

The Muckraker

Exclusive Interviews

Adoption

with Kristin
Vanderkin-Jus

Palestine

with Tamara
Arii

College
Counselor

with Hilary
Campbell

Library

with Lucy
Scott-Keller-
meier



The Muckraker

Speaks

Dear readers,

This issue marks the beginning of *The Muckraker's* 18th volume! In the spirit of our mission, "to inform the John F. Kennedy School student body of the goings-on of the school" and "to improve the quality of life at school for the students," we hope to incite discussion on several controversial questions in this issue. What is the role of adoption at our school? Will the Israel-Palestine conflict ever reach a peaceful solution? Is free will just an illusion? And are we unique? We are proud to give students and teachers a voice on these questions, and look forward to your opinions!

The Muckraker has come a long way, but still, there is room for more. So many new developments occur at JFKS every day that we are always happy to see new journalists willing to report on them. If you would like to write for *The Muckraker*, send us an email at themuckraker@gmail.com!

We are looking forward to a new year of muck-raking!

Yours truly,
The Muckraker Editors



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Interview: Lucy Scott-Kellermeier

Please introduce yourself.

I am Lucy Scott-Kellermeier and I work in the high school library. I came to the school in 1982 as a fourth grade teacher. I worked with the youngest kids until 2010. Then I took a couple of years off for family reasons, and when I came back, I was in the high school library.

And where are you from?

(laughs) That's not easy. I was born in Pennsylvania, I lived in New Jersey until I was eight, and then we started moving around. I lived in France, one year back in the States, and then I really grew up in England. I lived in London, and then in West Sussex. I went back to the States to go to college.

Is there anything about the library students probably don't know?

Well, it seems like a lot of student don't realize that we actually have e-books and audio books. And I think a lot of them don't really think about the fact that we have databases when they are looking for information, and the database might be a more efficient place to start than Google.

And are there any secrets of the library? Any stories from the past?

I do know that we have had some rare books. Some of which disappeared and some of which I actually have now in our little display case.

What types of rare books?

Some that disappeared were first edition English language translations of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. I don't know whether they were taken or gotten rid of, because of course part of running a library is trying to weed out books all the time. Maybe they've disappeared that way or maybe they disappeared into somebody's backpack years ago so they could sell them.

A recent change in the library was the new computers. Many students have been wondering how the school paid for Windows 8 touch screen computers. Were there particularly many book fines last year?

(laughs) No, it didn't come out of the library budget. It was a request that was in for a long time; we needed the replacement computers. But that was taken care of by technology and by the administrator who is in charge of the budget that we get from the Trust Fund. I understand that the touch screens were just some kind of add-in that wasn't requested. They just came that way. I don't know if that's true or if somebody ordered something different. But we are very happy to have the new ones. I would say I cannot complain!

How much did the library make in fines last year?

I'd have to look. But I would say last year we must have collected over 200 euros, which everybody can avoid if they just remember to renew. They don't even need to have the books with them!

How many books are there in the library?

There are approximately 47,000, down from 48,000 when I first started here. I am weeding out more than I am adding in an effort to clear the shelves enough that you can see what you are looking for.

How many books are checked out a day?

It really depends. Before vacation it's phenomenal. Like before summer vacation, it was hundreds within one day. But during the school year, when everyone's really getting down to business and projects and research papers, there is less turnover, and the books tend to be more non-fiction and serious than during vacation.

Are there any specific titles which are most popular?

One of the authors who is unbelievably popular is John Green. He is the guy who wrote *The Fault in Our Stars* which has been out all the time. I will have a signed copy for raffle on Fun Day! The year before last year, he was in Berlin as a guest author.

What's your favorite book?

Now that's really hard. I suppose one of my all-time favorite authors is Madeleine L'Engle. She wrote the *Wrinkle in Time* series and she has written quite a bit of adult and young adult fiction. I love Gabriel García Márquez. I think he is a fabulous writer on a more classical literary level. And I suppose from original English, Barbara Kingsolver is one of my favorite authors. But I've got so many it would be really hard to pick out one single book.

