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Columbia College Chicago

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CRITICAL ENCOUNTERS 2009-2010



FACT & FAITH

Columbia
COLLEGE CHICAGO

create...
change



In order to produce this special publication 26 students of the Fall 2009 Visual Journalism classes of the Journalism Department of Columbia College Chicago designed articles and essays written by students, faculty members and staff.

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What does fact look like?

How do you convey faith through words? These are difficult questions – questions we have been addressing throughout the year in through Critical Encounters: Fact and Faith. In this special insert, Columbia students, faculty, staff and community members explore issues of belief as they affect their lives, through personal stories and visuals. Some of these essays appeared in The Chronicle column, True/Believer. Some were responses to the book, “Hope Dies Last,” by that master chronicle of everyday life, Studs Terkel. Others were created for an exhibit of spiritual photographs, presented earlier in the year. All take a concept that is, by definition, ethereal, and give it tangible form in powerful and personal ways.

In the course of my tenure as Critical Encounters fellow, I have been surprised and inspired by the ways the focus has been embraced, wrestled with, and digested by our community. The results, whether a complex discussion, an intriguing work of art, or a heartfelt essay, are interesting in and of themselves, but taken together, form a much larger mosaic of thought and creativity. This insert is a chance to read previous essays in a new context, experience new points of view, and continue this vital conversation.

Special thanks go to the full-time faculty of the Journalism Department, who solicited essays from all incoming freshmen; the staff of the Columbia Chronicle, who have been tremendously supportive of the True/Believer column; Elio Leturia’s Visual Journalism course; Jodi Adams, for sharing work from the Critical Encounters Photo Contest; The Center for Teaching Excellence; Provost Steven Kapelke; and Columbia Trustee Marcia Lazar, who started the ball rolling four years ago.

Fact and Faith are not polar opposites. They are not even opposite ends of a spectrum. They are two interconnected and constantly changing methods we humans use to decide and make sense of what we believe. There is no roadmap for that process, but in this insert, you can see some personal postcards from the journey.

Eric Scholl
Associate Professor, Television Department



Believing in **HOPE** gets you **NOWHERE**

Admiral Gene LaRocque doesn't place any stock in hope

BY JONATHAN BROADUS
Journalism major

One of Studs Terkel's subjects who exemplifies Columbia College's motto, "create change," would be Admiral Gene LaRocque. I chose this character because of his way of viewing life. I would say he creates change by the way he thinks and lives his life. While some rely on others, some rely on religion, some rely on fate or destiny, and some rely on hope, he relies on himself instead of bonding himself to a force or physical power of another. He uses his own will to determine his own destiny. As he constantly looks at how people who are lowering or, another way of putting it, relying on another source to fix a problem, he knows only he can fix his own problem. If people didn't always blame others for their problems or always look for the easy way out, our world would be in better shape. As I read on, I can see how strong and how opinionated he became. I believe this is based on his concept of living, which is, "I don't believe in hope," as a way of thinking.

Admiral Gene LaRocque said, "I didn't hope to go to college; I said, I'll go to college." His philosophy on life was if I wanted to do it, then I'll do it. You don't have to hope because hope doesn't get you anywhere. Acting does. If it weren't for his way of thinking, then he probably wouldn't have turned out to be the man he is today. During all the tragic times that he has lived through, like the Great Depression for one, not once did he believe in hope because he believed it wouldn't help him. In his eyes hope was a wasted human emotion. In his opinion, hoping was a futile mental exercise. Acting upon situations instead of hoping about it made him stronger and wiser.

On the other hand, Admiral Gene LaRocque's concept influenced many other soldiers. He spent seven years at military colleges teaching people how to kill people and how to destroy things. He taught



Courtesy LOUIS LAROCQUE

Gene Larocque in his officer's uniform in 1945.

his soldiers the same concept and let them know there is no such thing as hope. They had a better chance of surviving if they learned not to believe in hope. The way he was brought up says a lot about him because it shows his strong character as an admiral. He trains his soldiers to be merciless and to become better marksmen, to be more alert, more attentive, to be better at detecting submarines, better at bombarding targets ashore, better at shooting aircrafts, better at killing and better at destroying. He taught his students they had to be strong to survive and to

be strong was to go through harsh training. For the admiral, life was his harsh training and he did that on his own.

LaRocque has a very strong attitude that would seem intimidating, but it isn't because his attitude is derived from the way he grew up. He can't help but be strong-hearted and highly opinionated all the time because of the things he's experienced. After living a hard life, it's going to rub off on those who surround him — especially since his soldiers are the ones who have to learn from and work directly for him. The admiral does things in a straightforward manner. There's no but or what if. He's a straightforward guy and the concepts of things to him are so simple, there's no confusion about him. He doesn't ask questions because he already knows the answer. He mentions the three T's and a C, which are supposed

WHO IS GENE LAROCQUE?



Source Ancestry.com

» LaRocque was born in 1918 in Kankakee Illinois.

» He joined the United States Navy in 1940. He would see combat in 13 different battles in the Pacific during World War II.

» He served a total of 31 years before retiring in 1972.

» LaRocque founded the Center for Defense Information in 1972. The Center monitors excessive military spending and encourages efforts to prevent nuclear war.

BRIAN LIVINGSTON

create...
change

CREATING CHANGE SINCE 2003

According to Columbia College Public Relations official Elizabeth Burke-Dain the term "create change" was coined by former Columbia Associate Vice President of Marketing and Communications Mark Lloyd. Photography major and Columbia alumni Sarah Faust designed the disc for the logo. Mark Lloyd combined the two to make the logo we've come to know today. —BL

—Design by Brian Livingston

Diagnosed with Stage 4 Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, one pastor still believes that God holds on with both hands.

OUR HOPE IS THE CONNECTING LINE

BY PARIS LEWBEL
Journalism major

Rev. Randy Schlak is a pastor at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Birmingham, MI. He was diagnosed with cancer two years ago. In his own words, he speaks about his faith journey.

I was the head pastor here since 2000, and the associate pastor for a few years before that. I was also the pastor at a church in Illinois for nine years.

My two brothers, who are 10 and 16 years older than me, went into ministry. In eighth grade when I had to do my confirmation paper I was foolish enough to write down that I wanted to be a pastor. I guess I was committed at that point.

I think throughout my high school and college career I challenged that direction. I was doing everything I shouldn't be doing as an individual, like being a poor student, a partier, outside the box of a typical student. At some point God made me aware that is the way I shouldn't be going. I tested him, I challenged it, and in the end He settled me down and said no, this is it.

Hope gets you out of bed in the morning. Our hope is connected to note a fate or some emptiness; it is all connected to God. So there is a hope that tomorrow can always be better.

There is a hope that God can work a miracle. There is a hope that even at the end of the darkest road here on earth, there is a promise of eternity.

Faith is the connecting line to my Lord and Savior and he's the one that really gave me that fate, and even if sometimes in life we are only holding onto it by a thread, He still holds onto it with both hands. Often, either they get stronger—just hold on so tightly and so faithfully and with so much trust—or they're on the other side of that, and say, 'I don't get it.' For people like that I think they have often connected their faith with earthly pleasures, and when the earthly blessings are gone, they think God is gone. I had a member commit suicide that was struggling with faith. I think at that point he still had the faith; he just struggled with life and the situation alike. There are many people that hold on with a string for a period of time, and then as a result they come out stronger.

There have been people that have come in contact with this church or myself that I assumed would never come. They only came here for a wedding or something. I think Vicar Chad is a great example; came here for a wedding. His fiancé Erin dragged him there; for love he'll do whatever. He joined the church, never thought he would



Randy Schlak

really become an involved member, and in the end he goes to the seminary. In something like that you see the hand of God.

It is the people and friends we know that bring faith into our life. I think that when I talk to people, there's a void in every heart; there's an emptiness. And so you talk about

that emptiness, that something in your life is missing, because people are talking about that emptiness.

There is a sense of fulfillment in coming to church. If all people brought in their friends, we would be full. There are so many people out there, and many churches don't have what Redeemer has. There is a sense of peace, family, fellowship. It's the perfect breeding ground to bring more people into the church.

A lot of churches have conflict and struggle. I just found out two days ago that the pastor that took my position at the church I left—I went to the seminary with—hired a new secretary and had an affair with her. He just resigned the pulpit, but that's just going to hurt the church for a generation, and Redeemer is so blessed that we don't have problems. It's just a great place to be.

On to you personally, what first went through your head when you were diagnosed with cancer?

Shocked. Jesus says pick up your cross and follow it. So after you get over that shock you realize that this is your cross, you're gonna follow it. They say if you have to choose a cancer, this is the one you pick, so I'm fortunate. I pray for more time, not only for the ministry, not going to heaven, not dying, but leaving my family. I would like to be here a little longer.

Faith and hope are things that keep you going in life, because you're believing in something far greater than you have. Hope never dies. In First Corinthians 13, the last verse says, "Faith, Hope, Love. But the greatest of these is love." But why does Paul say the greatest of these is love? Faith and hope are things in this world, but I trust in God that I hope in eternity. When I die everything is going to be fully realized, I'm not going to need faith, I'm not going to need hope, because what I hoped for and believed in was mine. But the love of God is eternal, and that is why it is the greatest. So I say, hope never dies for the Christian, it dies for the non-Christians, and that is what we have to offer.

Paul says hope doesn't discourage us, and he says one of the things that hope, as a result of getting hope, is the real challenge of life, and we don't realize that the challenges in life create this special hope. So, I think some of the challenges I experience in life will be the very things that grow in faith.

—Design by Karlie Baker. Photos provided by Lutheran Church of the Redeemer and Creative Commons.

WHAT IS NON-HODGKIN'S LYMPHOMA?

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma is a cancer of the lymph nodes, which contain white blood cells.

>> The cancer can start forming in a single lymph node, a group of lymph nodes, or an organ. The disease is divided into four stages by severity; the fourth stage meaning that an entire organ or site is infected with the diseased cells.

>> This disease is eight times more likely than Hodgkin's lymphoma, which also affects the lymph nodes. The crucial difference is the type of white blood cells being attacked.

>> The most common symptom is swelling of the lymph nodes in the neck, underarm, or groin. Other symptoms may include unexplained fever, night sweats, extreme fatigue, unexplained weight loss, itchy skin, cough or shortness of breath and pain in the abdomen or back.

>> These groups are most at risk for the disease: males, older people, those with an impaired immune system, anyone who's recently had a viral or bacterial infection, anyone exposed to pesticides, fertilizers, rubber processing, asbestos or arsenic.

>> There are five methods of treatment: watchful waiting (frequent doctor's visits until a system develops or organ stops functioning), radiation therapy, chemotherapy, stem cell transplant, antibody therapy. Currently Schlak, whose cancer has shrunk since diagnosis, is not using any form of aggressive treatment. Schlak said he would not seek other treatment unless the cancer grows or spreads.

>> Over 90 percent of those diagnosed with lower stages of the disease survive the next five years. Fifty-three percent of those with advanced forms have a five-year survival rate, and 36% 10-year survival rate.

Source American Cancer Society

A simple fortune
becomes a
family's curse

Photo Illustration by MICHELLE COX

The prophecy in your palms

TALKING WITH YOUR PALM: A BRIEF HISTORY

Palmistry, better known as Palm Reading, is a practice that dates back to the ancient Greeks. During this time many people took palm reading very seriously, and many palm readers (often known as palmists) were held in very high regard. The palm reader's predictions were held in very high regard, and they were given as much credibility as physicians.

Palm reading deals with analyzing a person's dominate hand (the hand they write with) and four basic lines. These lines are said to be indicators of everything from intelligence to serious illness. —DA

Sources sailor-games.com, essortment.com



TALK TO THE HAND

- 1 The Life Line.** It is said to determine a person's health and how long they will live.
- 2 The Head Line.** It is supposed to represent a person's intelligence and cognitive ability.
- 3 The Heart Line.** It is responsible for their love life and all other personal relationships.
- 4 The Destiny Line.** Also known as the "fate line" that is responsible for one's future.

JUPITER IMAGES

BY KATELYN CARLSON
Cultural Studies major

My experience with prophecy began before I was even born, and it's a story I've heard many times over. My father recounts this story as a way to both share the wonders of the Lord and to warn against the consequences of witchcraft—a word he throws around quite often. After my older sister Kristen was born a woman read my father's palm. She told him that he would only have one child. Since he already had one, this meant that my parents were finished reproducing and that my future existence was out of the question. As religious as my father is, how a woman was able to read his palm and tell his fortune is a part of the story I will never understand. But it happened and from that moment on my father claimed that a curse was put on our family, albeit temporary.

It took them four long years, plenty of prayer, and although I was never directly told this, I can only assume a lot of helpful acts of procreation before I was conceived. Once it was confirmed that a life had indeed begun to grow inside my mother, my parents went to church. At the church they met a man that had a gift for prophecy. There was the prophet, there was my mother, and I was there too, as an embryo. The prophet placed his hands on my mother's stomach, began to pray and then told my parents that I was going to be a "double blessing." I imagine a sigh of relief because my existence in the world had been insured, that the

curse had been broken, and my mother was giddy with the thought of twins. I am fairly certain this is when I unconsciously started to feel the pressure of fulfilling this prophecy.

From the first time I heard this story I've always wondered what exactly the prophet meant when he said that. Exactly what is a double blessing? Am I just a double blessing because I broke the curse and survived the womb? Am I a double blessing to my family? What about the world? Am I supposed to bless the work twice over? The significance of this prophecy is unknown to me, but it's always there in the back of my mind.

It either insures that I have a purpose in this life or it weighs heavy on my shoulders urging me to do more and be better, because after all, I can't screw it up. I'm supposed to be a double blessing.

However, there's more to understanding this story than what my parents like to include. Yes, it may be true that a curse was put on our family, but it's also true that my mother has a condition called Polycystic Ovary Syndrome which could be an additional factor in the difficult conception. Another fact that I have only been made aware of is that my mother suffered a miscarriage before Kristen was born. The truth was that conceiving children was going to be difficult for my parents before anyone got their palms read. But I guess the story of a curse broken by a beautiful prophecy is a much more romantic notion. It's certainly much more comfortable placing the blame in my father's hands than in my mother's womb.

—Design by David Anthony



Photo JUPITER IMAGES

A lesson on dying is a lesson in living



JUPITER IMAGES

Examining what the cycle of life and death teaches us

BY LOUIS SILVERSTEIN, Ph.D.
*Distinguished Professor of Humanities,
History and Social Sciences*

There are those who, upon confronting mortality, instruct us to protest our demise, to not go like sheep to our deaths, but to scream bloody murder upon sight of the grim reaper in order to drown out the sound of the bell tolling for us. Such raised voices are certainly a most understandable way of viewing the ending of a life. To be alive is indeed a gift from the universe. Do souls not need to experience the reality of existence on earth that they might enjoy the fruits of earthly love and be forged by human struggle into being strong enough to experience the cycle of life and death?

However, as is the case in all human affairs, there exist other doors into the house of dying and death, a primary one being that of acceptance and surrender to life's rhythms and flows. In fact, I was in the presence of such a passage-way a few weeks ago as I sat on a bench in my backyard observing hostas merging into the earth for their winter rest before re-emerging in the spring. No fear, no socio-religious-cultural construct to be intimidated by, no resistance. Just doing what plants do

naturally – surrendering to the birth/death/birth/death/birth/death ... cycle, for they travel not in a straight line with a beginning and end, but rather in circles, a truth known to all who exist close to the land or in sight of the vast oceans.

The venerable Buddhist monk and teacher Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of such a reality, informing us that to view our lives in a linear fashion is, in fact, an illusion, a turning away from who we are in truth. Yes there is birth and death, being and non-being. However, he goes on to describe such a worldview as one of waves. A wave seemingly has a beginning and an end. Yet the sea from which it arises is the source of its life, and it has neither beginning nor end.

