes” by Fede Galizia and the other paintings briefly mentioned are from the “By Her Hand: Artemisia Gentileschi and Women Artists in Italy, 1500–1800” exhibit (<https://www.dia.org/byherhand>). The African American pieces mentioned are the “Shirley Woodson: Shield of the Nile Reflections” exhibit (<https://www.dia.org/woodson>) and “Quilting Time” by Romare Bearden (<https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/quilting-time-34128>). The Chinese teapot is made up.

News

NEWS

Empowering our Neighbors: Interview with H.E.L.P Program Director Carlisle Sutton

Isabella Koh 03.09.23

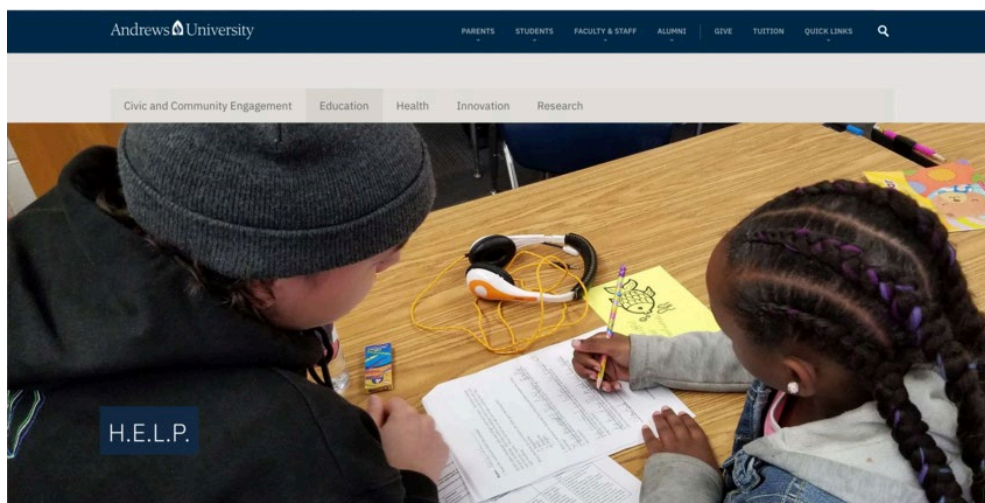


Photo by Andrews University

The Human Empowerment Life Program (H.E.L.P) was founded in 2015 to meet the needs of public school students in the Benton Harbor community. Although it has undergone change due to the pandemic, it still seeks to connect Andrews University with this neighboring community in constructive and meaningful ways. I spoke with founder Carlisle Sutton about the past, present, and future of the program, and why it continues to be a necessary part of the Andrews mission.

What is the H.E.L.P program?

The Human Empowerment Life Project is a program designed to build a team of trained volunteers who help reinforce positive values, develop a love for reading, improve metacognition, and increase the sense of psychological belonging among elementary students by fostering healthy relationships. The presence of students from multiple academic programs provides additional learning opportunities for the elementary students to learn of varied career options. The cultural and ethnic diversity of the University is reflected amongst the volunteers.

Why was it created?

Access to quality education is a human right. The Seventh-day Adventist church has long believed that “to educate is to redeem.” The biblical mandate to love your neighbor as yourself also informs our decision making as regards how we treat those in resource deprived circumstances. In 2015, when H.E.L.P. was created, the annual household income of the residents in Benton Harbor was 41% of the state average, the schools suffered from a shortage of certified teachers, and more than 95% of the students lived below the poverty line. In addition, all the schools of the Benton Harbor Area Schools (BHAS) were rated in the bottom 5% in their students’ academic performance with less than 4% of the students being proficient in key subject areas.

What are its main goals?

To build a lasting, trusting, meaningful relationship between the BHAS students, teachers, and administrators and our students, faculty, staff, and administrators so mutually beneficial learning experiences may be developed. Through the sharing of resources, there would be measurable improvements in school culture and climate that would create the conditions for improvements in classroom management and self-regulation. We have aimed to improve reading skills and comprehension, improve English Language Arts (ELA) test scores for the BHAS K-12 students, and develop a greater understanding and commitment to vocation among the Andrews University students and community.

What is your position/role in the program?

Program Founder and Director. Like so many, God placed the burden on my heart and He provided the support of friends and colleagues to enable me to develop and lead the program.

Why is this initiative important to you?

In 2013, I came to Andrews to learn how to serve my church. Instead, God showed me how to serve my community. This program has changed me and our student volunteers. Not only have we become more empathic and understanding of the challenges and resilience required by those in under-resourced communities, many of us changed our academic programs to be better-equipped to serve. In addition, H.E.L.P has brought me into contact with more than 700 student volunteers who are eager to change the world and thousands of grades 1-5 students who we have been honored to see grow over the years. Research shows there is a correlation between improvements in education and the impact on health, life-expectancy, and the quality-of-life indicators. Changing the educational outcomes would have a profound impact on the lives of the people of our community.

Tell me a little bit about the summer H.E.L.P program. What does it take from the original program, and what does it expand on?

Two years before covid, in discussions with the school district (because the literacy program was pretty well established), we went and explored some of the other needs that existed within the school. We found that many of the children were struggling with Algebra I. The success rate of the grade nine students was fairly low, so we worked with the school district to establish a summer program on the Andrews campus, where we brought in the ninth graders for eight weeks. They would do math from eight thirty in the morning until three in the afternoon. We would provide breakfast and lunch and transportation. We had a certified math instructor, and we also hired student tutors to work with the kids.

These are students who are doing credit recovery. After failing math in the school district, they were brought to our campus. During that summer, they all scored As and Bs. Because of the psychological sense of belonging that we were establishing, we found that the kids started to feel as if they really belonged on campus. By having daily check-ins and a trauma-informed approach, we would work with the tutors to create spaces for the youth to express their emotional state. They could have time-outs where they could go and debrief in quiet places. We gave them

other devices that would help them cope with their challenging moments and self-regulate. They were really excited about being in the program, and they all passed.

We stopped because of Covid-19. This summer we are trying to start it again. The program will run for 8 weeks and begin in the middle of June. We will bring high school students to our campus and provide breakfast and lunch, engaged instructors, and a safe learning environment on a University campus. Instructors will be paid for their time.

What are some examples of duties volunteers carry out? Are there any skills or credentials you are looking for in volunteers?

We are working towards hiring students who could be mentors. For the summer program, we are seeking out four individuals who have a strong background in math, especially in Algebra I. We are also looking for a certified high school math teacher. All positions will be fully paid for forty hours a week throughout the program.

Volunteers should be emotionally prepared to support at-risk youth. We're looking for individuals who are willing to answer questions about their family life, about their belief in God, about their value system—individuals who are willing to be authentic and accept that others may have different perspectives. They need to be open to the idea of listening and learning. Many of these kids have been through fairly difficult situations. They have learned to survive in those environments. There is a lot to be said for the fact that they are alive and that they are making progress. We want individuals who can come in and not see these kids as being broken and hard-pressed, but just see them as kids with a different experience. We want people who will love on them and support them through this journey.