What's the best part of being a librarian?

Actually, it's the kids. Even if I am crabby sometimes about the noise level, I really enjoy seeing students that I've known all the way through the school, and just to see them grow up. It's fun. And helping anybody look for something. Whether it's a book or information in a database, I enjoy that.

Thanks for the interview!

Interview: Mrs. Campbell



Can you tell us about your background? Where are you from? Where have you worked before?

I'm from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I lived in that area my whole life. So moving really was a big change. I've been a high school counselor for six years. Before JFKS I worked at one other school called Springfield High School. The name makes some people think of the Simpsons, and it was kind of like that too, a typical American suburban public high school. I gave advice on colleges, universities and career options to 11th and 12th graders, but also took care of the mental health stuff. I have also done drug and alcohol counseling, as well as some social work. I went to the University of Delaware and then attended UPenn for my masters. Other than that, I have a husband and a two-year-old son.

What are the biggest differences that you notice between our school and the one you worked at previously?

So many big differences! The role of the counselor is very different. Here, the families take on a bigger role concerning mental health. Roughly, I am working with the same number of students, but one thing I'll notice here is that students are really mature and respectful, and I don't know if its partly the fact that we have an application process to get into the school, or partly just because German culture fosters that

independence. My students before were a lot more dependent on me for things they could have done on their own and at least half of the students never took AP courses, and that was fine, but it's a shift to think that every single student here is taking such rigorous classes.

What was your major in college?

I went to college undeclared. I was interested in psychology and sociology, but I was also interested in art, so I went by process of elimination. That ended up happening very naturally, and I ended up majoring in Psychology and minoring in Spanish.

What are three things you couldn't live without?

Well, my family of course, dark chocolate, and I also really enjoy music.

What is the best thing about living in Berlin so far? What are your first impressions?

It fascinates me how ahead people are, everyone here uses compost! There are a lot of things you can do for your children, like there are playgrounds everywhere and even Kinder Cafes.

For 11th and 12th graders, what are things in the application process students tend to have a hard time with or miss?

The biggest thing, I think, is being proactive and doing your research early. People here apply to schools that aren't even used to seeing a high school diploma. So I would say the earlier the better, because when people wait too long, the biggest problems come up. And the money, of course. For the US, it's important to have a good conversation with your families about financing your education.

■ Matilde Borio, Clara Frick



Adoption, Normality and Identity

EVER SINCE THE reformation of the German law on adoption in 1976, adopted children are legally treated no differently than biological children. However, this merely formal modification to adoption does not change the fact that most adopted children struggle with their differences. Although adoptees are rarely identifiable as such in public situations, their familial relations determine significant factors of their personalities. For example, few students are aware that a number of pupils at JFKS are also adopted or have adoptees in their immediate family, since this may not be apparent at first.

"You don't know if someone is adopted or not, but it is a special part of them."

So too is the case with Kristin Vanderkin-Jus, a mother and teacher at JFKS, who says that one of the most significant emotional challenges she faced was rejection.

"That's part of the adoption story; you were rejected."

Kristin grew up in Wisconsin and was adopted at two months into a family that had already taken on two other children from two different biological families. As a child, her parents had always made an effort to ensure that she knew she was adopted, but that this fact was not to be seen negatively.

"I knew I was different, but in a good way. Being adopted made me extra special."

Adoption is something that has accompanied Kristin all throughout her life and ultimately played a large role in defining who she is. Growing up, she struggled with her differences and coming to terms with being adopted. In a defining moment she remembers from second grade, her friend was crying because her parents had just told her that she was adopted. While trying to console her, Kristin pondered over why this truth caused her friend to feel so terrible. It was then that Kristin began to realize that being adopted made her different from everybody else.

"I often felt like I didn't fit in with anybody in my family. But I'm very loved and I've never felt ostracized or not accepted."