Whether it be the words of sages and spiritual teachers, or the expressed realizations of the dying and their loved ones, all speak of the incredible value that the nearness of death bestows upon the present moment. Rising from sleep each morning a new day is before us, to live it as if it were the last day of our lives, or to believe with certainty that tomorrow is not just a promise. Yet, albeit it is

our desire and intention to have many more days in our lives, so do all those who die each day, including today. Believing we can die this very day is not a morbid thought. To the contrary, it is a life affirming principle, reminding us that all we truly have is the present, that now is the time to live life as if it were indeed our last day. All who have loved and lost know that just to be alive is our most

A wave seemingly has a beginning and an end. Yet the sea from which it arises is the source of its life, and it has neither beginning nor end.



Courtesy PLUM VILLAGE PRACTICE CENTER

WHO IS THICH NHAT HANH?

A world-renowned Vietnamese Buddhist monk, he is also a poet, teacher, activist and author of more than 100 books. While living in the United States, he studied comparative religion at Princeton University, and later went on to teach at Columbia University. In 1963, Nhat Hanh, a strong proponent of peace, returned to Vietnam during the Vietnam War to help his fellow Buddhist monks in their anti-war sentiments and non-violent peace efforts. In 1964, he established the Order of the Interbeing, which is currently located in France at the meditation center Plum Village. He also founded the School for Youths of Social Services in Vietnam, where teams of young people traveled to the countryside to establish schools, health clinics and rebuild villages that had been bombed during the war. He urged leaders to denounce the Vietnam War and, because of his efforts to promote peace, Martin Luther King Jr. nominated him for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. In 1969, he founded the United Buddhist Church where he now resides in a monastery. —SL

“[Death] is not a black and white issue, nor a positive or negative issue.”

prized possession, a gift to be cherished and shared with others.

To include in our daily life-affirming practice a meditation on dying and death offers us a clear mirror in which to see the choices open to us each day, to realize what has meaning and value for us. It compels us to remember not to allow whatever time we have left to be dribbled away, spent on foolish and meaningless pursuits. It heightens the preciousness of those we love because of their mortality. It requires of us a willingness to risk pain in committing ourselves to a meaningful attachment to another, to view each other with eyes of compassion, to speak the language of love and to touch each other lovingly as if this were the last day of our lives.

Louis Silverstein, PhD. is a transcendental philosopher and practitioner, interdisciplinary and multi-consciousness educator, author and social activist. He teaches Peace Studies, Death & Dying, Education, Culture & Society and Social Problems In American Society at Columbia College Chicago.

—Design by Shawna Lent

“Faith is the power to go on after great loss and know you’ll succeed”

Finding belief in grief

BY KATELYND MAES
Journalism major

I have faith in myself and in the world that surrounds me. I used to have complete and total faith that there was a God, but there have been, like in most people’s lives, times that make me question having the smallest of belief in any kind of higher power. I find hope to be, for myself, a fall back emotion, a comforting one.

Hope. It’s always the word to be used when you don’t know what else to say in a confusing, uncertain, tragic situation. “I hope you feel better,” “I hope your parents work things out.” “I hope you make it into college.” Hope has always been there for people.

I wish I could say that there was never a time in my life in which I had lost hope but just like everyone, I had a downfall.

It was back in 2005, when my father unexpectedly and tragically died. It was a dreary Monday morning, the first of my summer vacation going into high school. We received a visit from our local sheriff, Dave Hall, at 8:30 a.m. My brother and I woke up confused, with our animals barking loudly, so he and I went down the stairs to see what was going on.

It’s a matter of what people choose to believe, not what we know should be believed.

Mr. Hall introduced himself, as if we didn’t know who he was in a small town such as ours, and encouraged us all to sit down. My brother and I took the advice, but my mother, standing strong, did not. He insisted a n d she

persisted, so he began with the news that would forever change our lives.

“Your husband, Keith Maes, was killed in a tractor trailer accident earlier this morning...” The rest just seemed to drag on and become incomprehensible. None of it made sense.

Why? How? Who? Those were the questions that didn’t seem to be answered. It was complete and utter chaos from then on. It was a week from hell, most of which I remember. The small, minute details of the week have faded almost completely.

Our local newspaper, the Jeffersonian, decided to make our tragedy a front-page spectacle. They titled it “A Spectacular Event”. I couldn’t even begin to fathom how the death of someone’s loved one could be considered anywhere near spectacular.

At that point in my life, I had lost hope, my faith. There couldn’t possibly be a God. Why would he have taken my father? Why would he allow such people to be so thoughtless, so careless in the manner of presenting my father’s death to the public.

It has taken me four years to believe again. To believe that things do happen for a reason. I wouldn’t have been financially capable of attending school this fall if things hadn’t happened the way they did. Regardless, I would rather have my father, but if some good things can come out of the bad, I find it easier to cope with.

I don’t believe facts make a difference in the matter of faith. It’s all about what people want and choose to believe in. I don’t think one of two facts will make a difference. When people believe that there is a God, it has absolutely nothing to do with facts. You can’t look up to the sky and see a man looking down at us, watching over us and everything we do. It’s a matter of what people choose to believe, not what we know should be believed.

Everyone has tragedies in their lives. I’ve encountered and overcome mine, and sadly lost hope, but I can unashamedly say that it has helped me grow as a person and helped me grow in my faith. Losing sight for a time has made me regain my hope, made it stronger, and made me believe that even though bad things do happen, wonderful things happen too. That is what I consider to be my hope.

—Design by Kelsey Eckberg

COUNSELING SERVICES

Columbia offers FREE counseling services. Katelynd credits counseling as one of the factors that helped her mother deal with her husband’s death. Every student is eligible to receive counseling services, and the student is able to go up to ten times per academic year. Every aspect of counseling at Columbia is confidential, so a student can feel safe going to this resource.

To schedule an appointment call 312.369.8700. They are located at 731 S. Plymouth Ct., Main Level, Suite 112. —KE

OFFICE HOURS

- » Mondays 9am-7pm
- » Tuesdays 9am-7pm
- » Wednesdays 9am-7pm
- » Thursdays 9am-7pm
- » Fridays 9am-5pm



The Maes family from left to right: Keith, Katelynd, Jeremy, Debbie, Justin.

“I have faith in facts.”



Photo illustration by BRANDON SMITH

BY BRENDAN RILEY
Assistant Professor of English

I wonder why some people ignore science in favor of other explanations

A much-cited October 2006 TIME magazine poll showed that 64 percent of Americans would “hold on to what their religion teaches” even in the face of scientific evidence. In the 1980s, two Arizona State Physics faculty showed that students didn’t learn from physics labs that contradicted their day-to-day experience. “As a rule, students held firm to mistaken beliefs even when confronted with phenomena that contradicted those beliefs.” And we all have a friend who just knows the moon landings were faked. One particularly troubling but common belief is that pharmaceutical companies and public health officials are hiding the fact that vaccines cause autism, a conspiracy theory many cling to, despite mountains of data showing no connection between the two (and no convincing evidence to the contrary).

But there are anecdotes. Lots of them. You don’t have to look very hard to find empathetic stories from grief-wrought parents claiming that the MMR vaccine—or mercury, or formaldehyde, take your pick—changed their child. Or, as Jenny McCarthy puts it, “the light left his eyes.” The fact that autism’s most visible signs occur in the same period when children receive the bulk of their life-saving vaccines becomes, for these parents, evidence of cause (rather than what scientists rightly call correlation). This conspiracy theory survives the

strongest kinds of repudiation. It turns out that Andrew Wakefield, the British doctor who first published reports suggesting the link between autism and vaccines, faked data for his article, which he wrote on behalf of lawyers hoping to sue the vaccine manufacturers. When scientists removed the supposed cause of the epidemic, *Thimerosal*, autism rates continued rising; conspiracists shifted their claims—it must be something else in the vaccines. Even as preventable diseases like measles and whooping cough make a comeback and study after study fails to find any credible evidence of harm anti-

vaccination forces continue spreading the same misinformation.

I’m interested in the way these beliefs endure. Why do we cling to faith in the face of controverting facts? Perhaps it’s because we often perceive faith as fact. With the debate over vaccines, everyone has strong vested interests. Most of the anti-vaccine advocates innocently but wholeheartedly believe their arguments; we on the other side hold our views just as deeply. When humans strongly believe something, we no longer distinguish it from fact. We believe in God and ice cream both.

FIVE COMMON MYTHS THAT JUST WON’T GO AWAY

- » **Shaving makes your hair grow back faster.** (According to Dr. Jerri Hoskyn, M.D., shaving doesn’t affect growth.)
- » **Chewing gum doesn’t leave your body for—fill in the blank—years.** (Snopes debunked this long ago. We don’t want to see how they did it.)
- » **If a tornado is approaching, hide under an overpass.** (The Dayton Daily News, that reports on Xenia’s deadly tornados, found

your risk of death is increased doing that.)

» **You should open windows if a tornado may be coming.** (Jamie Simpson, a meteorologist, says it wouldn’t make a difference in the face of 100+ mph winds.)

» **Lightening never strikes the same place twice.** (The National Weather Service debunked this one. So run away before the charge can build up again!)

—BS

WHERE DOES FACT END AND FAITH BEGIN?

Michael Niederman, Chair of the Television Department at Columbia, lectured about conspiracy theories. He found they blur the lines between fact and faith.

Brandon Smith: For those who missed your talk, what were the important points?

Michael Niederman: What was fascinating for me, as I began preparing the lecture, was that I found I’m not really into conspiracy theories. I’m actually interested in stories, and how the stories get generated in the culture ... I’m a big believer in Occam’s razor—the simplest explanation is often the best explanation. How these stories get generated is just kind of fascinating.

B.S.: What are some of your favorites, for better or for worse?

M.N.: The Birthers, for one. (The story that Obama was not born in the United States.) I just think it’s fascinating that this convoluted, fabulous narrative could be maintained given the fact that there’s a birth announcement in a Honolulu paper that would have required a time machine to produce.

Also the story that the moon landing didn’t happen; I find it is just funny. I don’t know what to say. Very little was to have been gained by [asserting] it. But if you go on the internet there’s some wonderful things people have done ... for example, there’s a video where a lighting truss swung into the frame.

B.S.: A truss that was edited in?

M.N.: Yes, it was edited in. It just reminds you of the fact that these theories are still in our culture. It’s so interesting.

B.S.: Do you have any conspiracy theories of your own? I had to ask.

M.N.: The only one I have a real issue with is, I find that Jack Ruby shot Oswald very peculiar. I just find that a little strange.

B.S.: Do these theories help to clarify the relationship between fact and faith, or just mess it up?

M.N.: They mess them up. They blur the lines. There’s this notion that we’re having increasingly more trouble distinguishing between the two things. I think people think just because they believe it’s true, then it’s true.

But the secret at the heart of the Enlightenment was a shift in that faith, away from faith in facts toward faith in method. To “believe” in science is not to believe that the Earth is round or that Neil Armstrong walked on the moon or that we came from monkeys. It’s to believe in shared facts, verifiable evidence, and the most convincing explanation of these. It’s strange to espouse a faith in a system that could shift world-views overnight, but I take comfort in it. We’re a species who looked into the heavens and, by the shifting of the stars above, came to understand better our place in the universe. Then we turned those telescopes inward to discover entire universes inside.

We have only been able to do that because we understand that we interpret what we see, hear, and experience; and that our interpretation can be wrong. We’re at our best when we put faith not in a specific view of the world, but in how we know which view to believe.

Brendan Riley is an Assistant Professor of English who teaches writing, new media, and popular culture courses.

—Design by Brandon Smith

As a boy, Juan Yexier Agosto had faith he could fly like Superman. As a man, he now understands the facts that lie underneath the cape.



SHAWN NORTON and HEATHER YOUNKHANA

Not being Superman

learned that faith could move mountains, could heal the sick, could give sight to the blind, could make the deaf hear and make the dumb speak. I also learned that faith is not the answer or the solution to our problems.

Faith is the strength we have when we put our dreams and goals in God's hands, but it is our responsibility to see our world as it is...real. The world that we live in is full of facts, facts we must embrace to succeed in life.

As a child, I believed that Superman was the most amazing man in the world. I believed in him so much that I began to think he was real. I remember my first and last attempt to be like him: I tied a blue bath towel to my neck, climbed by brother's bunk bed, raised my arms to the sky and jumped. When I hit the floor, I realized by the pain that I was not superhuman and that I could not fly. I thought to myself, "Why can't I fly if I have faith that I can? After all, faith can move mountains." As my mom picked me up, she explained to me how important it is to have faith in ourselves ... to believe that we can fly like Superman is not a mistake. Conversely, she told me that we must not have faith in unrealistic ideas.

"I tied a blue bath towel to my neck, climbed by brother's bunk bed, raised my arms to the sky and jumped."

WHO IS AGOSTO?

Juan Yexier Agosto is a senior in the Music Department, where he is majoring in vocal performance. Juan grew up in a small town called Cidra located in the central mountains of Puerto Rico. Raised with the values and traditions of the Puerto Ricans of the 1950s, Juan looks for new life experiences as he explores Chicago for the first time. —HY

"I learned that faith could move mountains, could heal the sick, could give sight to the blind, could make the deaf hear and make the dumb speak."

even for Superman, to survive in the North Pole wearing a tight body suit that is more appropriate for scuba diving.

Superman is not real. But at the same time, if we all thought this way, perhaps Orville and Wilbur Wright would not have created the first airplane. Maybe they wanted to be like Superman, too. They had faith in the same idea that I had a child - we wanted to fly. The difference is that they used their faith to believe they could actually make a human fly and applied facts to their idea by using mathematical equations, dynamics, gravity, air flow, space, time, engineering designs and the like. In life, we need to believe that our faith is the catalyst needed to put our ideas to work. And when fused with facts, innovation and ideas are born. And today, I once again believe in Superman.

—Design by Heather Youkhana

BY JUAN YEXIER AGOSTO
Music major

The battle between fact and faith is present in any human's mind. Now and then, we all doubt faith because of fact and we may even deny the facts when they conflict with our faith. Both facts and faith are learned throughout our lifetime. There is no such thing as a "built in" conception of facts and faith. We learn our faith through our family and friends, while knowledge of facts develops with life experience and education.

As a child, I was taught that facts can never be more important than faith. I

I realized that both facts and faith play important roles. When I jumped from the top of my brother's bed, I was only driven by faith. It is impossible to follow just one - faith or facts - to succeed in life. If we do, we will find the point when we hit the ground, and believe me when I say that it hurts!

If I had considered the facts prior to jumping, I would have realized that Superman lives in the North Pole and I am from Puerto Rico, where the weather is around ninety degrees most of the year. First, I would have noticed that we are not from the same place, bringing up a valid point that we are not related. So, there would be no chance to inherit the ability to fly from him. In addition, I should have noticed that it is impossible,



Hope will manifest change

With all this talk of change, how do we cultivate it?

“With simple actions and steadfast beliefs, these people challenged what was accepted and, in turn, changed it.”

BY DEVIN MAINVILLE
Journalism major

Recently, the cries for hope and change have become increasingly prevalent, but before groundbreaking history brought these ideas to the forefront of the American conscience, Studs Terkel was discussing these very concepts in his book *Hope Dies Last: Keeping the Faith in Troubled Times*. In his book Terkel examines the power that hope and faith have in the quest for change. Undoubtedly, the subjects in Terkel’s book have overcome obstacles that would have many in despair, yet it is their unshakeable faith that allowed them to make a change, whether small or substantial.