Do you have any favorite memories or stories from your time with the program?

In response to the request of the teachers and administrators of the Benton Harbor Area Schools, we invited the grades 1-5 students to what became an annual Christmas production at the Howard Performing Arts Center. Each December, our team of volunteers would develop and produce a musical production. The University Choir, the Watchmen, Journey, and many of the best musicians were featured and they helped to make the occasion memorable. We also partnered with the music department, the Graduate School, Griggs Academy, the James White Library, Neighbor to Neighbor, and many others to provide small gifts and treats for our guests. Each year the teachers, and staff expressed their appreciation for

the quality of the production which exposed their students to new sights and sounds that expanded their knowledge.

In the third year of this production, we worked with the Boys and Girls Club of Benton Harbor to train the drama students of the Benton Harbor High School to be the actors in the production. It was remarkable to see the self-confidence grow as the teens prepared for the event. They worked hard to memorize lines and get into character. On the day of the musical, the exuberance backstage could only be matched by the screams of delight as the grades 1-5 students saw their older brothers and sisters in costume effectively delivering their lines on stage. It was a remarkable day for everyone. These experiences shape how people see themselves and their capacity to achieve.

Another memory I recall with great fondness took place at the end of the first year we had the math program. We carried our kids to the recording studio, where we asked them what they liked best about the project. They said that they thought we had become a family. They felt that our tutors loved to teach because they were so engaging with them. They really affirmed that our efforts to portray Christ in a practical sense worked.

Can you share some specific examples of how the H.E.L.P. program has positively impacted students in Benton Harbor?

Through the math program, all the Benton Harbor high school students who participated in the program were able to earn credits that counted towards their high school graduation. The fact that they were able to earn credits on a University campus helped them to see themselves as being successful. It helped them to feel as though Andrews University cared for them. Many of them wanted to come back to Andrews to pursue bachelors degrees in music and nursing when they finished their programs.

In many ways, yes, there was an academic achievement that we checked off, but beyond that, there was a social, emotional component where we taught them things like self-regulation and appropriate boundaries. They asked us, and we answered questions about drug use, premarital sex, the Bible, and God. We were able to open our lives and our experiences to them so that they could see what life could look like beyond the boundaries of a resource-deprived community.

Why is service to Benton Harbor communities particularly important?

Andrews University is just about 12.5 miles away from Benton Harbor. Our motto of seeking knowledge, affirming faith, and changing the world is a powerful one. It

speaks to our intent to identify challenging situations and work with communities to develop solutions. I think if we are to really be true to our motto, we need to address the reality that there is a community so close to us where individuals struggle with access to affordable housing, food, medication, healthcare, and a sound educational system—all the elements that we assume to be essential for individuals to thrive. If they don't have safety, health, and education, how then can we look at individuals and say, "Here's Jesus" ?

My understanding from Ellen White is that she says, "Christ's methods alone will bring about true evangelism." Christ walked with people. He learned of their challenges and was able to identify with their needs. He cried with them, he laughed with them, he gained their confidence, and then he bid them "come follow me." For us, I think we often do the "come follow me first, and then after you follow, join me with my religious value system, and then I will try to help you out with some of the other things." Ellen White says Christ had "disinterested love." I would love for us to see people, not because of what they can do for our church or our institution in terms of enrollment numbers, but because they're people and because they have needs, challenges, dreams, and aspirations. If we could plug into those and partner with them and walk with them, I think our journey at Andrews would be so much richer. Above and beyond that, the community would also be a much happier and better place for everybody to thrive.

Based on where you've seen this program come from, where do you hope to see it go in the future?

I would hope that every department of the University would come on board, getting students to utilize their skills to support the community in a respectful manner. We have students who are doing physical therapy—how can they be part of this? We have students doing nursing. A lot of times we go in saying "We have the answer. We're here. We want to do this", without asking people "What do you need? How can we support you?." The first thing that I think we need to deal with when we engage with Benton Harbor is the issue of trust. Too often, people come in with funds, want to do a project, stand and pose for the photos, and then the funds run out and they say "bye, see you later." I think we need to demonstrate to the people that we care about them and that we're there for the long haul.

I would like to see Andrews University develop a holistic effort, where we intentionally sit with the leaders of the various entities in Benton Harbor, whether they be the schools, churches, the Mayor's Office, and have real conversations about what resources we have and what we can share. I want us to be committed to

ensuring that those resources are delivered regardless. Did we ask them what they need? Did we sit with them? Maybe what they first needed was to have somebody just sit and listen to them, figure out what they're experiencing, and just cry with them. We don't always have to go in with tangibles and say we're there to change the day. Sometimes just having a presence matters. We can learn to have a presence, just listen, and respond in a respectful manner that says, "we can work towards helping you to get where you want to go."

How can interested Andrews students/staff get involved?

They can email me at carlisle@andrews.edu. Beyond emailing me, at Andrews we have a Community Engagement Council headed by Paulette Johnson. They can reach out to her as well. Right now, she's looking for individuals to lead in some of the various subcommittees. There are subcommittees for education, diversity and inclusion, religion, and more. If individuals are interested in really getting involved in community engagement, which is what this is all about, they can connect with her. I'm sure she'll be happy to find a place for them where we can utilize all the skills and all the talents that are available. If individuals want to give money as well, we also have room for that. But right now, for the most part, the biggest thing that we would want is individuals to be able to commit to being part of the process for however long it takes. We need to understand that it took Benton Harbor decades to get where they are right now, and one summer or one year is not going to change the whole picture. We need to be in this for the long haul.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Anything our departments on campus can do to build a presence in the schools, or even bring the students to the campus, is important. There's an Andrews student who was working with the student clubs toward establishing a mentoring program for Benton Harbor High School students. In that project, the chemistry club, the biology club, and others would go to their classrooms and share interesting science experiments, or talk to them about what it means to study science.

Over the years, H.E.L.P was made possible by the financial support of the Berrien Community Foundation, Versacare Inc., Elder Ted Wilson, President of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church, Adventist Community Services (ACS), Pioneer Memorial Church, Village SDA Church, and many other friends of the University. Their support helped pay for transportation, student meals, printing, volunteer events, and other associated costs. To the hundreds of volunteers, our University administration, our faculty advisors Charity Garcia and Melissa Ponce Rodas, our donors, the administration, teachers, and students of the Benton

Harbor Area Schools, and community partners, my prayer is that someday soon, we will all hear, “well done!”