As Kristin grew up and started to forge her own way in life, she was confronted with many challenging questions, such as "What is adoption?" Because there are so many different stories of adoption and both positive and negative experiences, this question is hard to answer, even for someone like Kristin, who has been contemplating it for decades.

"What does being adopted mean? Maybe it means I love my mom harder."

These problematic situations of feeling different from friends and family and struggling with identity are not limited to adopted children. Many of the conflicts faced by Kristin and other adoptees are not isolated to their cases but rather intrinsically faced by young adults. She remembers seeking help in her teenage years and hearing, "Yes, other kids have this, it's not specific to adoption." Now, she wishes she had pursued "creating some sort of open dialogue" more actively.

"What I would like to see is some conversation and get to know what do other people think about adoption."

The "Normal" Adoption Project, in which Kristin is involved, is a social media project aimed at creating a platform for stories of adoption, in an attempt to facilitate such peer to peer talks. Another goal of this campaign is to question normality and ask, "What is a normal family?" She believes this program has the potential to be beneficial to those touched by adoption as well as the entire JFKS community. Even those people not directly affected by adoption could learn a great deal about the dynamics of their family because the adopted are so much more acutely aware of these principles. In addition to supporting this project, Kristin also wants to become more personally engaged in opening up debate on adoption.

"I am open to having conversations with anyone that has an interest in adoption. I would like to know what other people think about it."

So it seems that even those of us who are not adopted have much to gain from engaging in the "Normal" Adoption Project and increasing awareness of this omnipresent social issue. It provides both a chance for us to become more compassionate human beings as well as an opportunity to find out more about ourselves and the inner workings of our own families. In the end, all that differentiates an adopted child from a biological one is the sequence of a few molecules.

"Adoption is another constellation of family, that is equally as normal as any other."

■ Jonas Nelle

“My Beautiful Palestine”



Two thousand two hundred and nine dead, 11,100 wounded and yet the Israel-Palestine conflict has once again left the mass media cycle. The sad fact is that missiles flying over Gaza are no new occurrence. Violent outbreaks between the two parties have become normal events that newspapers and news stations care little about once the major fighting has died down. What makes this such a sorrowful ordeal is that the media has apparently lost hope that peace might follow these violent eruptions, peace that could bring an end to thousands of civilian casualties. They care little about what follows the brutality, believing that no change could end the endless and deadly battle between Palestine and Israel. Thus, for the last few weeks after dominating our screen, the conflict has disappeared. But for others, the images of destruction, hopelessness and violence on either of side of the strip never leave.

Tamara Aarii is a senior at Santa Catalina School in California, and despite the astounding 12,050 km between her hometown of Monterey and the Gaza Strip, the fate of the Palestinians is extremely close to her heart. Her mother comes from Palestine and it was always of tremendous importance to her to impart her cultural heritage to her daughter. Growing up in America and Saudi Arabia while being Palestinian and continuing the traditions of her people has given her a unique perspective that we in Germany rarely get to hear.

So where exactly are you from?

I was born in Mission Viejo, California.

Have you ever visited Palestine?

I have never been to Palestine. I have an American passport, but my mom never wanted to go there because it would break her heart to see soldiers everywhere, and to see other people occupying what should have been her home and where she should have grown up. My family respected her wishes, but now I am hoping to travel to the West Bank and Israel alone next summer with an organization called Palestine Summer Encounter, where I'll live with a Palestinian refugee family. To visit is one of my biggest dreams.

You grew up, while close to Palestine, still in a very different world than that of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. How do you keep your heritage alive and continue to feel Palestinian?

Life in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip isn't normal. That lifestyle is not the Palestinian way of life, or a lifestyle that anyone deserves. So this question would be a good one for people living under such horrific circumstances. It's a challenge for them to keep the Palestinian heritage alive when their country doesn't exist anymore and their people are being oppressed, but if any people can do that, it's the courageous Palestinians. I am surrounded by our heritage at my grandmother's and uncle's homes, as well as my own. It's a beautiful culture that I never want to lose, and although I fear that one day what happened to the Native Americans will be the fate of the Palestinians, I know that the Palestinians around the world, who have been making other countries their home their whole lives because someone else is living where they all should, will keep the culture more than alive.