One of the most thought provoking interviews is the one with Reverend Will D. Campbell. A southern preacher, Campbell is similar to the other subjects in the book in his hope for a better world, one of peace and understanding; where he differs is in his “apocalyptic kind of hope.” He sees an ideal world, but it’s just

a dot on a distant horizon. While some may view his attitude as pessimistic, it is in actuality much more realistic than the view that the world can be fixed in one’s own lifetime.

Personally involved in the civil rights movement in the ’50s, Campbell has a realistic attitude that lends itself to the stories he shares with Terkel.

He recounts his memories of sit-ins he witnessed and two remarkable citizens who did what they could to stop the escalation of violence. One was an elderly white woman who berated the attackers into relenting, in turn protecting the black students at a lunch counter. The other was a young white man who turned an attacker into an attackee, once again protecting the black students sitting fast for their rights. Campbell says, “I’ve never been sure which one did the work of the Lord that day, but both of them did.”

His stories of ordinary citizens standing up for what is right reminds us that it is us that need to be the change we want to see. It is much grander to picture these important people leading marches, giving speeches and challenging politics, it is much easier to point to these influential people and say: ‘These are the ones that changed history.’ And while their contributions certainly need to be honored, it is important to remember that it was the everyday people who

had a greater impact. With simple actions and steadfast beliefs, these people challenged what was accepted and, in turn, changed it.

When directly questioned on his view of hope, Campbell once again tells a story he was simply a third party to. On Sept. 11, Campbell saw a woman and her young daughter watching the news coverage on the attacks. While the mother watches, hysterical, the daughter turns to her and says, “What’d we do?” Campbell found hope in this question because as he says, “That may be the most profound question, the question this country has tried to answer... This little girl was asking the right question. We’ve done a lot.”

Even with the amazing contributions of everyone featured in Teckel’s anthology, including those of Reverend Campbell, society would be wise to take a look at this book and the many others who have yearned for change and succeeded in making it. We have come a long way and have even longer to go, but if anyone is unsure of this fact then take heart in the words of advice of Reverend Campbell’s friend Congressman John Lewis who said, “Now, if you want more change, do what we did, get out there and march and chant and sing and protest. Whatever it is you don’t like. We changed it!”

—Design by Emmanuelle Matthews

Five organizations creating change

TOMS

For every pair of Toms shoes purchased, this organization continues to donate one pair of shoes to every child in need. TOMS has given over 150,000 pairs of shoes to children in need through the One for One model. TOMS is planning to give over 300,000 pairs of shoes to children around the world in 2009. For more information visit: TomsShoes.com

TARGET

This well known store chain is very involved in “giving” efforts. Not only does it support education, arts, culture, and social service programs, but also offer grants to students as well. For more information visit: Sites.Target.com

KENNETH COLE

This New York based shoe designer compiled a book called *Awareness*. This book is a collection of stories that celebrate the many ways everyone can make change. The book is a compilation of 86 original essays from contributors who have committed their lives in one way or another to service. Kenneth Cole also draws socially aware clientele by creating strong advertisements that continue to engage with our diverse social climate. For more Information visit: AwarenessBlog.com

SALVATION ARMY

Operating in 118 countries, and providing services in 175 different languages, this organization supports communities by giving back. It is considered one of the largest providers of social aid. It helps communities who have been struck by natural disasters, supports charities and works to stop human trafficking. For more information visit: SalvationArmyUsa.org

FEEDING AMERICA

Feeding America has been fighting hunger for 30 years. Every year, Feeding America provides food to more than 25 million low income people. Their network contains 200 food banks in all 50 states. For more information visit: FeedingAmerica.org

—EM



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BY MARANDA GORR-DIAZ
Journalism major

The story of Irish immigrant Dierdre Merriman was a story that had special significance to me. Alcoholism runs deep through my family tree and reading about the struggles she had to face and the sacrifices she had to make, made me think of my grandfather who also was an alcoholic.

My grandfather was an unruly drunk similar to Dierdre. Merriman became so addicted to alcohol that she ended up losing her kids. My grandmother, trying to put my grandfather in his place, also threatened him with that same opposi-

tion. If he didn't seek treatment, then he would have to leave the house. Unlike Merriman he checked himself into AA right away, desperate to keep his family.

Dierdre continued to battle substance abuse, while facing many other hardships such as homelessness, domestic violence and mental illness. Although not as extreme, my grandfather faced similar hardships as he tried to overcome his alcohol addiction.

He was threatened with divorce and the break up of his family. He couldn't hold a job for very long and all the while, trying to defeat this horrible alcoholic disease that consumed his whole life.

As Dierdre said, "When you're an alcoholic, you don't just drink because



Courtesy MARANDA GORR-DIAZ

Left, Maranda and her grandfather Gary take pride in his 14 years of sobriety.

SEEKING HELP

If you or anyone you know is abusing alcohol or other drugs, seek help. Hotlines and programs can be found on the internet. For more information about drug and alcohol addictions go to gdcada.org and/or myaddiction.com —AS



WWW.JUNLIMITED.COM/EN/SIGN_IN/INDEX

In 2006, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reported that over 22 million individuals have a substance abuse dependency or addiction.

you're unhappy. You drink for any reason. If you're an alcoholic, you drink 'cause it's raining; you drink 'cause it's not. You drink 'cause the sun is shining; you drink 'cause it isn't. You drink 'cause it's daytime; you drink 'cause it's nighttime. You don't need an excuse".

Like Dierdre, this was the same mentality my grandfather had.

Even though Dierdre faced many hardships, she overcame alcoholism and got her life back on track. She went to Truman College and studied psychology and journalism. She became a state-certified rape victims' advocate and also regained communication with her children and family after six years, when they had no idea if she was dead or alive.

My grandfather also had the strength

and overcame his alcoholic addiction. He has been sober now for over 14 years and although he is divorced, he still maintains a strong relationship with his children and grandchildren, all the while, holding a steady job.

Both Dierdre and my grandfather maintained hope and overcame their battle with alcoholism. I know that they both conquered significant struggles to get where they are today and live a happy and sober life. According to Dierdre: "I have come through so much and fought so hard to get where I am today, to where I like myself, I like my life. I have not maybe everything I want, but everything I need. I have never, ever in my life been able to say I was content, and I am."

—Design by Amanda Shaw

"When you're an alcoholic, you don't just drink because you're unhappy. You drink for any reason. ... You don't need an excuse."

—DIERDRE MERRIMAN

Journalism major Ana Simovska, who was born in Macedonia, says the weather in Chicago is much more severe than the typical winter in Macedonia, although the two climates are not so different.



JONATHAN MATHIAS

5,171 miles of hope...

My journey from Macedonia to Chicago and who I am today

BY ANA SIMOVSKA
Journalism major

I WAS TEN YEARS OLD when my parents decided it was best to move to America. Growing up in a third-world country, Macedonia, I wouldn't exactly say my childhood was filled with expensive toys and Disney World vacations.

From a very young age, I became a firm believer that nature was my playground; my opportunity to be as creative and free as I wanted to be. Rather than playing with Barbie dolls or video games, I was out exploring the hidden pathways and gravel roads that led to vigorous rivers and spacious valleys. It was truly a time when my siblings and I were fearless. I remember climbing trees and jumping off cliffs into a creek surely not much deeper than our own heights, unaware of the consequences it might bring. On days like those, I thought I had it all.

It was a cold, rainy day in Chicago and I remember walking out of the airport for the first time. Taking those first steps was easy, but breathing the air wasn't. It was different. Heavy. I didn't know why, but I was sure this was not my home. My parents assured us that everything would be okay. After all, they brought us here for a better life; a second chance. For me, it was difficult to grasp the fact that this would be the place where I'd grow up. I felt angry toward my parents that they would strip me of my perfect childhood and throw me into a place where I didn't

even know the language. My parents, on the other hand, were thrilled. They seemed content that all we had were a handful of suitcases and some money to last us a few months until we settled.

"Faith," said my father as he looked down at my strangled smile. I didn't know what he meant. Does he think I'll love this place more than our own backyard? No way, I thought. How could I? Night had already fallen and I couldn't even see the stars in the sky from all the pollution. "How can you make a wish on a shooting star if you can't even see it?" I asked. How can you fall in love if you can't see the stars?

Fast forward several years later when that scared little girl at the airport is a happy, mature young woman with her whole life ahead of her. Yes, I said it, happy. Growing up in America really was a rare opportunity that my brothers and I were blessed to be given. Maybe I didn't know it back then, but the day I stepped foot on American soil was the turning point in my life. See, it didn't matter if I had faith in myself at that point. It mattered that my parents had faith in us; that we could be and achieve anything we wanted in this country. In the past 11 years, we have overcome everything imaginable. As immigrants, my parents worked long and stressful hours only to provide for my brothers and myself. Without their strong faith in our family, none of what we have now could've been possible.

When I reflect on what I have faith in,

or what faith means to me, the answers always vary. There are days when I can't see past the hardships and struggles of everyday life. Days when my life may seem so dull and meaningless where nothing makes sense. But then there are days where I can say faith, to me, is the ability to believe in your own destiny and make it happen. When my family is together, all healthy and happy, and my goals seem reachable... that's when I know all things are possible. On those days, I know I can have it all.

—Design by Jonathan Mathias

A FEW MACEDONIA FACTS



»The landlocked Republic of Macedonia is located directly north of Greece in South Central Europe.

»The country is about the size of Vermont, with a population of just over two million people. Most of the inhabitants live in the western part of the country. Skopje, the capital, is the largest city in the country, with over 600,000 citizens.

»According to the Associated Press, Macedonian President Gjorgje Ivanov has promised to send an extra 80 soldiers to Afghanistan in February, along with President Obama's surge, raising their troop count to 250.

»Lake Ohrid is one of Europe's oldest lakes, and contains a vast and unique diversity of life. The lake was declared a World Heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1979.

»According to the U.S. Department of State, the principal Macedonian exports to the United States are tobacco, apparel, footwear, iron and steel. —JM



Source GOOGLE MAPS

JONATHAN MATHIAS

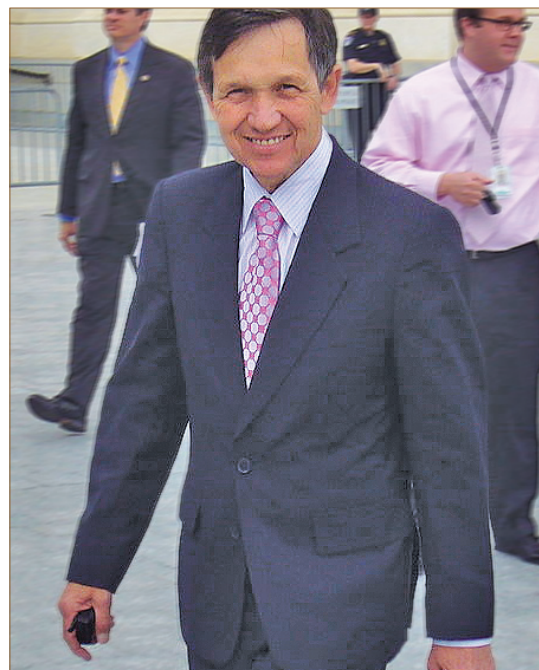


FREEPHOTO.COM

Keeping the faith with politics

Are faith and hope the same for everyone?

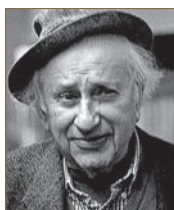
Rep. Dennis Kucinich is a Democratic member of the U.S. House of Representatives. He represents the 10th District of Ohio.



WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

BY DASHUN CARTER
Journalism major

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Mr. Studs Terkel presents a series of condensed accounts of subjects who at some point in their lives were forced to throw out conventional thinking and rely on the inspiring unseen conviction that is faith. Mr. Terkel (pictured at left) takes highlights of their stories

and laconically constructs a biographical story of how individually hope died last in their own personal journeys, which is the common thread shared by all subjects. They all accept the challenge of having to deal with conflicting human emotions and characteristics which proves to be daunting in any capacity, but especially so in dealing with confronting the unknown. From the steadfastly optimistic to the desperately despondent, they all eventually arrive full circle attributing the idea of hope as the proven key to their success. Hope not only serves as a portion of the title of the book, but it also complements the unifying theme that is "faith." I have my own definition of the word faith. Faith to me is divine optimism. Not to imply a spiritual connection, it's the belief or hope that something will come to pass when all other explainable means have failed or seem unreachable. Now whether you look to yourself, others or subjects as a source of intervention depends on you.

Faith and hope to me are one and the same. Whether one precedes the other is irrelevant. Even the King James version of the Holy Bible uses one of the terms to assist in defining the other. "Now FAITH is the substance if things HOPED for, the evidence of things not seen..."

Mr. Terkel has carefully chosen a diverse group of

Faith to me is divine optimism. Not to implicate a spiritual connection, it's the belief or hope that something will come to pass when all other explainable means have failed or seem unreachable.

subjects that have all proven to share values of the writer. From educators to clergymen, politicians to artists, these people credit the idea of 'faith and hope in tough times as tools for finding 'delight in the night'. The two themes provide the backbone of the book. He mentions merely expressing grievance and hope can be seen as activism, which I think he secretly finds to be both liberating and sometimes necessary.



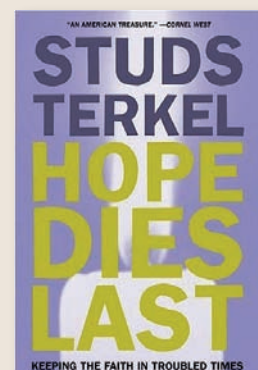
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images were also featured on the shirts of an excited generation, on-board and ready to believe in one little four letter word. Hope was often mentioned with another word/call to action ubiquitous with the successful campaign "change."

Faith in some way singularly ties all the stories together and the people telling them, creating a realistic world of believers who all appear intensely human. It was Representative Dennis Kucinich who had to rely on faith that his hard work and persistence would reap great long term benefits. Immigrant filmmaker Usama Alshaibi relied on the same value from an entire nation (United States) while seeking political asylum to save him from a forlorn trip back to Iraq, a country with unknown intentions. If all the subjects didn't share the same life experiences, they all shared the belief to trust instinctively on the completely intangible idea that things might get better but there's a chance they won't. Once you reach the point of hope led by faith, you relinquish control and begin to rely solely on something so much greater than yourself.