NEWS

John Wesley Taylor V Elected to be the Next Andrews University President

03.09.23

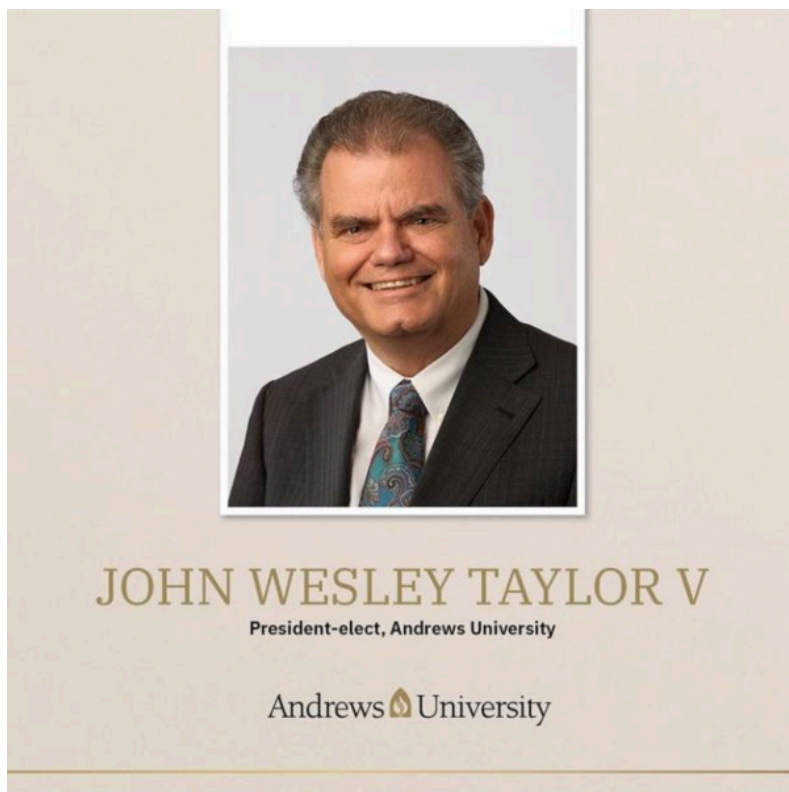


Photo by Andrews University Instagram

On March 7, the Executive Session of the Andrews University Board of Trustees elected John Wesley Taylor V to be the seventh president of Andrews University. President-elect Taylor's term will begin on July 1. He is currently serving as associate director of the Department of Education at the General Conference. The Andrews University press release about his election may be found [here](#).

NEWS

Students Open the Month with Cultural Showcase

Andrew Francis 03.09.23



Photo by Chloe De Leon

Although Black History Month has ended, Andrews students and community members are not finished celebrating unique diversity and culture on campus. Preceding the “AUnited” weekend that will be occurring from March 10-12, Pilipino Culture Night (PCN) was presented on Saturday, March 4. An elaborate

display of Filipino culture and heritage was shown to the Andrews community in the Johnson Gym. For a small fee, students could witness demonstrations of Filipino dances, Filipino food items, and other aspects of the culture throughout the night. I got a chance to talk to Jeffrey Wright (freshman, psychology), Brooklyn Anderson (freshman, animal science) and Matthew Bourne (freshman, music) who were a part of the program as either performers or spectators.

What is your cultural background?

Jeffery Wright: “I am Irish and Nigerian.”

Brooklyn Anderson: “Filipino.”

Matthew Bourne: “I am black (African American).”

How did you participate in Pilipino Culture Night?

JW: “I helped perform maglalatik, the coconut dance.”

BA: “I participated by going to the event.”

MB: “I participated in Pilipino Culture Night by being a bouncer and checking people in at the entrance of the Johnson Gym.”

What was the preparation for this event like?

JW: “The prep consisted of practicing [the performances] once a week together and then by ourselves when needed.”

What was your favorite part of the cultural experiences?

JW: “The food, not going to lie!”

BA: “The dances and costumes. I love the tinikling dance because it’s so mesmerizing to watch. I learned so much more about my culture. The finale was also done in such a colorful way. They used dances from the entire night, and it was so amazing to watch!”

MB: “Learning about the different cultural dances that were performed.”

After the success of the several Black History Month programs and the smashing hit which was PCN, the Andrews University Student Association, as well as the surrounding community, are waiting in anticipation for the upcoming cultural events that will continue throughout this month and the rest of the school year. Cultural events like Pilipino Culture Night and AUnited provide an outlet for students to demonstrate self-expression and cultural pride. These events also allow for a destressing period for many students, faculty, and staff alike as classes, midterms, eventual final projects and exams, and graduation come up on the horizon. Stay tuned for the following cultural celebrations and events that are

going to provide further chances for cultural expression, entertainment, and a chance for all the hard working individuals on this campus:

Friday March 10, United in Christ: A Collaborative Vespers, at 7:30 PM

Saturday March 11, AUiverse: A Cultural Showcase, at 7:30 PM

Sunday March 12, Head in the Clouds: A Cultural Gala, at 7 PM

NEWS

The Agora at AU: A Conversation on Police Brutality

Solana Campbell [03.09.23](#)

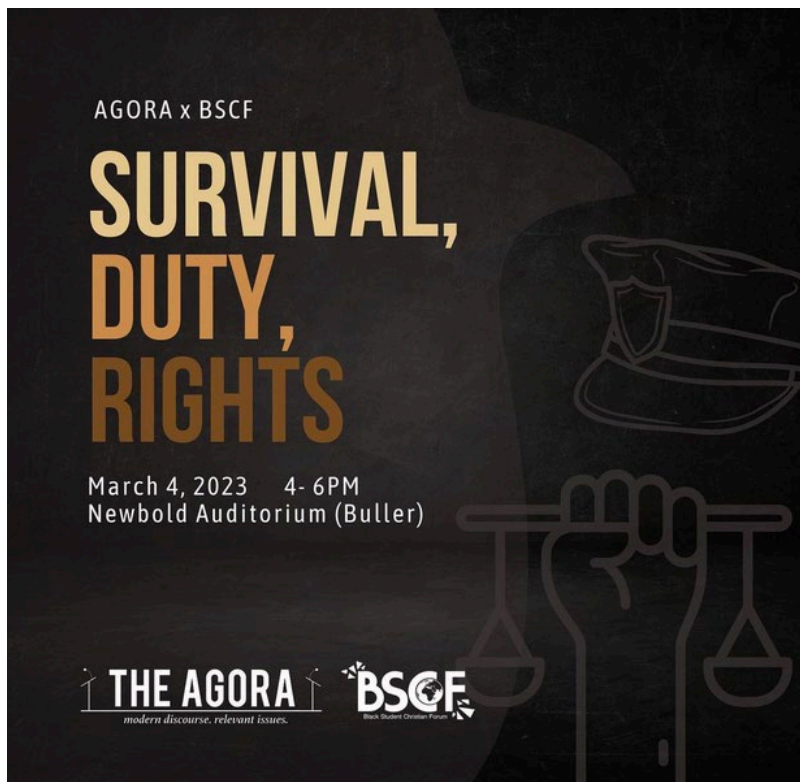


Photo by Agora x BSCF

This past Saturday, March 4, from 4-6pm in Newbold Auditorium, Andrews University students eagerly awaited the return of the Agora, a space for meaningful dialogue about hotly contested topics in our world today. This weekend was a conversation about systemic racism and police brutality, featuring four panelists: Professor Elizabeth McCree, who has taught classes for the AU department of Political Science and History for two years and owns her own defense practice in Benton Harbor; Castwell Fider, a former AU student who worked as a volunteer law enforcement officer in Tennessee from 2016 to 2019 and currently serves as Managing Director of Talent and Culture at Gerard College, a primarily Black and Latinx school in Philadelphia; Wambui Karanja (junior, nursing), the secretary of BSCF; and Julaine Phillips (junior, medical laboratory sciences), who serves as vice president of BSCF. It was moderated by Anaya Abdul-Haqq, the undergraduate tutoring coordinator for the student success center.

The panel discussed multiple heavy themes, with a spotlight on police brutality. Professor McCree emphasized the racist history of our policing system—how it found its roots in the days of slave catchers and has always been fundamentally opposed to freedom. Castwell, as a former cop, brought loads of new insight to the topic of policing. He describes the police system as a “fraternity of terrorism,” talking about how police officers would watch videos of officer’s shooting people as an “initiation” and were encouraged to enact those actions themselves.

The answers to the police certification exam are given from the front during the exam, ensuring that the exam is “cop-friendly.” Fider emphasized, “You can either choose to be a cop or to be a Black man.” During his time, he was under constant pressure to ‘behave’ in a way that was socially acceptable to those around him, including small details like the way he did his hair. When he put his hair into traditional ‘locs,’ his fellow police officers looked at him differently. Now that they perceived him as a Black man, he was no longer part of their brotherhood.

The panel members all had personal stories about negative interactions with police officers, interactions that were exacerbated by the color of their skin. Professor McCree describes just how often she was pulled over—even as a teen, it was constant. She told the story of a time when she was pulled over as a prosecuting attorney and the police officer didn’t believe her until he called her boss. Over and over again, the policing system has wronged people they perceived as the wrong color. For Black students, Fider recommended approaching police stops one of two ways. Do you want to become a hashtag? If so, know your rights. Don’t allow them to search your car without cause and follow the letter of the law.

However, if your goal is to get home safe, do what is asked. Fider specifically emphasizes, “Get a dashcam!”

But the panel shifted at this point into a new and more hopeful direction. “As Christians, how do we humanize police officers while advocating for our rights and need to be protected?” Professor McCree highlighted how poorly prepared police officers truly are. Their education is short-term and it’s unfair to put these young people in a position where they don’t have the tools to make good decisions. Wambui mentioned that “the people within the system are also hurt by the system.” It’s an endless cycle that doesn’t make life easier for anyone in it. Fider shared how police departments are ruled by fear, and there’s a constant anxiety that is encouraged every time they approach a car. Although the system is built the way it was meant to operate (its purpose was never to protect Black bodies), change is absolutely necessary. Professor McCree hopes that reallocating funds to create teams will benefit police officers by providing them with other resources to deal with difficult situations.

The Agora has been a longstanding space on campus to discuss difficult topics and this event was no different. The stories shared and the solutions suggested will stay with me always. The Department of History and Political Science asks students to keep their eyes peeled for the next Agora. Join them April 1, for a discussion on women’s history!

NEWS

What's Going on East Palestine, Ohio?

Julia Randall 03.09.23



Photo by Public Domain

The East Palestine Derailment

Friday night, February 3, on Norfolk Southern Railway's Fort Wayne Line, the hot bearing detector at milepost 49.81 triggered an alarm on freight train 32N after [recording](#) a wheel bearing temperature 50°F past the critical threshold. The crew stopped the 149-car train and reported a fire and suspected derailment to the Cleveland East dispatcher; some 50 cars had [derailed](#) near the town of East Palestine, Ohio. Eleven contained hazardous materials, including vinyl chloride and other petrochemicals, prompting first responders to begin evacuation for nearly 2,000 residents within a mile of the site as thick smoke filled the sky. While the fire had been diminished by February 5, continued rising temperatures in one tank car alerted responders to an explosion risk due to the potential heat-releasing polymerization of the contained vinyl chloride. This led to plans for a [controlled](#) release and burn of the reactive carcinogen. The [combustion](#) of vinyl

chloride produces hydrogen chloride (a [corrosive](#) gas and irritant to the eyes, skin, and respiratory system), carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide (a [neurotoxin](#) and asphyxiator with significant exposure), and phosgene ([notorious](#) for its use in chemical warfare). Regardless, the controlled release and burn began on February 6 in order to prevent the distribution of contaminated shrapnel in a decision between what Ohio's governor [described](#) as "two bad options." On February 8, local government officials [declared](#) conditions safe enough for residents to return home, but advised homeowners to avoid well water. Meanwhile, the toxic plume from the derailment moved into the nearby Ohio River, raising concerns for other communities relying on the river water. But the Environmental Protection Agency suggested that the remaining volatile organic compounds had been [diluted](#) to nontoxic levels.

The Aftermath

Following the derailment, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources [collected](#) a sample of nearly 3,000 killed aquatic species, mostly minnows, and estimated a total aquatic life death toll over 40,000 in the impacted waterways. Aquatic species have returned to these waterways and are not believed to be currently at risk. While municipal and private well [samples](#) do not exhibit harmful contaminant levels, in an Ohio Department of Health survey, a [majority](#) of East Palestine residents reported symptoms including headaches, anxiety, and coughing. Some experts link these symptoms with psychosomatic [effects](#) of lingering chemical odors, but others highlight the challenges of determining a specific chemical culprit for the reported issues.

Beyond short term health effects, residents of a town where a similar spill occurred a decade ago warn of potential problems to come: in 2012, a train derailment in [Paulsboro](#), New Jersey released vinyl chloride, and residents say they developed breathing problems years after the incident. Some East Palestine families have expressed interest in leaving over health concerns, but lower income families [lack](#) the means to do so, highlighting the importance of continued support for the community.

Currently, the Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have stationed [medical](#) professionals in East Palestine for public health assessments. Other organizations conducting investigations include the EPA, which has ordered Norfolk Southern to organize decontamination; and the National Transportation Safety Board and Department of Transportation, which have studied why the derailment occurred and how to improve rail safety.

Cleanup Challenges

As contaminated dirt and water from fire-fighting efforts are collected from the site, new complexities arise. The toxic materials are destined to [disposal](#) facilities licensed to process specific wastes, meaning waste must be properly labeled based on the exact contaminants. While shipments have already been made to sites in Texas, Michigan, and Ohio, the grand total quantity of hazardous waste from the derailment exceeds the capacity of these facilities. After the EPA identified an Indiana destination for the waste, the state's [governor](#) expressed dissatisfaction with the plan and suggested the waste remain closer to its source.