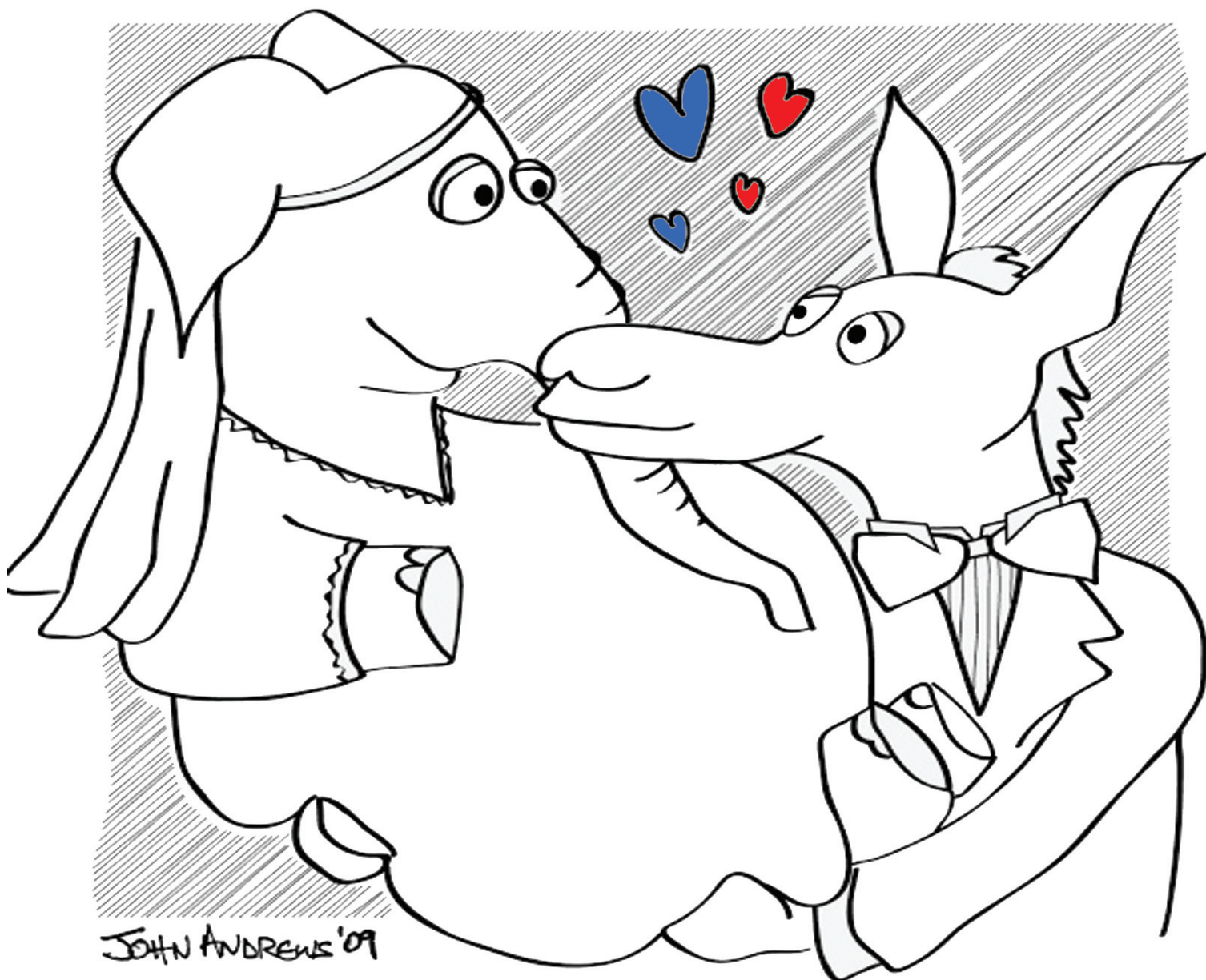
—Design by Evelyn Oropeza

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



AMAZON.COM

» **Hope Dies Last** "Keeping the Faith in Troubled Times," 2003) by Studs Terkel. The New Press: www.thenewpress.com \$16.95



Just as much as I do

One student discovers the key to political tolerance

BY JOCELYN PEIRCE
Journalism major

IT CAN BE VERY HARD TO BE A LIBERAL IN AMERICA. The further left we lean, the more likely it becomes that someone will attempt to insult us by calling us communists. Even the word “liberal” itself is sometimes a dirty word. As a Canadian who grew up in the United States, I often found this concept difficult to understand. Even as a child it was easy for me to see that liberals wanted to help people get ahead, while conservatives were only interested in maintaining the wealth of the wealthy. It was simple.

As I grew older (though not necessarily wiser), conservatism in America, particularly during the Bush Administration, began to look more and more like a conspiracy. By the time I was sixteen I had no doubt that every single republican in the United States government really hated the

people of the United States. I don’t think it’s hard to understand why a teenager would think this. I remember the Bush Administration, the majority of my teen years, as an era of fear. We were all afraid almost all the time – whether it was fear of another terrorist attack or fear of the repercussions of dissent. It was almost as

though the Bush years were a second Cold War where the enemy was liberalism at home rather than communism abroad. In short, it was a bad time to be a liberal in America.

Dehumanization of an enemy is a tactic used time and again by military leaders. It’s much easier to shoot to kill when the person you’re killing is definitely an evildoer. The Bush Administration used this tactic to sway the hearts and minds of the American people against much of the Middle East. They also used this tactic against domestic dissidents – calling us unpatriotic anti-Americans. “You’re either with us, or you’re against us,” Bush would say. It became wrong to speak out against him.

But dehumanization of an enemy, it turns out, is more human nature than some brilliant military strategy. It is easier to believe you are right once you convince yourself that everything about your adversary is wrong. My teenage efforts not to associate with the socially or fiscally conservative were not as effective as I’d hoped. Several times, I remember gasping in surprise upon learning that a friend of mine—a decent, generous, intelligent person—was conservative. This was a disconnect that I could not understand. The conservatives were just as evil as Bush thought the liberals were. They praised a free market that, left to its own devices, would favor only those who created it and took their mortality not from themselves, nor even the Bible, but from a preacher’s pulpit where the words of Christ were twisted into something cruel and unfeeling. How, then, could any of them be decent people?

“It is easier to believe you are right once you convince yourself that everything about your adversary is wrong.”

In Studs Terkel’s book *Hope Dies Last*, he interviews a man named Dan Burton, a Republican congressman from Indiana, with a record for being a true conservative. He is a man whose political ideals are almost exactly opposite to my own, yet I could not help but be moved by his story. Burton is a rare example of what a person from a disappointing family can do to improve his station in life. He is a rare example of a person who believed he could do better, and did. What I found particularly interesting about his story, however, was how his hatred of his abusive father manifested itself in his politics. Though Burton entered politics because he was opposed to socialism (and, one assumes, communism) in America, he took on J. Edgar Hoover for his willingness to put innocent people behind bars. “I can’t stand bullies,” he said, “Hoover or my father.”

Ted Kennedy Jr., said of his father that he “taught me some of life’s harder lessons, such as how to like Republicans ... He once told me—he said, ‘Teddy, Republicans love this country just as much as I do.’ ... When he learned that a survey of Republican senators named him the Democratic legislator that they most wanted to work with and that John McCain called him the single most effective member of the U.S. Senate, he was proud, because he considered the combination of accolades from your supporters and respect from your sometime political adversaries as one of the ultimate goals of a successful political life.”

What moved me about Dan Burton’s interview was the clarity with which he expressed his love for his country and its people, his awareness of its weakness, and his hope for its future. I do not agree with the majority of his politics, but I cannot, having read the interview, dislike the man. After all, it’s clear that he loves this country just as much as I do.

—Design by Chelsea Kidd-Edie

WHO IS DAN BURTON?

Born in Indianapolis, Indiana on June 21 1938, Dan Burton graduated from Shortridge High School in 1957 and from there moved onto Indiana University and then the Cincinnati Bible Seminary.

Dan Burton’s first term in Congress began in January 1983, and he is now serving his fourteenth term as United States Representative from Indiana’s Fifth



Congressional District.

Today, Congressman Burton is a Ranking Member of the House of Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia. Burton is also Senior Member on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Dan Burton and his family now reside in his hometown of Indianapolis, Indiana. —CK

Source Burton.House.gov

Inside and Outside is a photo that I took in Istanbul in the winter of 2006. It shows two Muslim women: one inside a home wearing a Hijab and one outside without a Hijab.

Putting a Hijab on, as a way to show their belief and faith to god, has promoted the view to most of the Western societies that women with Hijabs lack understanding of knowledge.

Although I was not born in a religious family in Iran, I have seen many women in Muslim countries who wear Hijabs can be as modern and educated as women without them. In my photo, I have tried to highlight this point with a shot from a Muslim woman inside and a Muslim woman outside the house.

—*Morehshin Allahyari, MFA candidate in Interdisciplinary Arts*



The eternal visual quest

Last November the Student/Staff/Alumni exhibition opened in the Columbia College Chicago library showcasing the art of 14 photographers. A call went out to the college community and beyond to respond to the Critical Encounter focus of Fact & Faith. The artists were from various backgrounds; graduate and undergraduate alumni, seniors in photography and graphic design, as well as a freshman majoring in photography and a graduate student from the college's Interdisciplinary Arts Program.

As a curator, it was my intention to challenge the college community to question their beliefs, and to reflect what it is they hold as faith, and what they believe to be true. For most people, college is the first time they are away from home, allowed to be their own person, go to church or not, continue with their religious rituals or not. There is no parent here instilling their own belief system; instead, the student is now free to make their own choices, to become an adult, to learn about other cultures, other facts and other faiths of the world. I wanted to see that deeper questioning manifested into art.

These are just a few of the artists and their stories reflecting that need to know, and the need to believe. —*Jodi Adams, School of Media Arts*



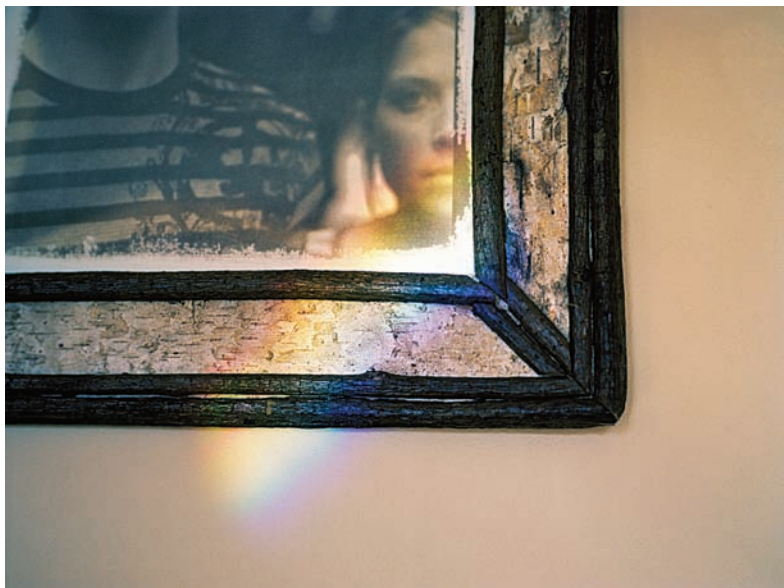
I am an environmental landscape photographer, focusing on the human relationship with the natural world. My photographs direct the viewer to once natural sites, questioning civilization's use of the land.

For the past few years, I have been working on the project **The Forest**. Once prairie, this land was influenced by the landscape architect and activist Jens Jensen in the late 1800's. It was the Kelly estate, where prominent arts and crafts architect Howard Van Doren Shaw, built their family home. After the Kelly's residency the land was divided and over time went through many changes. The wooded prairie behind the home was left alone and turned into a beautifully tangled forest, where many of the historical artifacts of the past have been preserved. Presently, it is managed by the Lake Bluff Open Lands Association and its intent is to restore it to its 19th century prairie state. The original homestead of the property has changed hands and is now being developed and turned into an upscale retirement community, called Stonebridge. Before the development, the property was a communal space, seamlessly adjacent to the forest behind. It was where kids would play, people would run with their dogs and many would watch the feeding deer. It also neighbors my childhood home and where my love for the natural world began.

My spirituality resides in this wooded prairie. It was where I discovered my connection with the natural world and where I always go back, to be home.

—*Evy Briggs, Alumna in Photography*





My photographs explore the influence of the past on our everyday experience. The work focuses on the delicate nature of memory and the effect of the passage of time on both individual and collective experience.

By photographing transient moments I am able to capture the time and mystery that makes up our actual lives. I am fascinated by memory and the way that memories are forged not only by our own perceptions but also by the memories of others. Stories, fact or fiction, are shared and become integrated into who we are, sewn into our experience.

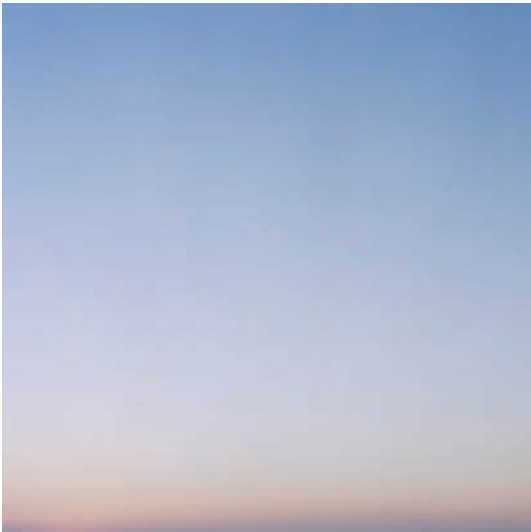
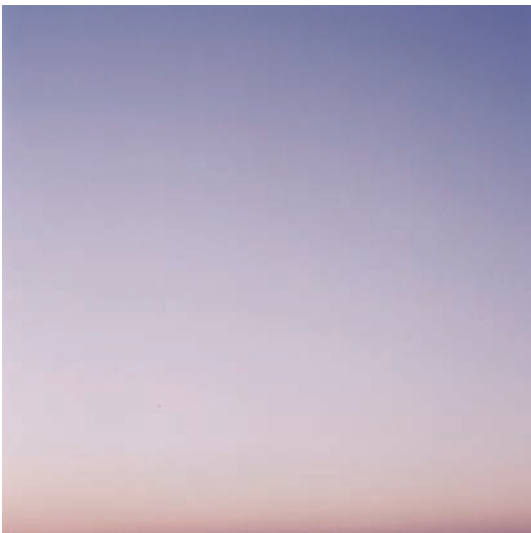
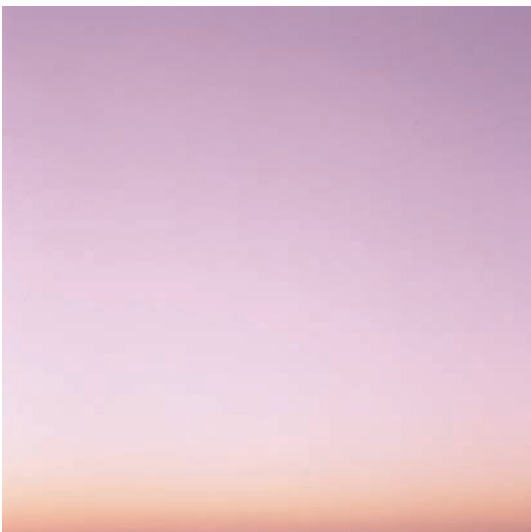
I am interested in the role that photography plays in the proliferation of our own history. Photography is greatly connected to the past and reveals our innate desire to capture life, which is inherently fleeting and impermanent.

January Eyes offers the audience a question about the reality of the present and the significance of the past.

—Aidan Fitzpatrick, *alumnus in Photography*



Although most of us have never experienced **war**, we are surrounded by its imagery. (Re): media is an exploration of the way imagery and information from movies, videogames, newspapers, and the Internet come together to form our perception of war. Having never experienced war first-hand I am forced to put my faith in mediated expressions of the thing itself. By combining the imagery I pillage from all these sources, there is a possibility that what I am creating is more real than the individual images themselves. Explosions are war's most universal and most spectacular signifiers. We are never falling short of this imagery. I have made use of these magnetizing images to show not only how the lines between fiction and non-fiction blur, but also to show how a mediated experience can become indecipherable from a real experience. —Krista Wortendyke, *MFA alumna in Photography*



Forms of the Sky. We are aware of certain forms, colors, and shapes that the sky can take. As a viewer and a photographer I focus on the subtle changes; the moments when the sky is most still and seemingly dull, to point out the same beauty found in the clearly aggressive or cloudy image of it.

I aim to record the inevitable changes of the world around us by focusing on the sky, a notoriously erratic medium. It's about the clear understanding of the sun leaving its mark, as it rises and falls daily. I capture the sky in its most raw form that could never be replicated, given the time and space.

It is a universal interpretation and belief, that time and the reality of instantaneous change, happens above us as well as below us. My spirituality focuses on time and space as well as color, which represents harmony. The weight of each individual shade has a significant importance in the balance of life. The color *sky blue* might be named that for the twelve hours of the day where the sun is not affecting the horizon. But aside from those mid-day hours the sky has a vast color range. The experiences that have shaped my beliefs lie in the forms of the sky. —Sydney J Walters, *Photography major*

LOVE STINKS

With so many hookups and breakups, should we just give up?

BY JENNIE FAULS
Assistant Director of
First-year writing,
English Department

I don't believe in love. The divorce epidemic, rising instances of domestic violence, and bad eHarmony commercials have dispelled the notion that true love in the modern age is possible.

I may have aged-out of this particular system and that's fine with me.

But I do believe that love was real in bygone eras. That knowledge, cemented in my memory from exposure to family, literature, history and art, sustains me.

Graduate-level literature studies teach you that love is only true when one is compelled to throw oneself under a train in its honor. And nobility comes from enduring unrequited love or lifelong grief over love lost.

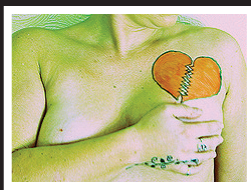
I maintain at least a curiosity about love and its pathologies by regularly reading the Sunday New York Times wedding section. Their featured weddings are increasingly based on unlikely pairings in the form of older women/younger men, radical class difference (CEO and doorman) or unexpected cultural pairings ("You're Jewish? I'm Indian! This could work!")

The details in these narratives tend to teach me that modern love is ultimately selfish. When people indicate that they're looking for their 'missing piece,' what's implied is that it is only about 5 percent of themselves that has gone missing. The rest of their identity is intact and settled just fine, thank you.

The happy couples I know are primarily same-sex partners and/or couples on their second commitment. (Another thing I've learned-it doesn't work on the first try.) Romantic love can serve families well, by providing a larger support network and more reinforcement associated with the 'good times.' Same-sex couples appear to dodge certain essential pitfalls having to do with gender difference. And someone on wife #2 can employ smarter strategies in negotiating hazards, based on what went wrong before.

Some people are content to give their love life over to algorithms, in the same manner we have given up on slow, curious research. Googling for a relationship doesn't suit me because the seed of love can't grow in "The Matrix." It's not organic.

The best evidence of love that I have seen in my own lifetime comes from my grandparents, all of whom lived to



CREATIVE COMMONS

see their 50th wedding anniversaries and the birth of great-grandchildren. They believed in love.

I believe that their shared sacrifices during World War II characterized their commitment to each other and to family. Their love was manifested in simple pleasures, best witnessed in their later years. I happily recall grandparents bickering over holiday meal preparation: "Bill! I told you to take the potatoes out five minutes ago!" "Margery, they are not done. You can't see them. Why don't you come in here and look for yourself?," "I am busy making drinks that you're supposed to be making because you should be finished with the vegetables!"

I really don't have fonder memories than that.

Encoded in their good-natured nagging was the closeness, familiarity, and trust built by decades. They were in love so completely that no boundaries existed. They didn't know selfishness because they had known struggle so much more deeply. There was no reason not to remain united. And they loved so fully that their lives didn't make sense once one passed away too soon.

My grandparents' resting place is a memorial to their love and a warm place for me to reflect. I am certainly open to surprises, if not buying into the ugly modern ways that 'matches' are 'facilitated.' (There won't be a keyboard click in my love story.)

Fortunately, I believe in happiness and the infinite ways that memory and family model love. I'm listening to voices from the past for clues towards my future. —Design by Rahel Fissha

You gotta believe!

A boy struggles with lack of proof and explanation when searching for substance behind faith.

BY JOSEPH CULOTTA
Interdisciplinary Arts major

Fortunately, my mother loved me. She might have killed me if she didn't. I was a curious little boy, and persistent, content to fire off a string of "why" questions—or "how" or "how come" at any unexplained quirk of the world I was exploring. Alas, my mother was not omniscient and never knew enough answers to satisfy me. Still, I delighted in asking a question and getting an answer, but each answer simply fuelled me ahead in hopes of getting to a deeper and more meaningful explanation of the topic. The habit, to say the least, tested my mother's patience. My father was much less tolerant, ordering me to "go look it up" at the first sign of interrogation. Defeated, I learned where to find the encyclopedia.

This behavior continued throughout Catholic elementary school. I would raise my hand and ask how I could really be sure heaven existed, or whether I could really be sure I had a soul. I wanted to understand and I felt in my heart that the teachings were true, but the nuns' responses were as tangible as a cloud. "You must have faith," they said.

Rather than a demonstration of piety, I took the words as a cop out. How could the nuns—dedicated students of the Church's teachings—have no answers, yet insist I accept their proclamations on a whim? The Bible, too confusing and mysterious for me to understand, was the only reference book offered by the Church; besides, stories about heaven didn't prove it existed.

I was not mad or simply annoyed at the nuns. I was disappointed that the scholars of the subject could not provide evidence of truth. The nuns would have hardly bristled at the notion of me being disappointed in them, but I developed a nagging mistrust for authority that spilled back on my poor mother. I defied her motherly standard, "Because I said so!" with a daring retort, "That's not a good enough answer! You must have a reason!" Aghast, she supplied none, and I was left to do whatever preposterous thing she wanted me to do, like go to bed.

I grappled with the flimsy explanations Catholicism offered. Assertions that life is unique to Earth

and the notion that the entire cosmos existed solely to glorify God, I judged as insufficient. I felt that it was entirely possible that in the vastness of the universe, life could exist somewhere else.

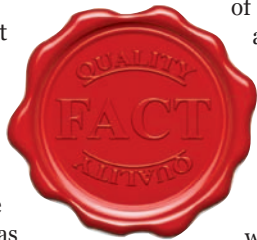
A natural fascination with outer space brought me to a small public library near my home on many occasions to pore over books about stars, planets and galaxies. Seated on the floor of shallow orange carpet beside a floor-to-ceiling window, I hunched behind a high bookshelf and selected a book on space. I thumbed through it eagerly and stopped at an illustration of my favorite mysterious cosmic object—a black hole. Relatively few books on outer space included information about black holes and I stirred with excitement as I flipped it open, captivated.

Time slowed as I examined the diagram of the black hole. My mind boggled as I attempted to visualize light, unable to escape the gravity of the black hole, being sucked back into the singularity at its center. I could not understand how such a thing could exist, even though I found the idea absolutely compelling. Then my eyes moved to the caption, which explained that scientists had not confirmed whether black holes existed because none had yet been observed. Their theories, nevertheless, supported the possibility. I studied the graphic and then read the text again, perceiving that the caption most decidedly did not say that scientists had faith in black holes, and therefore, we must believe in

them too. The scientists demanded nothing of me without offering proof. Sitting quietly on the orange carpet, with light from the window illuminating the open book, I appreciated their integrity.

Joseph Culotta grew up in the Chicagoland area and is currently a senior at Columbia, specializing in Writing and Editing. After graduating in May 2010, he plans to pursue a career in technical writing.

—Design by Rilee Chastain



"I was not mad or annoyed at the nuns. I was disappointed that the scholars of the subject could not provide evidence of the truth."

A question of substance

A SIDE NOTE FROM JOSEPH

»An unexpected papal announcement has acknowledged my idea. The Vatican's chief astronomer indicated in May 2008 that if aliens exist elsewhere in the universe, they would be our brothers because they are God's creation. Incidentally, such rule-changes within the church were a frustrating part of Catholicism for me as well. —RC

Photos: JUPITER IMAGES



Is spending more money for name brand items really worth it?



KRISTINA WELLS



JUPITER IMAGES UNLIMITED

Identical *but not* equal

BY SANDRA ALLEN
Director, PR Studies & Assistant Professor

Quick. What do Nike’s Air Jordans have in common with Pfizer Pharmaceuticals’ painkiller Bextra? Here’s how I connect the dots.

This September, Michael Jordan was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame. I’m a Michael Jordan fan, so when I missed the televised event, I checked out his remarks on YouTube. While some would carp that Michael could have been more gracious (and I’d agree with them), should have recognized the fans, would have been more effective at the podium had he not dissed some of his former colleagues, my general impression remains undimmed. Michael Jordan is an admirable man, a role model, a real stand-up guy. But still, the reasoning goes, a show is just a commodity, right? Wrong. To us marketers, the name Jordan in Air Jordan is a promise, an emotional connection beyond mere rubber, plastic and cloth. It’s a brand.

And Pfizer’s Bextra? As I learned in early September, the United States Attorney General’s office levied a record \$2.3 billion fine against Pfizer for its fraudulent marketing practices regarding Bextra. This following the Federal Drug Administration’s demands in 2005 that Pfizer remove Bextra from the market because of safety concerns.

But in marketing terms, both Air Jordan and Bextra are well-known brands. And the brand image is a valuable ele-

ment in marketing the product. It creates the impression that the brand is unique. It’s what the corporation offers to the marketplace. For both Air Jordans and the painkiller Bextra, the brand image convinces the customer to pay prices higher than the cost of producing the shoes or the drug. It’s a promise to us, the consumer, that rests on an act of mutual trust and faith in the company’s convictions, and perhaps even, naively, on the belief that they care about us and our wellbeing.

Air Jordans are the best-selling brand in all the history of athletic shoedom. Bextra, once the hot new drug touted by doctors – who it appears were offered kickbacks to endorse the drug – now is a symbol of Pfizer’s decision to put its company’s reputation at risk. Looking at both news stories through my marketing communication lens, I see one brand that has broken the faith with the public. I see another brand that continues to connect emotionally with its target market. It’s not hard to determine which is which.

Building a brand is not rocket science. It’s what we marketers do. We know a recognizable brand delivers a clear message about the product or service. It is the sum total of a customer’s experience and perceptions. At its most basic, it is a promise. And customers accept that promise as an act of faith. Faith in Nike’s word, belief that Air Jordans are well-made, durable, and maybe even that tiny fragment of hope

COMPARING SHOE PRICES
Air Jordan Men’s Training Shoe \$98
Generic Men’s Training Shoe \$29.99
Air Jordan Men’s Basketball Shoe \$125-\$175
Generic Men’s Basketball Shoe \$29.99-\$159.99
Source Nike.com and google search

COMPARING DRUG PRICES
Bextra avg. \$2.78 per pill
Generic - Valdecobix avg. \$1.00 per pill
Source realpharma.com, painstudy.com



THE GREAT MICHAEL JORDAN

Michael Jordan was born on Feb. 17, 1963. He is considered one of the greatest National Basketball Association players of all time. His career lasted from 1984 until the end of the 2002-2003 season. He retired twice, the first time from 1993 until 1995. During those two years, he played minor league baseball with the Chicago White Sox. Jordan retired again in 1999, but came back from 2001 until the end of the 2002-2003 season. Jordan is a six-time NBA champion with the Chicago Bulls. He is the all-time points leader, scoring an average of 30.1 points per game. —KW

Source NBA.COM

Images WIKIMEDIA COMMONS, JUPITER IMAGES UNLIMITED

Air Jordan training shoes (above left) have a much higher retail price than generic training shoes (above right), because they are a name brand product.

Building a brand is not rocket science. It’s what we marketers do... It is the sum total of a customer’s experience and perceptions. At its most basic, it is a promise.

that with those shoes on our feet, we too can “be like Mike.”

At another level, the purpose of branding is to build and sustain trust. So what of Pfizer’s decision to put profits ahead of concerns for the patient’s health? What does that say about the other products in Pfizer’s arsenal of medical miracles? What happens to a company’s reputation, its brand image, when the facts reveal that we have misplaced our faith? We feel cheated, tricked, perhaps a little frightened, and wonder what else the pharmaceutical corporations have hidden or haven’t told the public. We decide we can no longer have faith in Pfizer’s claims, even if the F.D.A. endorses their products in the future. Like Humpty Dumpty, we marketing professionals are quick to point out that once broken, a brand image cannot be put back together again. When the facts reveal we have misplaced our faith, therein lies Pfizer’s shame, and Nike’s glory.

—Design by Kristina Wells

For both Air Jordans and the painkiller Bextra, the brand image convinces the customer to pay prices higher than the cost of producing the shoes or the drug.

FALLEN FATHERS

A science professor finds his faith

BY LUIS NASSER | PHOTOGRAPH BY DAN O'CONNEL

My father died when I was eight years old. Oddly, it wasn't the cancer that killed him, but a blood clot formed by the post-op radiation treatment that ended his battle to stay out of thermal equilibrium with the universe. I didn't know my dad as well as I'd have liked because he had another family—another life, but he left a vacuum that was never really filled. What I remember the most was my mother crying at night, when she thought everyone was asleep and she could afford the privacy of wrestling with her pain alone. I remember her body language in the mornings, and I knew something vital was missing. Poof! Gone as suddenly as my dad was. She was inconsolable in silence—a ghost in plain sight, walking through the mist and we were all shadows. I remember I felt robbed of both my parents, and what happened next was bizarre, because I was never raised to be religious. In fact my father sternly told me to never trust anyone in a uniform or a robe, but that was before I tasted despair.

Looking back, I can understand why my foolish eight-year-old brain hatched a scheme that would try to make things right: I wrote two lists on a piece of paper. On one were all the things my father did, all he was: Habib

Nasser, chief surgeon at the emergency room of Mexico City's famous Joco Hospital, a man famous for the role he played during the 1968 student massacre in Tlatelolco, who continued to save lives and ruffle authoritarian feathers on a routine basis; a lecturer of medicine at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and a physician for the W.H.O. The other column was about me, and it was far less impressive. I was almost invisible to everyone that mattered, but while he breathed my dad would insist I read a lot of stuff, and I knew half of the genetic alphabet that put me together was his.

So every night, after my mother would cry herself to sleep, I would climb to the roof, and begin my contract with God. I was uncertain, knowing nothing about this God, but with the enviable innocence of a child I tried to convince him he had made a mistake. Every night, from full moon to full moon, I

pleaded my case. It was a simple fix, really: me for him. My mom would be happy, people's lives would be better, and there was enough of him in me to ensure that whatever plan the absentee cosmic landlord had for my dad's death would probably still work. Of course, every night I'd get up from my knees, raw from the concrete, deafened by the silence of the smoggy Mexico City night sky. On the last night of my vigil, I told God he was going to have to make a choice: I was going to dedicate myself to be as much as my dad as I could. I was going to effectively turn into him, and if that was something he dislikes enough to kill, he would have to then kill me too. But if he was willing to do that, why not simply do as I asked? I never asked for much—in fact, I never asked for anything before! A life for a life seemed fair to me, and his denial marked him as a cruel tyrant. I had no place in my heart for such a vain, petty

beast, and so I began to live the rest of my life at war with this God that watches, judges and "cares" for us with tough love and hostile indifference.

It's been many solar orbits since that cold summer night in 1977 when I vowed I'd never get down on my knees to beg again, and life has taken me on a hard but interesting journey.

Who's to say for sure if the child who was a mistake has truly grown?

All I know is I don't believe in God, but I still talk to him from time to time.

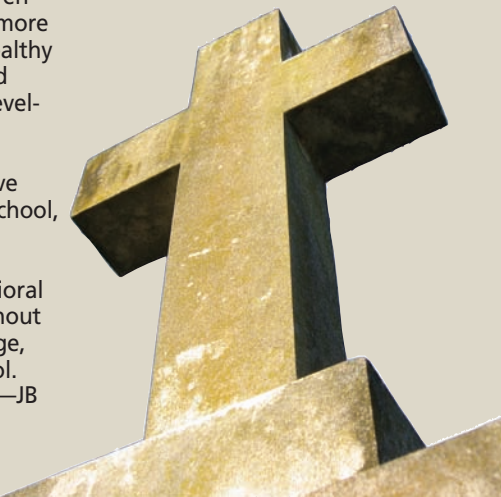
Luis Nasser is an Assistant Professor in the Science and Math Department. He was born in Mexico City in 1969. He has a PhD in Theoretical Physics, and is a bassist and songwriter. He is "quite happily acclimated at Columbia, probably because it's one of the few places that reward growth, learning and experimentation in teaching without penalizing you for shoddy attire."
—Design by Jovana Brenner

THE IMPORTANCE OF A FATHER IN HIS SON'S LIFE

- » According to a study done by the National Fatherhood Initiative, male children raised without a father, experience a greater amount of turmoil than those who have been raised with one.
- » The National Fatherhood Initiative states facts, which prove that children are 5 times more likely to experience poverty when their father is absent.