Preventing Future Incidents: Working Conditions

In just over a month since the East Palestine derailment, two [additional](#) Norfolk Southern trains have derailed in Indiana and Ohio, neither of which involved toxic spillage. After the most recent incident on March 4, the railroad carrier announced plans to introduce safety practices including usage of distributive power on trains greater than 10,000 feet in length, which a rail union president questioned, pointing out that the train derailed in East Palestine already made use of distributive power. Shortly after the February 3 derailment, a union [letter](#) to the Federal Railroad Administration highlighted the surge of derailments following the adoption of Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR), which sought to cut costs at the expense of reduced safety, including by laying off [employees](#). This follows the US Senate's December failure to pass a bill that would guarantee railroad workers paid sick leave, a vote [described](#) by one locomotive engineer as "... a blatant endorsement of corporate America and the too big to fail corporations that are allowed to have free reign over the US economy." In wake of the East Palestine incident, other [railroad](#) workers have expressed concern with the industry's profit prioritization and shared how they have been encouraged to skip safety checks for improved efficiency. The impact of risky cost-cutting strategies is felt not by wealthy company heads and politicians, but rather the railroad [workers](#) and communities like East Palestine.

Preventing Future Incidents: Problematic Petrochemicals

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) constituted the major [contaminants](#) detected following the derailment. VOCs present in the derailed train [include](#) vinyl chloride, butyl acrylate, isobutylene, ethylene glycol, and ethylhexyl acrylate; each of these is used in plastics production and can cause health issues in humans. These organics are derived from petroleum products. Petrochemical processing facilities produce significant pollution and elevate [cancer](#) risks for employees and local

communities, leading to the nickname “[Cancer Alley](#)” for an industrial region of the Mississippi River. While plastics like PVC, the major application of vinyl chloride, have a wide range of important uses, the contamination resulting from the East Palestine incident provides an opportunity to consider alternatives to and lessen usage of such toxic materials. PVC pipes, for instance, can be [substituted](#) with copper, cast iron, or galvanized steel pipes. Certainly, total cessation of VOCs usage is not immediately possible, but the February 3 derailment reminds of risks associated with some plastics that may be often overlooked.

For now, East Palestine [residents](#), while no longer in immediate danger, grapple with questions of the future. Has the town been given the opportunity to rebuild better than before? Have residents’ health been compromised? Will Norfolk Southern act to prevent future disasters?

Ideas

IDEAS

The Biblical Bechdel: How Much are Women Represented in the Bible?

Bella Hamann 03.09.23



Photo by Public Domain

Women make up approximately half of the global population. This means that half of the stories, half of the life experiences, and half of literally everything that goes on in the world are impacted in some way by a woman. It would only make sense, then, to think of the way in which we live our lives through a lens containing equal points of view regarding the lived experiences of everyone—not just men.

This is especially important when we think within religious contexts. Since the beginning of civilization, religion has been used to justify everything from societal standards to legal rationale. Not only has religion impacted everyday life in nearly

all parts of the world, but it does so with a long and complicated history containing the vast majority of a single narrative: one that is portrayed by men.

Now, this can be explained by the reality that, for hundreds and thousands of years, women were treated as second-class citizens in almost every global area—and it has not been until recently that advances have propelled women into (more) equal standing and positions of official leadership. After all, it has only been a century since most American women were given the right to vote; one cannot expect ancient texts of major religions to be as progressive as what many may call “the bare minimum” in gender equity. And that is fair; it would be unwise to neglect historical context in this area. However, it may still be beneficial to analyze the representation of women in religious works, since ideologies drawn from those texts still very much apply to current society.

In the United States especially, Protestant Christianity has widely affected all branches of government and social expectations. Because of its high national relevance, the Bible is a great example to examine the importance of women in regards to one of the main informational sources of the religion itself. An excellent way to test female importance in any sort of medium—books included—is a three-step process known as the Bechdel Test.

For those who are not familiar with it, the [Bechdel Test](#) originates from the mid-1980s and is used to evaluate the importance of women in media. Although it is mostly utilized for films, it is in no way exclusive to them and can be applied to virtually any work. The three steps to pass this test are as follows:

1. There must be two named women, who
2. Have a conversation with each other about
3. Anything other than a man.

The next question then becomes: how does the Bible hold up? The short answer is that, well, it passes. The long answer is that it passes by the skin of one’s teeth. After looking at a [database](#) that analyzes hundreds of interactions and thousands of names, there are only five stories that pass the test, and three of them could be called under scrutiny since Jesus is a character of the interaction in regard to context. In fact, the only book in the entire Bible that passes the Bechdel Test beyond a reasonable doubt is the book of Ruth. The two interactions that pass are found in Ruth 1:6-22 (“Where you go, I will go”), and Ruth 2:1-23 (which contains a conversation that Ruth and Naomi have about finding food).

Out of the hundreds of stories and the 3,070 named characters in the Bible, the fact that there are only two individuals who have interactions that meet this criteria is abysmal, to say the least. It acts as a comparison of how women are represented and expressed within Biblical narratives, and could be used to study how various historical viewpoints have been shaped by the presence of women, or their absence.

Although well-known and effective, it must be noted that the results of this Bechdel Test should not be regarded as a one-and-done deal in terms of how we view the Bible; rather, it can help us understand that the time and context in which it was written may not—at least in the humanistic aspect of its narratives—be an accurate picture of the individual experience. That is not to say that the Bible is sexist; many religious scholars, [SDAs](#) included, dismiss this notion entirely. But simply because narratives are not sexist does not mean other factors of representation cannot also contribute to productive conversation.

Religion has a level of importance not only in spiritual experiences, but in social norms, governmental affairs, and many other aspects of everyday life. Regardless of what our personal worldviews may be, it is by recognizing prominent narratives—or the lack thereof—that we can better be equipped to form educated opinions of our own.

Just make sure that it's not only half of the story.

IDEAS

The Murder of Abby Choi: A Spotlight on Relationship Violence Against Women

Abby Shim 03.09.23



Photo by Public Domain

TW: Distressing themes of death and violence

Hong Kong socialite and fashion model Abby Choi, mother to four, seemed to have the picture perfect life—the style icon often attended Paris Fashion Week and was featured in magazines such as *Elle* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Born to a wealthy family who ran a prominent construction business in mainland China, Abby Choi Tin-fung was a self-proclaimed fashionista well-liked by couture brands. Just a few weeks ago, Abby graced the cover of *L'Officiel Monaco*, a luxury fashion and lifestyle magazine, and she posted about the achievement with gratitude on her Instagram with over 100,000 followers.

Yet on Tuesday, February 21, 2023, Abby Choi was reported missing. And only a few days later, a few of her body parts were recovered in an apartment in Lung Mei Tsuen, a suburban village on the east coast of Hong Kong.

The gruesome details of her murder shook Hong Kong—often listed as one of the safest metropolises in the world with a remarkably [low level of violent crime](#)—and began an inquiry into what led to her traumatizing death. Abby Choi's first marriage in 2012 to Alex Kwong ended in divorce in 2016. The socialite went on to pursue a relationship with Tam Chuk Kwan, whose father had founded TamJai Yunnan Mixian, a well-known casual restaurant chain. However, despite divorcing Kwong, Abby was apparently still financially taking care of her ex-husband and his family. She reportedly maintained good relations with Kwong's relatives, even as far as referring to Anthony Kwong, Alex's brother, as her own brother. Anthony Kwong served as her personal driver, and the two opened a pancake stall together.

Yet Abby's relationship with her ex-husband's family began to turn sour after she began making plans to sell the luxury apartment she bought for the Kwong family and her two children with Alex Kwong. Although Abby paid for it, it was registered under her ex-husband's father's name, who allegedly arranged the mortgage agreement as such to avoid paying nearly \$8 million Hong Kong dollars (\$1 million US dollars) in stamp duty. Alex Kwong's father, Kau Kwong, vehemently opposed her decision to sell the apartment.

Abby's financial rearrangements greatly angered her ex-husband and his family, who decided at that point to begin plotting her murder. Police reported that the scheme was premeditated, with Kau Kwong renting out an apartment to dismember Abby's body. When police discovered the apartment, they noted that it was essentially a butcher's shop, equipped with an electric saw, meat grinder, hammer, and choppers. The apartment was covered in plastic material, and the Kwongs wore face shields and black protective outerwear to prevent blood from splattering on them. In the refrigerator of the apartment were two dismembered legs and pots of soup containing human remains.

Alex Kwong's parents and brother were swiftly detained, but initially, police were unable to locate Alex. Later on, they caught him trying to escape on February 25 via speedboat.

In light of Women's History Month, the tragic case of Abby Choi emphasizes the prevalence of violence against women, especially in relationships. It is important to highlight that violence against women can take on many forms, including

physical, financial, and mental abuse, as witnessed in Abby Choi's story. According to the World Health Organization, about [1 in 3 women worldwide](#) have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Femicide, or the gender-based killing of women, has been described as a "[silent epidemic](#)" in the United States. In fact, of all femicide cases in high-income countries, [70% occur in the US](#).

Reducing such distressing statistics begins with reenvisioning cultural and societal norms. Patriarchal and oppressive values that perpetuate violence against women must be confronted. Even subtle and more culturally accepted ideologies such as pornography or demeaning music must be challenged to combat the degradation of women. As Women's History Month continues, I encourage you to hold space for such discourse in your conversations with your friends and family, and think more about holding yourself and others accountable for a more equitable and safe society.

Pulse

PULSE

Nilah Mataafa: An End to Period Poverty

Interviewed by: Chris Ngugi 03.09.23



Photo by Nilah Mataafa

I had a conversation with Andrews University student, Nilah Mataafa (senior, accounting), about her organization dedicated to ending [period poverty](#) in the Middle East, beginning with Lebanon. This is the story of her organization and her journey in her own words.

Hi Nilah, I am so excited to be interviewing you! Could you please introduce yourself to us?

Yeah, my name is Nilah, and I'm an accounting major. Currently, I work in consulting in San Francisco where I've gained a lot of experience. Additionally, I am a co-founder of a nonprofit called Phoenicia Finesse, which is focused on social innovation. Outside of my work, I'm super passionate about traveling and exploring new cultures.

Phoenicia Finesse, could you please tell me what this is and who it's for?

Certainly! Our organization is mainly focused on providing essential menstrual items, and financial support, to refugee women in the Middle East, specifically Lebanon. We're looking to expand, but right now we're just working in this area. Hopefully, we will get to touch other bases in the Middle East. For now, we work with local partners who distribute items to these women in the refugee camps, and we also provide opportunities for the women to work for livable wages through our program. Our goal is basically to help women overcome challenges that they face and empower them to build a better future for themselves.

Out of curiosity, where did you get the idea for the name Phoenicia Finesse?

Phoenicia was the ancient area of Lebanon. Whenever you ask [Lebanese people], "Who are your ancestors," they say, "we are Phoenician." That started the first part of the name. And then, "Finesse." Um yeah, we're working on a rebrand. But, basically, when we first started, we were just trying to gain funds, and we started selling clothes, so we named our store Phoenicia Finesse. It was kind of targeted towards more Gen-Z because we were "thrifting" and selling [the clothes] online just to get some capital, and then buying some of the products for the women [in Lebanon]. Those are the roots of our company, and I think that is a unique thing because it did just start with three college girls just trying to do something.

I understand your [website](#) mentions the creation of sustainable jobs for Lebanese women. How has this goal become a fundamental part of this organization?

That's a really good question. At our organization, we believe providing sustainable jobs for women is a huge factor in empowering them and helping them build a better future for themselves and their families. Because of the situation over there, a lot of women don't have working rights; a lot of refugees don't have working rights. So, when we started the organization, we realized that a lot of these refugee women were facing significant financial challenges and were blocked access to job opportunities that could support them and their families. So, we decided to focus

on creating a sustainable job opportunity as a core part of our mission. We work with local partners to provide training and job opportunities, like a partner called “Winners.” They’re a Brazilian nonprofit in Lebanon as well. They have a sewing class, so we partnered up with them. Once these women learn how to sew, they “graduate” and then are offered a job with us, Phoenicia Finesse, to make menstrual kits that we then distribute. So, overall, the creation of sustainable jobs is a fundamental part of Phoenicia Finesse because we believe that it will have a lasting impact on these women that we serve, and so we are just committed to continuing this work and expanding our operations in the path to come.

Wow, a little bit off script here, but I wonder, does the Phoenicia Finesse pay the women who graduate, or...

Yeah! We pay them livable wages, which is why we are fundraising a ton. A lot of the money goes towards their wages. We want to create this system and expand it so we can hire more women. That’s our current goal. Currently, we have three women employed, and we want to expand and have even more women be employed!

Could you speak to some of the resilience and willpower of the women in Lebanon?

These women are so strong. A lot of these refugee women who came from Syria literally just had normal lives, just like me. They went to the mall; they went to their day job; they had a family. And then, due to the war, a lot of them just had to leave their homes and had everything taken from them. And so, I imagine how the life I live right now could be taken away from me. All of a sudden, I can’t work, I can’t earn money, I don’t have access to basic essential items for my own health as a woman? That, that’s trauma, and a lot of these women just keep pushing forward. They make it day by day. They try to help their families in whatever capacity they can, and I think that’s amazing, and it takes a lot of resilience just to be able to go through something like that. They inspire me, just hearing their stories and seeing how strong they are. And the way they believe in this cause, which not only means a lot to us but means a lot to them too.

What about you, Nilah? Why did you get involved in this project?

So you know how we often say we “want to be a change,” but we don’t have access to resources? In my experience, if I actually look back and do a self-reflection, I see that everyone has a skill or a talent that they can contribute. My sister and I have access to different resources, and if we can use them for good, why not do that? And, so, I thought this was the most tangible way to actually make a lasting impact,

especially for women who are just like me, who have the same problems as me, and who have the same health concerns as me. It is something I am super passionate about because I want to empower other women, and they empower me too, just from hearing their stories. I think it is something every young person can do. They can use any skill or talent to give back. If you ever have the opportunity to do so, I think you should.

Could you please tell us more about your journey, specifically with entrepreneurship?