- » When a father is not involved in the child's life, the child is more prone to participate in smoking, drinking and the usage of drugs.
- » A fatherless child is more likely to drop out of school, or be expelled at an early age due to the fact that they don't have a role model to look up to.
- » Children without fathers are 20 times more likely to end up in prison.
- » 63% of fatherless children are prone to youth suicides, according to the National Fatherhood Initiative.

- » The number of fatherless children has quadrupled since 1960, from more than six million to 24 million. A healthy relationship between children and their fathers is critical for good development.
 - » Children without fathers are five times more likely to drop out of school, commit crime, and live in poverty.
 - » 85% of all children with behavioral disorders, come from homes without fathers. This is 20 times the average, says the Center for Disease Control.
- JB



Just when
she thought
she had it all
figured out,
a heart
breaking
defeat
turned
into an
opportunity
to begin

The quest back to me

BY TARA JOHNSON
Television major

My wonderful boyfriend and I had just left the summer camp his parents had organized for the past 30 years.

While I was there, I thought to myself, “My in-laws do such an amazing ministry.” In my head I called them “my in-laws” because my boyfriend and I for the past several months had seriously been discussing marriage.

We had started pre-marital counseling, deciding where we would live after our September wedding and when we would try to buy our first home together. We did have one outstanding issue to discuss; would my nephew come to visit for one or two weeks during his summer vacation?

As we pulled up to my apartment complex, I thought it was strange that he didn’t pull into the garage. He stopped in front of the complex and turned to me and said “Tara, I don’t want to discuss marriage any longer.” I looked at his mouth and could tell he was speaking, but I didn’t understand the words coming from it.

All I could hear were the sounds of my perfect future being flushed down the toilet.

I got out of the car and managed to hold back the tears long enough to close the front door of my apartment. Once the tears started, they didn’t stop for months. Everything that I knew and planned was gone. What do I know?

After the tears dried up, I got angry and wanted some answers. My ex-boyfriend/fiancé wasn’t talking to me so I was forced to look at myself. I just



JUPITER STOCK IMAGES

kept asking: Who wouldn’t want to marry me? I WAS PERFECT! Or at least I was trying tremendously hard to be perfect. Whatever he desired, I bent over backwards to get. If he got a cold, I would carry tissue in my purse from then on in case he ever needed it. Who doesn’t want to marry that woman?

Then it hit me; WHO IN THE HELL IS THAT WOMAN? She definitely wasn’t the Tara Teresa Johnson that I knew and previously loved. She was lost and I had to find HER.

“The Quest Back to Me” led me to a single source of happiness that had never failed me, that was singing. I had stopped singing after my ex made some snide comment about my voice. I mustered the courage to start taking voice lessons. From the moment I started singing the first scale, I felt HER coming back. The higher the note on the scale, the higher my confidence rose.



Eventually, my voice coach encouraged me to start auditioning for plays in New York. I wondered how she knew that was something I had always wanted to do. I got a principle role in the musical “Dreamgirls” on my third audition! From there, my true passion came to the surface. I wanted to pursue a career in television, in front of the camera.

I searched for the perfect place to turn my dream into a reality, the television program at Columbia College. So I packed my bags, said goodbye to my old life in the Big Apple and headed for the Windy City to become an actress and television producer extraordinaire!

Now I thank my ex for what he did; he forced me to reclaim my life. Don’t get me wrong, I still want to get married. But this time, I will know the woman who stands at the altar to recite her vows and she won’t be a stranger. She is my best friend; she is the “true me.”

—Design by Shay Bapple

“Who doesn’t want
to marry
that woman?
Then it hit me:
WHO IN THE
HELL IS THAT
WOMAN?”

The facts behind the faith.

Columbia graduate student contrasts his Catholic upbringing to an education based solely on fact

GERARDO GALVÁN
Graduate student, AEMM

Faith is a powerful and funny thing. It has the power to bring people together and, at the same time, rip them apart. It can heal, yet it can also start wars. The dichotomy of the concept is something that has always fascinated me and made me very interested in the different ways people interpret faith.

Growing up in a Catholic household, faith was always something that was instilled in me from a very young age. We had to have faith in God, both in His existence and His power and the influence He had in our lives. At the same time, it was almost a blind faith because, as a child, you rarely questioned what your parents told you; you just accepted it.

As you get older, however, the same amount of faith you had before just isn't enough. The older you get, the more you need. You begin to question and ask

"I put all my faith into facts." why things are the way they are and you start looking for it in a different place — you start looking for facts. As we progress with our education, we are bombarded with learning how to prove things: proving a math problem is correct, defending an argument in a paper and finding facts to support any type of idea we put forth. While, in practice, this is a good idea, faith just seems to take a backseat along the way and we forget how to believe in things.

At least, that was my experience. I grew up full of faith and turned to facts as I aged. I was no longer able to just believe in God and spiritual things without any hard evidence. After all, everything I had been taught in school was to make sure things could be backed up with facts and science in school seemed to provide more "real" answers than faith ever could.

So, in essence, I put all my faith into facts.

I relied heavily on only what could be proven and if there was no evidence, I wouldn't believe it.

As people age and become more knowledgeable, they often look down on those

who thrive on faith and consider them less intelligent. It's a bizarre paradox, but it was one I went through. It wasn't until I hit points where things were just unexplainable that I had trouble grasping events. It was during these tough times that I realized one cannot live on facts alone.

The dichotomy of fact and faith is one that cannot be separated, no matter how hard you try. With faith, people become stronger and can work together to help get through those difficult times, even if it isn't necessarily faith in a superior being but just faith that things will get better. Faith can give strength when facts fall short. It is through faith that people can survive because a human can spend their entire lives learning but the more they learn, the more they realize the less they know.

I'm not advocating following blindly or being so wrapped up in faith. Like anything else in this world, too much of a good thing is also bad. It's important to keep the balance, to really understand the importance of faith and come to the realization that they both need to coexist.

—Design by Kelsey Herron



JUPITER IMAGES

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patron saint of Mexico and has become a national symbol, as well as a highly exalted religious icon.



JUPITER IMAGES

Rosary beads are a traditional aspect of the Catholic faith. Each bead is used as a counter in a series of 15 meditations regarding the mysteries of the lives of Jesus and Mary. Galván cited them as a symbolic image in his Catholic upbringing.

A FAMILY OF FAITH

Gerardo Galván is a Mexican-American student whose parents emigrated from the small village of Monte Escobedo in Zacatecas, Mexico. He grew up in the northwest suburbs in Palatine, Illinois. Galván received his undergraduate degree in marketing from the University of Illinois and is a graduate student at Columbia working toward a degree in Arts Entertainment Media Management.

Zacatecas, or what is often referred to as "the City of Silver," depends on agriculture, mining, and tourism for its livelihood. It is Mexico's eighth-largest state and occupies just over 3% of the country's surface area.



Mexico



Zacatecas

Monte Escobedo

0 50mi

Source EXPLORANDO MÉXICO



K. HERRON

You said you grew up in a strictly Catholic household, what was that like?

My parents are Mexican immigrants; it was ingrained in their culture. We were so focused on going to church just for that ritual.

When would you say you lost interest in the church and its rituals?

Once I was in high school, I shied away from faith for awhile. I wasn't agnostic or atheist, I just wasn't interested.

You talked about how your family life was very religious, yet your education taught you otherwise. Was that confusing for you as a child?

Education is so focused on facts; it almost gets to the point where it ignores the cultural aspects of religion. I had a lot of friends who thought they were "too smart" for religion, it made me put things in a better perspective.

Where would you say you are now with your faith?

Now, I'm definitely a lot more spiritual. I consider myself a Christian, but I really just try to live a good life.

How would you define what it is to have faith?

I guess it's just the belief that something exists — that there's more to life than what you see. —KH

K. HERRON

"It was the most excruciating pain I have ever felt in my entire life."

Defending faith

The struggle of an athlete's ruptured knee and dreams

BY ALICIA VALTIERRA
Journalism major

Faith can be one of many different things. People can define faith as something religious or it can just be something that is very close to them. I consider faith something I use to keep motivated to do anything in life.

To me, it's what I turn to when I feel like giving up. I have a lot of faith in myself. It makes me feel like I can do anything I set me mind to. For example, I have been playing soccer ever since I was about seven years old. During my senior year of high school, I was playing indoor soccer for the winter season to start getting in shape for the actual spring season. Sadly, I was injured in one of the indoor games.

The whole inside of my knee basically exploded. I tore my ALC, MCL and meniscus from simply twisting about two inches in the wrong direction. It was the most excruciating pain I have ever felt in my entire life. I ended up having surgery to reconstruct all the tendons in my knee the day before New Year's Eve. My doctor told me that I wouldn't be able to play soccer for my senior year of high school, and that I probably wouldn't even be able to play soccer in college anymore as well.

It was then that my faith in myself and the faith that I received from my mother was shaken. My mother always supported me in my athletics. When I would get frustrated and wanted to quit, my mom

always told me to take a breath, go back and try it again or work it out. She came to every game and cheered me on from the sidelines. She always had an extra Gatorade or vitamin water on the side just in case. Having her support me for all those years made me have strength in myself. So when I became injured, I was emotionally crushed. Soccer was my life. For 12 years, I played travel soccer in the fall, indoor in the winter, school soccer in the spring and 3v3 tournament all through the summer. I didn't know anything but soccer. I felt as if there was nothing I could do to change it.

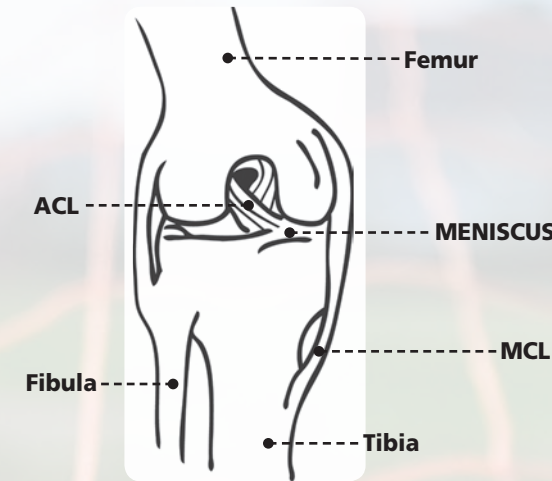
I had to go through five months of

tough physical therapy. But week by week, I started to notice how I was gaining strength back in my knee. My physical therapist was surprised as well. I started to have faith again. I had a mind set that it wasn't the end of soccer for me. I was going to get better and play again.

After five long months of therapy, my doctors felt that if I wanted to, I could start playing soccer again. I eased myself back into it, and I am now playing again. My mom is so proud of the fact that I never gave up, and I am proud of the fact that I never lost faith in myself.

—Design by Kelsey Lindsey

MAJOR LIGAMENTS IN THE KNEE



KELSEY LINDSEY

» **ACL** (Anterior cruciate ligament) A cruciate ligament of each knee that attaches the front of the tibia with the back of the femur and functions especially to prevent hyperextension of the knee and is subject to injury especially by tearing
» **MCL** (Medial collateral ligament) A ligament of the inner knee that connects medial parts of the femur and tibia and helps to stabilize the knee joint
» **Meniscus** A fibrous cartilage within the joint of the knee

Source MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY



The **documentarian**...



Working in production, Eric Scholl begins filming for a documentary.

Courtesy ERIC SCHOLL

...behind the **facts**

WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM?

According to the Skeptic's Dictionary, Agnosticism is the position of believing that knowledge of the existence or non-existence of God is impossible.

It is often put forth as a middle ground between theism and atheism. Understood this way, agnosticism is skepticism regarding all things theological. The agnostic holds that human knowledge is limited to the natural world, that the mind is incapable of knowledge of the supernatural.

An agnostic also could be a theist or an atheist. The former is called a fideist, one who believes in God purely on faith. The latter is sometimes accused by theists of having faith in the non-existence of God, but the accusation is absurd and the expression meaningless. The agnostic atheist simply finds no compelling reason to believe in God.

For more information about agnosticism visit the web site: skepdic.com/agnosticism.html

—RDC

Searching for truth in a mixed belief marriage

BY ERIC SCHOLL
Associate Professor,
Television Department

When I was chosen as the Faculty Fellow for this year's Critical Encounters focus, Fact & Faith, my first thought was, "Me?"

Science has never been my strong suit. My last science class was chemistry in high school, and while I didn't leave any blast marks, my performance was less than stellar. I do have more experience on the side of faith, but this too was confusing. I am a product of a mixed marriage—my father is a minister and my mother has always tended toward the agnostic.

I don't remember much religious talk as a child. I was not a traditional "preacher's kid," because my dad did not have a church, but rather concentrated on social work in a series of boys' homes. This made me a SPK—"Secret Preacher's Kid." Since my peers were not aware of my PK status, it meant I was immune to the type of rebellion common to offspring of clergy, which left me free to chart my own course of rebellion. It was very freeing. My father has never been one to preach (Although he does, on occasion.) He was much more interested in doing socially relevant work. Faith may have been his



Courtesy STOCK EXCHANGE

motivation, but he didn't flaunt it.

Although my mother has not really taken an overt position of agnosticism, she has never been one to look for supernatural explanation for things. We were never encouraged as children to look for divine intervention or fear the wrath of an angry god.

You did things because they were right. Heaven? Sure, it would be nice, but it's not a very practical scenario. The real, physical world provided explanations if you looked for the evidence.

So here I am, a mix of the two, with a drive for social justice, a healthy skepticism toward easy answers and a need to seek evidence to back up my beliefs. Did I really have any choice but to go into documentary? While science may have eluded me, I've had a long relationship with searching for evidence and proof, through documentary work. I've always been drawn to doc's ability, to paraphrase Bill Nichols, to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange, but also its ability to shine light in the dark places of injustice. That said, I recognize the limitations of documentary to portray objective reality. I teach a class, Fictional Documentary Workshop, which explores the grey areas—the way that the very act of filming and editing changes the reality being captured; The way it is impossible, and not necessarily desirable, to present objectivity.

FICTIONAL DOCUMENTARY WORKSHOP

The fictional documentary class taught by Eric Scholl explores the grey area existing between fiction and non-fiction media; exploring the ways film and video artists adapt material from real life for creative purposes. Currently the workshop exists of graduate students and half undergraduate students.

The class looks deeply into questions such as; Is seeing believing? Why do we trust documentary? Why is the story so necessary?

For more information on documentaries by Eric Scholl, visit his website at: amalgamatedmediaworks.com

Within Scholl's works, we can find **The End of the Nightstick**. This piece looks into police brutality and torture in Chicago, taking a deeper look into the Jon Burge Case. He also has done documentaries on cajun music, dogsled racing and labor arts. —RDC

I believe it is possible to recognize the manipulation of reality inherent in documentary, while recognizing its power to bring, not a copy of reality, but a portrait of truth. Part of this is accepting that, as a filmmaker, it is not my job to provide answers but pose questions. If you provide all of the answers, your doc may be entertaining and informative, but your audience's work is done when the lights go on. As a filmmaker, I have to have faith that the audience will look at my presentation of the "Facts," recognize my point of view, and go on to ask their own questions. Which is not so coincidentally, what Critical Encounters: Fact & Faith is about.

—Design by Reina DeLaCruz

"This is a strong example of how faith culminates in action."