Yeah, so a lot of the time, I am someone struggling with caring about what everyone thinks. Entrepreneurship is a nice little cure for that because it pushes you to your limits, and you have to put yourself out there; you have to believe in your cause, you have to believe in your mission, and you have to believe in yourself. Sometimes I am such a perfectionist, and the thought of failing or of doing something wrong almost hinders me from even acting, but entrepreneurship teaches you that you have to fail in order to learn. So, it's kind of built a lot of my confidence, it's helped me be more bold in my ideas, and I want to see more women in this space do the same. It has been an awesome journey learning to just fail. Fail, but learn from it. Just go for it!

Can we expect to see more projects and organizations coming from you in the future?

I want to work on this one right now. I think another key aspect of entrepreneurship is consistency, so I would like to continue to grow and expand this [organization]. Maybe in the future, I will start something else, but for now, I want to focus and put most of my energy into this.

Phoenicia Finesse truly sounds wonderful. How can anyone interested in it, like myself, give to the organization?

Yeah, so we are trying to raise money and spread awareness for what's going on, so you can visit our website, www.phoeniciafinesse.org, or you can check out our [Instagram page](#). You can donate through them, or you can share. We share a lot of posts whenever we have a campaign, so we would like to spread awareness through that. That is a huge way that people could get involved. Also, we're trying to set up a trip for AU students to help out with what is happening in Lebanon! That's coming up in the near future. So, when that happens, I'll let people know and they can sign up, help out, and come see what's happening.

Thank you for speaking with me today, Nilah. Do you have any closing remarks you would like to leave with us?

Thank you so much! I just want to say that if you ever have an idea that you want to share, do it! Your idea could help somebody, so believe in yourself and believe in your dreams.

PULSE

“Remember the Ladies!” : The Female Perspective on Women’s History Month

Amelia Stefanescu [03.08.22](#)



Photo by Public Domain

*“Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors”
Abigail Adams*

March 1 marked not only the beginning of a new month, but also the beginning of Women's History Month, with Women's Day being on March 8. It found its roots in 1981, when Congress passed [Public Law 97-28](#), requesting the President to proclaim the week beginning March 7, 1982, as "Women's History Week." In 1987, after being petitioned by the National Women's History Project, Congress passed [Public Law 100-9](#), designating the month of March 1987 as "Women's History Month." To this day, the Month is an annual occurrence. This month is meant to commemorate and celebrate the contributions of women to American history. You can find more information about the month [here](#) and [here](#).

I wanted to gauge how women themselves felt about this month, and these are the responses I've collected. "It's very nice that we get a whole month to ourselves so that people can learn about the difficulties we had to go through in order to reach where we are today, but we also still have a very long way to go," says Vivienne Lupu (sophomore, social work). She hopes that people realize it shouldn't be a performative thing, where people only care about women's rights for the month and then continue discriminatory behavior. "Overall, I hope that this is not only an empowering month but an educational one for everyone as well," she says. Dr. Stephanie Carpenter, professor of History, has also expressed her views on the month. She has spent a lot of time studying and engaging with American women's history. She discussed with me the initially exclusive nature of the month, which only targeted the accomplishments of heterosexual white women. She continues, "If we look at women's history in a much more diverse manner and try to be inclusive to all women, the use of this month is to showcase these contributions in a more complete way." She ended with an important thought, saying, "Some people think that they have to celebrate women for only one month, but there should be a way to incorporate women in studies throughout the year in a more inclusive way."

As a woman, I am deeply warmed by the efforts put into this wonderful celebration. We are honored by the idea that our experiences and contributions are seen and acknowledged. Nonetheless, there is a palpable unease in women today, and the beginning of March brought with it an influx of saddening news for women's history. Bills are being proposed targeting the removal of women's rights: see South Carolina's [House Bill 3549](#), aiming at introducing the death penalty for women who go through with an abortion, which would be considered a "homicide." Furthermore, in other parts of the world, the restraints on women's education in Afghanistan are a terrible tragedy, as women cannot attend university anymore,

and some even high school. This is not to mention the restrictions regarding in what way and in which places women can appear in public: women have been denied access to parks, gyms, and certain workplaces, and have been restricted from traveling outside and even within [Afghanistan](#). A stricter dress code has been enforced, as women are directed to be fully covered, including their faces. On the side of social media, there is a TikTok trend, "[April 24](#)," which is jokingly (and sometimes not jokingly) referred to as "National Rape Day." It is used to openly talk about sexually assaulting women on that specific date, with posts saying, "Females, you have been warned," or "I have been watching you. April 24th is game day. Wear something nice!" While there might not be any proof of a rise in sexual assault cases during this day, this does not excuse the fact that children as young as middle schoolers are partaking in this trend and "joking" about a very serious and triggering issue.

I do not write this to sadden or create a pessimistic view of the woman's world today, but instead to remind everyone that we as women are still fighting for our rights every single day: trying to be accepted as equal instead of being objectified and cast to the side. We should all remember to treasure individuals for their own raw selves and the history of marginalization they have and still go through, and not necessarily solely for their accomplishments. Do not make the mistake of assuming that you should treat women with respect only during March, but make it a life-long aim to eradicate any inequality and hatred towards all marginalized groups through educating yourself and learning to love.

PULSE

The Aerial Workout You've Never Heard Of

Melissa Moore 03.09.23



Photo by Kayla-Hope Bruno

Have you ever wished you could fly? There's something about the ability to soar above the ground that infatuates many of us. That's part of what makes roller coasters with steep drops and extreme sports so appealing to the crowds that take part. On a related note, have you ever wanted to change up your workout plan to include something unique and fun, but are unsure what you should add to make the change? What if I told you that there is a way you can kill two birds with one stone and feel like you are flying while you work out? Today we are going to get to know Rachel Keele, director of the Andreasen Center for Wellness, and she is going to tell us about how that may be possible.

Why is fitness important to you?

Fitness did not become a priority to me until my mid-twenties. A few years later, I had a stroke and multiple doctors told me that the reason I would fully recover was because of how healthy and fit I was. So in that way, fitness saved my life, or at least prevented a very different outcome.

Why do you think fitness should be important to the university?

Everything about our well-being is interconnected. Aside from the physical health benefits, improving our fitness consequently improves our brain function, our mood, how we relate with others etc. If Andrews cares about producing graduates that are capable of changing the world, they have to care about the physical health of their students.

Speaking of fitness, I've heard there is a new bungee fitness class at the Andreasen Center! Could you tell us a little bit about what the class is?

Absolutely! In the Soar Bungee Fitness class, you wear a harness that is connected to bungee cords that are fastened to the ceiling. This system provides resistance for the movements you do on the ground, so it creates an environment where you can perform “high intensity” movements, like burpees, jumping jacks, squats, etc. with “low impact” to the joints. But the bungees also enable you to “fly” off the ground, which is very fun!

When did you first hear about bungee as a low-impact method for exercising?

I started seeing this type of workout online a couple of years ago. Last year we decided we really needed to bring something like this to the Center, not just because of how fun and unique it was, but because it enabled people that needed low-impact exercise (due to injury or disability) to do movements they wouldn't normally be able to.