—ADRIANA MÉNDEZ
Advertising major

A walk of faith

Columbia student follows a prominent procession in Venezuela, her home country

BY CIARA SHOOK
Journalism major

Adriana Méndez, sophomore advertising major, thinks it is a little important for a human to have at least a little faith.

Growing up in Guanáre, Venezuela, Méndez's parents took her to church each week to teach her Catholicism. Venezuela, a predominantly Roman Catholic country, holds a procession in honor of *La Divina Pastora*, one of the most revered icons of the Catholic faith in this South American country.

For the first time at the beginning of 2009, Méndez participated with her family in the walk as part of her commitment to her faith.

During the walk, a group of men carry a statue of *La Divina Pastora* above their heads for peers to see, and the statue is dressed in the finest clothing and displayed in a glass case. *La Divina Pastora*, which means 'the divine shepherdess,' is the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus and a sheep.

Méndez said the walk is a testament of "por una promesa," a promise made to the Virgin that if she gives them a miracle, they will to participate in the procession.

Méndez said some Catholics commit to taking the walk without shoes.

"Some people promise 'If you do that, I'm going to promise I will not wear any shoes through the procession,' or 'I'm going to be carrying my kids, if you do this or that,'" Méndez said.

"When I did it, there was a dad and he had promised to carry his daughter for every procession every year, so he's been doing that for 19 years. She was 19—she was heavy and he had to carry her during the whole thing."

The walk began during a cholera outbreak in 1855 when residents of the Venezuelan city of Barquisimeto walked through the streets praying that *La Divina Pastora* end the epidemic, which was granted when the procession took place.

KEEPING THE FAITH WHILE AT COLLEGE

Though Méndez attended Mass with her family each Sunday, she no longer goes to church while in Chicago and relies on her personal spirituality.

"Now that I am in the United States without my family and practically alone, I especially need to have faith," Méndez said.

Méndez said she does not believe she should go to church to be diligent to her religion, but she attends once a year with her family at Christmas.

"I know what I believe in," Méndez said, "but I don't need somebody to tell me 'you have to go to this.'"

Méndez said her faith helps to give her strength and helps to keep her going in life.

"I can achieve my goals if I have faith in myself and in the things I do," Méndez said.

"Sometimes it is hard to manage school, work and other activities, but with faith anything is possible." —CS



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

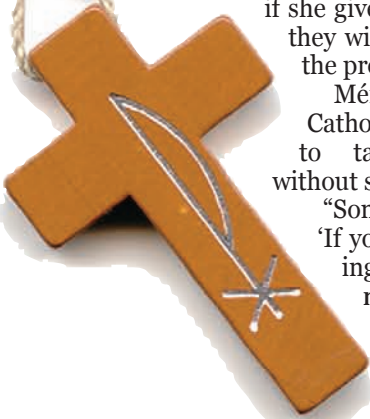
Each year on Jan. 14, more than 2 million people participate in the walk from Santa Rosa to Barquisimeto.

» Widespread praise

The procession began in 1855 during a cholera outbreak, when residents walked through the streets of Barquisimeto, imploring *La Divina Pastora* heal their sick.

» Best-dressed

La Divina Pastora statue is decorated in the finest materials by the finest designers, so during the procession she is the best dressed woman in the million-plus crowd.



SOUTH AMERICA

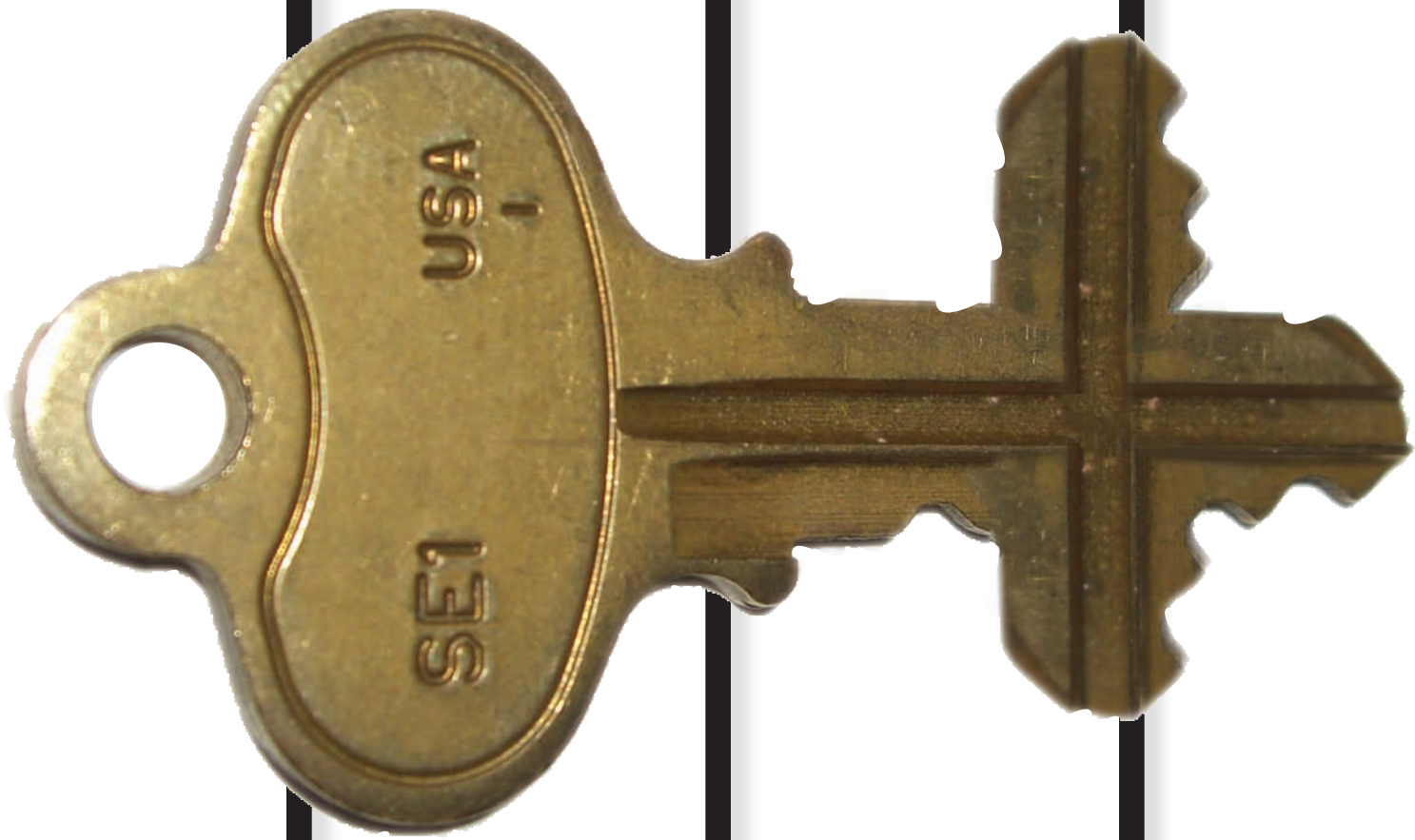


Photo Illustration by MARK HERTVIK

Into the lions' den, back out again

James Zbonski's family and faith helped him through prison and alcoholism

BY VICTORIA ZBONSKI
Journalism major

Faith. It gives every person hope that things can only progress positively. Faith. It is abstract and free-spirited. When times are tough, faith is that extra push that makes everything worth living for. Life has its ups and downs and for some people, that roller-coaster ride isn't so smooth.

Faith is more of an idea than a fact and is too complex to have just one single definition. Studs portrays that in "Hope Dies Last: Keeping the Faith in Difficult Times." Before I read his stories, faith was meaningless to me. I am not very religious and have grown up believing that there is a higher being, but there is not a Jesus and there is definitely nothing to the Bible. I always associated faith with religion, so the whole idea of faith was just a waste of my time. In reality faith is whatever you believe it to be.

Recently, times have gotten tougher for many Americans due to the poor economy. My father, a man with a huge heart, has really had it rough. After reading Terkel's stories I spoke to my father, James Zbonski, about his

views on faith. He has always been much more religious than myself and told me that now, after losing his job, his mother, and nearly his home, he finds hope by reading excerpts from the Bible and never gives up on his faith.

The stories he told me almost broke my heart and helped form my own definition of my faith. I realized that whatever I do, if I work my hardest and am determined to achieve my goals, eventually I will become the person I want to be. That is faith. Almost everyone makes wrong choices in life, but it's how you recover from your mistakes that makes you who you are. If you believe in yourself and have faith in yourself, the rest will fall into line, hopefully.

My dad made many wrong choices as an adult and his life started going downhill at a fast pace. When the economy started slipping, there was no work for many carpenters and painters like my father. He ended up an alcoholic and in prison. At that moment he said that he had lost all hope in his life until I sent him a letter while he was emotionally and physically a mess. He explained that the Bible wasn't giving him the faith that he



Courtesy VICTORIA ZBONSKI

Victoria Zbonski poses with her father, James Zbonski, in an undated photo. She kept faith in her father by writing letters to him while he was imprisoned.

needed to survive like it used to. The encouraging letter from his only daughter, filled with our favorite Shakespeare quotes and as much love as I could express in a letter, gave him more faith than ever before. Hearing this honestly made me cry.

I noticed that my faith lies in the hands of my family and extended family. The support

from those who love you is the best feeling. It's like having an army of people on your side. I know for a fact that they will all be there for me when I'm in need of some encouraging and I will be there for them. I know family will never disappear, so I will start here with faith.

—Design by Mark Hertvik

"The support from those who love you is the best feeling. It's like having an army of people on your side."

"And it harm none, do what you will"

Adjunct faculty member, Ali Beyer, tells her story about growing up Pagan

BY ALI BEYER
*Adjunct Faculty,
Television Department*

My mother was a Wiccan High Priestess. Growing up in Madison, Wis. in the 1980s, this was uncommon to say the least, but this was especially evident since my siblings and I attended Catholic school. I wasn't raised Catholic, however, my parents are strong believers in private school. My mom's family is Irish Catholic while my dad was raised Lutheran; both of my parents are one-fourth Gypsy, which made Paganism a good fit for our family. Our unusual situation let me to spend a great deal of time as a child deciding what my own spiritual inclinations were.

I never believed in Catholicism, but I found the ornate rituals taking place to be fascinating. Due to my upbringing, I was aware even at a young age of some of the Pagan undertones in this mainstream religion. I found extraordinary nuns and priests in the Madison Catholic schools who were more interested in spiritual conversations than attempts at conversion, and looking back I appreciate it greatly.

Alongside traditional subjects, we had religion class and I liked it a great deal – to me it was like philosophy class and I especially appreciated the time we spent looking at other traditions. I had the opportunity to visit other Christian churches as well as looking less at well-known religions such as Mormons and the Seventh Day Adventists. My favorite was the day I got to visit a Quaker meeting house. Although I did not desire to practice a religion other than Wicca, I found many similarities between the different belief systems and I enjoyed searching for the overlap.

My own places of worship were so much different! We were generally either outdoors in semi-private spaces or at someone's house or backyard. Once in a while, there would be a public event at

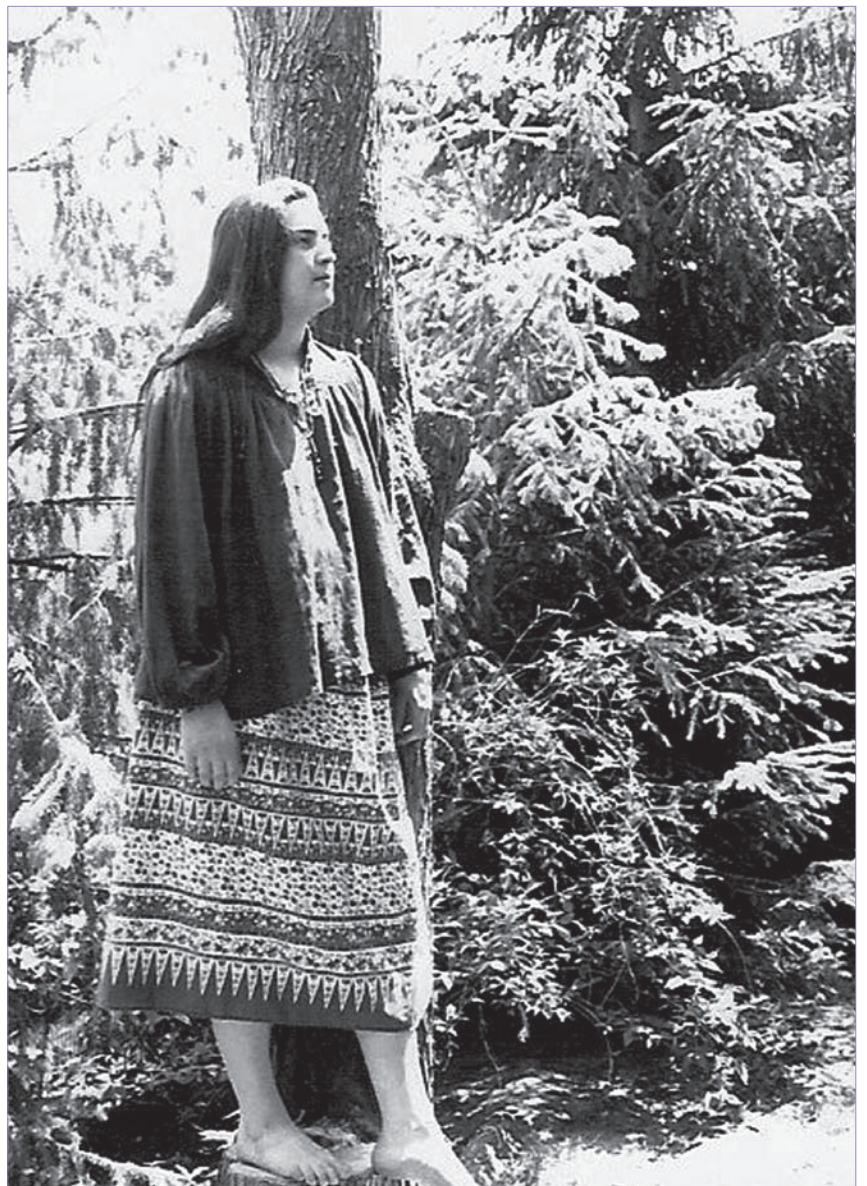


Courtesy ALI BEYER
Beyers mother, Serenity, at a Pagan Spirit Gathering in the early '90s.

a meeting space such as Gates of Heaven (an old church building that hosted weddings and the like) or at the local Unitarian church. There were also a few festivals around the country held for a week or so outdoors where people would camp and gather to celebrate one of the major Holy Days.

At these Pagan festivals a lot of fun and revelry occurred, but there was also a great deal of spirituality going on – and once again I was amazed at both the similarities as well as the difference between the many paths being presented to me as Pagan! This experience allowed me an even greater awareness of what I personally believed, and what traditions are more cultural than spiritual to me.

Being the eldest daughter of a Wiccan High Priestess, I heard from the day I was born that I was Goddess given, and I knew that my job was to one day serve Her by being a Priestess too. This would be the greatest gift that I could give Her



Beyer as a teenager in Madison, Wisconsin.

Courtesy ALI BEYER

“Being the eldest daughter of a Wiccan High Priestess, I heard from the day I was born that I was Goddess given, and I knew that my job was to one day serve Her by being a Priestess too.”

– and that I could give my mother. This was both a burden and a birthright I suppose, and it is true that out of my four other siblings, I am the only one who has pursued the priesthood in our religion. However, I also think this caused me to really stop and consider what it is I think about things both spiritual as well as mundane. I am very aware of what I actually know and what it is I believe and where that line crosses and/or blurs – and I am also willing to change that line altogether on occasion.