How has teaching this unique class added to your journey as a fitness instructor?

I tend to get bored really quickly, so this has provided something new for me to enjoy. But I'm in the process of learning too! It's been a good challenge to teach people a new skill and learn how to adapt it for each individual.

What value do you think such a class offers to gym members at Andreasen Center for Wellness?

Like I mentioned, this is a great opportunity for those that need low-impact movement. We've had people in class that are exercising again for the first time in several years, which is really exciting. Consistency is arguably the most important aspect of a fitness journey, and the only way for most people to develop that is by doing something they enjoy. I don't expect everyone to enjoy bungee fitness, but I do think there's a lot of people that have WAY more fun doing this than any other sort of workout they've done before.

Why should people try out this new fitness class?

First, I have to acknowledge that it's still very hard to get into the class, and I'm sorry about that! We only have eight stations available, and because I'm the only certified instructor at the moment, the five classes a week don't provide a lot of opportunity for everyone. But the rest of our bungee cords just shipped! So we will have a total of eleven stations soon. Plus, two more instructors will be certified so we will be able to add more classes to the schedule when that happens. I'm a big believer in trying new things and challenging yourself. Even if you think it's something that might be scary, uncomfortable, or just not your style, try it once! You might be surprised at how much you enjoy it.

Bungee fitness is a type of aerial workout that, as mentioned above, is low-impact, which makes it a valid workout option for most people who are privileged to be near a gym that offers the class. Sources vary on where the practice originated, but [most people seem to believe it was invented somewhere in Thailand](#) before being adopted by gyms in other countries. Although bungee fitness has gained popularity over the years, it is still uncommon to find a location that offers it as a fitness class. Even among those locations that do offer it, the activity requires a lot of equipment, and class sizes are often on the small side. This can make it difficult for interested individuals to experience such a unique form of fitness. Because bungee fitness classes still are not offered at most gyms in the United States, this makes the Andreasen Wellness Center's class a valuable opportunity. Those who have access should at least consider trying the class once or twice if they are able.

Bungee fitness truly is unique. There are fun moves that make you feel like you are flying as you momentarily hang in space. Aside from this, the general bounciness of the harness and bungee make even regular exercises more enjoyable as you have the ability to shoot straight from a squat into a burpee. I tried the class myself a couple of times, and it gave me feelings reminiscent of when I was a kid and begged my parents to let me go on the bungee trampolines commonly found at fairs and similar events. Although the experience is not quite the same, I was pleased to find the bungee fitness class just as fun. As a bonus, the bungee fitness class does not end after only five minutes, and it can help individuals make progress toward specific health goals.

While the Andreasen Center for Wellness has many classes and amenities available to improve fitness and health, the new bungee fitness class is an incredibly unique opportunity that is suitable for most people, and anyone who gets the opportunity to experience a class should try.

Last Word

LAST WORD

Perfect Imperfections

Shania Watts [03.09.23](#)



Photo by Public Domain

I clearly remember the day I realized that I hated myself. I was 12 years old.

I was looking at a photo of myself. My dad had taken it earlier in month to commemorate my first day as the concert-master of my youth orchestra. I was wearing a black beret with a matching black coat and pink scarf, proudly clutching my violin case in my right hand. I looked so happy and carefree.

I lay on my bed holding the photo inches from my face, analyzing every feature and nitpicking details that were only visible to my critical eye. I hated how certain angles brought attention to “problem” areas on my body. I hated how my chin slightly doubled when I smiled. I hated the dark circles under my eyes. I hated how

my right eye was bigger than my left. I hated the small patch of zits settled on the side of my cheek. The list grew longer, more critical. I fell into a deep pit of self-loathing. Sitting up, I stared at the brightly colored walls of my room. Red, orange, and yellow. They seemed to mock my blue-gray soul. Eye-brows furrowed and mouth twisted in frustration, I dreamt of the day when I would have a job and I'd undergo every cosmetic surgery needed to "fix" myself.

From then on, I despised looking at pictures of myself for the longest time.

Four years later, however, my dream came true...or so I thought. Facetune had just released a free download, subscription-based version of the app. I'd wanted it ever since the original app was released in 2013, but it was \$3.99 per month and I was never going to ask my parents to buy it for me. So I eagerly downloaded Facetune onto my iPhone. And It was *amazing*.

I could smooth out my textured skin, erase pimples, make my eyes bigger, whiten my teeth, reshape my nose, make my face smaller, and add a full face of makeup! Suddenly, I loved taking selfies. I could become *whoever* I wanted to be. There wasn't a photo in my gallery that was left untouched. But the more I used the app, the more I hated myself. I was falling in love with the girl I was creating, and I was angry I didn't truly reflect that image. My Facetune era eventually ended, but I was left with a heap of insecurities that I still struggle with today as a 22-year-old woman.

I was reminded of my Facetune era earlier this week as I was scrolling through TikTok. Numerous young women shared throwback photos, criticizing and laughing at their (now) obvious photoshop attempts. It was amusing and comforting to see that I wasn't alone, but it also made me very sad to see how a whole generation of women suffered under the harsh constraints of beauty standards. I've never known a life where I wasn't constantly bombarded with filters, apps, and images that perpetuate what the idealized woman should look like. Unfortunately, this is a plague that never ends for women.

From a young age, women are told that they're supposed to stay petite, perfect, and ageless, all while having careers, getting married, and raising children. In an ideal world, that would be wonderful—but as I grow into adulthood, I'm learning that my body is more complex than I ever imagined. I've had to learn that fluctuations in weight are normal, breakouts and textured skin are normal, stretch marks are normal, and eventually, aging will be a natural progression.

I've come to terms with these changes, but I'm not sure if society ever will. When I walk into stores, every magazine features an airbrushed actress or model, because textured skin and wrinkles are considered gross and unattractive on women. Yet on a male actor or model, wrinkles and gray hair are considered rustic and refined (just think of Chris Evans's "Sexiest Man Alive" photoshoot, and every other man that has ever been featured on the cover of People Magazine). Social media vultures continually criticize actresses such as Emilia Clarke for refusing to [undergo cosmetic surgery](#) or get botox, comparing her to "[spoiled milk](#)." Artists like Nicki Minaj and SZA have both faced criticism for recent weight gain. Despite the criticism they've faced, all three of these women have decided to embrace these changes. Striving to please people or fit within societal beauty standards is exhausting. It's unhealthy, mentally and physically.

As I've increasingly settled into my womanhood, I've made myself a promise: any lifestyle changes I make will be strictly for my health and wellbeing, not to fit a beauty standard or make other people happy. My imperfections are *perfect*, because they are what makes me Shania Watts. I am my own beauty standard.

I try to tell myself this as often as possible, and sometimes, there are days I struggle to believe it. But nowadays, when I look in the mirror or see a photo of myself, I'm glad to say that I grimace less and smile more.

So, in honor of Women's History Month and empowerment, I just want to say one thing to all the women reading this:

You are your own beauty standard.

You are beautiful.

You are resilient.

You are worthy.

You are loved by God.