What I am certain of, is that this type of personal inquiry about spiritual affairs has made me a better artist and a better scholar. Throughout my life, this line of inquiry has allowed me to exercise critical thinking skills in a practical manner about a subject I have always had a great deal of interest in. For me, perhaps it has never been only about what I believe, but it is rather that the pursuit of knowledge has always been worthy.

—Design by Kendra Callari

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WICCA & PAGAN?

Books

- »»“The Pagan Path: The Wiccan Way of Life” by Janet Farrar
- »»“Paganism: An Introduction to Earth-Centered Religions” by Joyce & River Higginbotham
- »»“Bonewit’s Essential Guide to Witchcraft and Wicca” by Isaac Bonewits
- »»“Dictionary of Northern Mythology” by Rudolph Simek
- »»“People of the Earth: The New Pagans Speak Out” by Elen Evert Hopman
- »»“Natural Magic” by Doreen Valiente
- »»“The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft” by Ronald Hutton
- »»“Wicca: The Old Religion in the New Millennium” by Vivianne Crowley
- »»“The Encyclopedia of Celtic Wisdom: A Celtic Shaman’s Sourcebook” by Caitlin Matthews
- »»“Practical Magic in the Northern Tradition” by Nigel Pennick
- »»“A Witch Alone, New Edition: Thirteen Moons to Master Natural Magic” by Marian Green

Online

- »»Witch’s Voice
www.witchvox.com
- »»Circle Sanctuary (WI)
www.circlesanctuary.org
- »»Covenant of the Goddess (COG)
www.cog.org —KC

What is Wicca and what is Paganism?

The definition of Pagan and/or Wicca can vary from person to person.

According to Selena Fox, High Priestess of Circle Sanctuary, Wiccans and Pagans honor the Elements of Nature: Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit. They also use the associated directions – North, South, East, West and Center – in the sacred circles where rituals are held. Rituals usually include a combination of invocations, movement, meditation, music, and the use of magical tools.

Most Wiccans follow the Wiccan Rede when working magic, “And it

harm none, do what you will.” This saying is the central ethical law of Wicca.

For Beyer, she believes in a higher power, which she chooses to see reflected to her in a higher feminine and masculine form – these are Gods and Goddesses. She also believes in the concept of the Old Gods, which pre-exist before humans.

“A big difference between Paganism and many religions is that Pagans, for the most part, do not believe in heaven and hell, nor do they think theirs is the only spiritual fulfillment,” said Beyer. Beyer said that Pagans do not pros-

elytize. “For Wiccans, this is actually part of this tradition. There is some mystery and secrecy that this tradition is steeped with due to persecution of witches during the burning times in particular,” said Beyer.

“There have been recent examples of discrimination in this country to this day, so many people do not declare this religion publicly,” said Beyer. “I do because I always have, but I understand that reasoning for others.” —KC

Source “Introduction to the Wiccan Religion and Contemporary Paganism” by Selena Fox, High Priestess of Circle Sanctuary .



Courtesy SODAHEAD.COM



Courtesy THE TREE HOUSE MAGAZINE

Columbia student ties punk rock and politics together

BY COURTNEY KAZMIERCZAK
Journalism major

I GOT INTO punk rock music in the fifth grade. I had a very small knowledge of what the term “punk” actually meant, but I knew that it made my parents angry and I liked that. They were completely turned off by the idea of their 11-year-old daughter moving on from the safety of boy bands and girl groups and into the world of tattoos, hairstyles that were not commonly accepted, and politics. Once my music started preaching political corruption, I started learning politics and the more I learned, the more I didn’t like it.

Elementary schools do very little to teach about the wrongdoings of our government. We learn the basics of the wars we’ve fought in, surprisingly very little about the civil rights movements, and mostly about the founding of our nation and the creation of the documents that our nation is based upon. We do not learn much about the Trail of Tears, race riots, and the herding of Japanese-Americans into designated living areas after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In elementary school our government is glamorized, idolized and made to sound like the number one greatest thing on our planet.

I am a big learner, and since I wanted to keep up with the angry punks I did my research. I read about all of the things that my fifth grade teacher wasn’t teaching us and then I started to question it. Why was our government willing to help some people but not others? Why were blacks still being treated differently, even though all men were created equal under God? I began to view our own country as a big bully and

I felt helpless to do anything as a fifth grader and that is around the time that I started to lose faith in our government and how great it really was.

After 9/11, I continued to ask even more questions. Sixth grade was the first time that the word “Democrat” had been used to describe me. My uncle is a Republican and during one of my questioning sessions with him (since he was a Republican, I was hoping he could help me understand George Bush) he looked over at my dad and said, “sounds like you’ve got a liberal on your hands, Chris.” I became increasingly frustrated when I realized that most of the people in my town and family circles were for the war. I wanted to know where the anti-war movements were. The protest.

Then one day a few years



Courtesy whateverhq.tmok.com

Milo Aukerman of Descendents performs in front of a sold out crowd.

after I was given my tag as a “liberal Democrat,” I was at our local ice arena, and a 7-year-old girl who was the daughter of a family friend was sitting there with pen in hand and a piece of paper in front of her.

“What are you writing, Maggie?” I asked her out of kind curiosity.

“I’m writing a letter to the

Punk, minus politics, equals lies

COURTNEY'S TOP PUNK BANDS AND ALBUMS

- » **Ramones** “*Ramones*”
- » **Anti-Flag** “*The Terror State*”
- » **Rancid** “*Indestructible*”
- » **The Gaslight Anthem** “*The ‘59 Sound*”
- » **Go Betty Go** “*Nothing Is More*”

president,” she said with child-like nonchalance. I figured this had to be a school assignment of some sort. Something telling Mr. Mush Jr. how great of a president he was and asking what it was like living in the White House. When I asked her what for, she looked up at me with her chubby cheeks and wide eyes filled with innocence and said in a stern voice, “I’m asking him to stop the war.”

I was floored. Here I had been looking for the young

people, much like myself, and I had found her sitting on a concession stand counter at the age of 7. That brief conversation with Maggie did nothing to restore my faith in the government, but it did give me new faith in young people and their ability to make their voices be known and heard and change what they didn’t like.

Faith to me is more like a euphemism for expectations. People expect their religion and God to give them strength. As a Democrat, I had faith, expectations for our government to provide for us as people, treat us equally and for as long as I was paying attention, they failed to do a great job of that. As the years went though I became more and more inspired by what young people were doing to speak out against our government and make their voices be heard. And they were doing it peacefully. The punk rock bands that I had grown to

love created compilation CDs with songs clearly shouting out what they didn’t like about our government. The grassroots movement thrived and worked hard to rope young people into signing their petitions for their various organizations. The first that I really remember as a young adult were the mass of mostly young people gathering against Proposition 8 in California. Gays and straights alike worked together to make their voices heard, and again, it was done peacefully.

In 2008, I became involved with my first presidential campaign for Barack Obama. I’m proud to say that I was one of thousands of young people who worked hard to campaign for our current president and I have full faith that he will do what he can to pull this country out of the slump that we have been in for years, and start doing what we’ve expected our government to do for us for a long time—provide for us.

Young people are incredibly underestimated by the older generations. After the last election though, I have faith that perceptions of us as young people will begin to evolve. Not only did President Obama recognize that young people had done a lot for him, he also acknowledged it and chalked up much of his success to the younger people on his campaign.

For a long time, the opinions of young people have been pushed to the side to make room for those of the more, experienced and older people. We as young people though have finally found our voice and we refuse to continue being pushed to the back burner.

—Design by Vaughn Roland

Forced into religion

A child who
was not willing
to believe in
a higher power

BY CHRIS TERRY
Graduate student, Fiction Writing

“So, I met Tina, the new minister at the Union Church, and I like what she’s saying,” said my mom. Mom was in the passenger seat, my younger sister and I in back, and my father was driving us home after my elementary school’s annual picnic. This was the beginning of fifth grade.

“This Sunday, we’re all going to the church to check it out. There’s Sunday School for Chris and Caitlin,” she said.

I wrinkled my nose and got mad. Except for weddings and a couple of cousin’s baptisms, our family never went to church. And I intended to keep it that way.

“What? No! Do we have to?” That was my reaction, and probably my sister’s too. Church meant getting up at a certain time on Sundays, sacrificing the hours of pajamas, cartoons, sugar cereal and, well, it also meant going to church.

Church was dressing up, and I was hard-pressed to wear anything but a Metallica shirt and some Bugle Boy jeans. Church was going to school on the weekend, and I thought that five times during the week was enough already. Church was about God, and I didn’t believe in God because God didn’t make sense.



Illustration courtesy of FOTOLIA

We all value specifics.

God was magic, like a ghost. Ghosts weren’t real, and magic was just someone being slick.

“Yes, you have to. What did you think? We were going to leave you at home? We’re just going to try it,” she said.

Mom had made up her mind and there was nothing we could do. Our family is creative. Dad writes songs on the guitar, Mom makes quilts and incredible cookies, Caitlin dances and writes poetry, and I write stories and the occasional song.

We’re imaginative, but realistic, needing fact. Dad does legal work, there are specific measurements to quilts and baked goods, dance is precision and bal-

ance, and I work as a proofreader.

We all value specifics. In Sunday school, the kids in Caitlin’s class were given pieces of poster board and told to draw a saint. Other kids broke out the crayons and drew MLK and Mother Teresa. Caitlin’s poster was of a brown-skinned woman with curls of hair com-

Those are the things that we do in my family.

ing off the sides of her head. She held it up in front of the church’s congregation and said, “My poster is of my grandma, because my Dad always says, ‘My mother is a saint!’”

Everyone in the church laughed, but my sister wasn’t joking. Those are the things that we do in my family. We take things literally, and we elevate them from the day-to-day to the divine.

Our church attendance slowed after less than a year, when Mom got angry at being left in charge of the Sunday school. By the time I was in junior high, we only went on Christmas and Easter, and I still fussed about that. Church hadn’t done anything for me. It was boring. I wanted my Sundays to myself. I argued about my outfit every week. The other kids in Sunday school were squares. We always left the reception before I could eat enough cookies to count on both hands. I still

didn’t believe in God.

I want to be responsible for my own actions. There’s no one else to blame if something goes wrong. I’ll get myself where I’m going.

Ten years later, I rode my bicycle from my apartment to my parents’ house. Dad met me on the stoop with his standard, “We gave at the office” line, then squinted and looked at me a bit closer.

“Since when did you start wearing a bike helmet?” he asked.

“Well, I’ve been biking a lot for the last few years, and nothing bad has happened to me. I figured that my luck was bound to run out, and I should either start believing in God, or wearing a bike helmet,” I told him.

I want to be responsible for my own actions.

Dad looked at the helmet, a dorky black plastic beetle that I was pulling off of my head, then said, “Well, you can believe in god if you like, but whatever you do, don’t start going to church!”

I held up the helmet and said, “Don’t worry, Dad. I chose the helmet over god.” We both laughed and went inside.

—Design by Ashley McHale

LIFE’S TOUGH, WEAR A HELMET

- » Non-helmeted riders are 14 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than helmeted riders
- » By wearing a helmet, an injury can be prevented every four minutes
- » 85-88% of critical head and brain injuries can be prevented through the use of a bicycle helmet
- » Helmets can prevent an estimated 75% of bicycle fatalities among children —AM

Source www.wearahelmet.org

Will the world be round in 3009?



PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.JUNLIMITED.COM

How science, religion and culture influence our beliefs

BY PATRICK LICHTY
Assistant Professor, IAM and Executive Editor of Intelligent Agent Magazine

"The more you experience, the less you know."
—Lau Tzu, Tao Te Ching

"Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance."
—W. Durant

Consider that before Kepler, Copernicus and Newton, contemporary science was that the Earth was the center of the universe and before that, it was flat. This very fact of the development of human knowledge over time is at the heart of the collision of fact, faith or whether either one accurately describes human knowledge.

Education from current knowledge is in no means falsehood, but on the other hand, that does not mean one can rely on information without empirical evidence as anything other than anecdotal.

For example, high school educator Danny Pennington of West Monroe, La., is a staunch supporter of creationism in biology curriculum, a practice approved by the state legislature earlier in the year

as a part of "critical thinking" legislation. His belief is that the factual case for Darwin was faked due to a set of 19th century drawings made by Ernst Haeckel, describing the development of a human foetus until it reaches human form.

From this, Pennington has been angrily stating to the press he feels he lied to students.

I do not know any ethical educator, regardless of their ideology, who believes they would willingly lie to their students.

However, we live between two problems; that fact develops with new innovations, and that there is no empirical faith.

Education from current knowledge is in no means falsehood, but on the other hand, it does not mean one can rely on information without empirical evidence as anything other than anecdotal.

Where does that put society?

In many ways, it makes science look like a pseudo-religion, and religion in the place of comparative theory.

Neither work, such as the unproductive dichotomies put forth by Plato in considering mind-body dualism and C.P. Snow's segregation of the arts and sciences.

As recent studies in physics and cognitive sciences suggest, ourselves and our universe are far less polar than thought.

Quantum entanglement shows that objects can be affected at a distance, and our consciousness is very much tied to our bodily form and structure.

The "either-or, right-wrong, fact-faith binary breaks down as our knowledge of the universe continues to develop.

However, the problem of the apparent opposition of fact and faith and forcing of the subject is the insecurity of not knowing, but it is also no excuse for irrational behavior either.

It may seem "old school" to say that I have fallen back to Zen-like mix of post-

modern uncertainty and Enlightenment reason as an antidote to my challenges in the classroom and with the misperceptions with the public.

That is, I still have some hope that objective evidence from as many sources as possible, mixed with an informed position, based on the sciences and humanities, as well as exposure to as many ideologies and cultures as possible will hopefully create a person who can make his/her own decisions.

The "either-or, right-wrong, fact-faith binary breaks down as our knowledge of the universe continues to develop.

It appears that humanity, such as it is, is trapped in the glacial dialogue of history that has seen many cultures, governments and religions (the old ones now called "mythologies"). It will be for history to say whether we were right, wrong, or whether that we just were.

Beyond this, the metaphysical, the supposed "fact" of any religion and the "fact" that over a millennium ago the world was flat is incomprehensible for me.

Perhaps in 3009, the world will no longer be round, but that is not to say that we have lied, as we have entered into this enterprise in good faith.

There may not be any opposition between fact or faith as both have their unsure points. However, without acting with insight, reason and caring, fear, ignorance and unreason may surely devour us.

—Design by Shameka V. Robinson

INFO ABOUT LOUISIANA LAW PASSED ON TEACHING EVOLUTION

» According to npr.com, the state of Louisiana mandated creationism and evolution to be taught in schools, but the U.S. Supreme Court denied the right in 1987.

» In 2008, state legislators passed a law that protects teachers who want to question how science, religion and evolution came about.

WHO IS DANNY PENNINGTON?

» Danny Pennington, an assistant principal at Good Hope Middle School in West Monroe, La., recently created a power point presentation on his research about the theory of evolution.

» He questions the drawings of German scientist Ernst Haeckel's evidence on evolution and believes it was faked.

» He mentions that evolution occurs within species but disagree that over time an ape can turn into man.

» Pennington suggests that students that care about the topic use critical thinking and question everything. —SR

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Culture & Conversation: Traveling in Peru

TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 2010

11:00 A.M.

**MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS CONFERENCE ROOM
618 SOUTH MICHIGAN AVENUE/4TH FLOOR**

During J-Term 2010, thirteen Columbia College students traveled to Peru as part of Teresa Puente and Elio Leturia's Travel Writing course offered by the Journalism department. Students wrote travel articles, submitted blog posts, worked on multimedia projects, shot photos, and produced short videos about their experiences. Join us for Culture & Conversation as they share their journey. This event is free and open to the public.