What is your feeling towards Israel? Can you understand Israel's justifications for not allowing the creation of a Palestinian state, considering Israel's own history?

My feelings towards Israel are shame, disapproval, disbelief, frustration, and anger. I understand that Jews have been persecuted since the beginning of history, and now that they finally have their finally have their own country, they are too scared to give Palestinians their own state and power in fear of them getting too strong, because they fear Israel might not exist one day. But what I don't

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“My Beautiful Palestine”

understand is why they think that because they were persecuted, they deserve the land that was never theirs in the first place, at any cost, including violating human rights, killing innocent civilians, and treating humans worse than animals. I am disgusted by how inhumane and cruel the IDF is, and so horrified by how they treat Palestinian people. What I don't understand is how they are living next door to the pain of another people that they have experienced since the beginning of their existence, but they continue to believe they have a right to be there.

And what is your opinion of the Hamas? Do you view them as a terrorist association and if so, do you think their actions demonize the voice of the Palestinian people?

I don't view Hamas as a terrorist association. I see them as a group of fighters defending their people, who have been oppressed and tortured for 66 years. Why is it so strange for the world to see Hamas as that? When Israel bombs them, it's "Israel has the right to defend itself." But when Hamas bombs Israel, it's seen as if they are the problem of the conflict and they are the ones starting the violence. Blaming Hamas for firing rockets at Israel is like blaming a woman for punching her rapist. Israel has been raping Palestinians for years, and Hamas is just trying to fight for their rights. Hamas hasn't been around for as long as the conflict has. The creation of Hamas is in response to Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinians. They are some of the most courageous humans the world has ever seen and will ever see. They are all the Palestinian people have.

They fight against the IDF, who have the most advanced technology, while they are making their own weapons, which are toys compared to what their enemy has. Israel puts so much pressure on them to surrender, but they keep fighting. They would rather be martyrs than continue to live without their rights. Their way of life is already so unbearable and inhumane that they would rather die than give up and continue to live under siege and the blockade. Palestinians are a people with a faith stronger than any kind of fear. The land of resistance has seen death and lived without water, electricity, and basic needs for survival. They have had rockets falling above their heads, were psychologically and physically tortured and exhausted. They deserve to explode with happiness. Palestinians wake up every morning and teach the world how to live. They need this bit of happiness before the next round starts, where they will just wow the world again. So Hamas's fight, although I don't support any kind of violence, is completely understandable.

Do you find yourself projecting these feelings you have towards the Israeli state onto Israelis that you meet? Do you often discuss the Israel-Palestine conflict with Israelis?

I have never meet an Israeli, but if I did, it would definitely be a topic that I would like to discuss with them. I would politely and respectfully speak my mind, and like to hear what they have to say as well, and I always hope that those discussions can be civilized and respectful. I have had several deep conversations with my Jewish friend who believes Israel has the right to exist, and even though we disagree on almost everything, the fact that we can acknowledge our differences and cooperate peacefully in our discussion is so beautiful, because that's the only way peace is possible. Violence and firing at each other is never going to solve anything, but sitting down and talking things out will get humanity somewhere.

You live in America, so the coverage you receive of the conflict is obviously drastically different from what your friends view in Saudi Arabia. What do you think about the coverage of the fighting presented in the American media?

When the death toll of Palestinians this summer was about 800, CNN's breaking news headline was "Israeli soldier twists ankle in Gaza." The Western media, although it presents facts most of the time, always puts a little twist on things to make Palestinians seem like the bad guys. Instead of saying, "147 Palestinians civilians bombed and murdered today by IDF planes, and 2 Israeli soldiers killed in battle with Hamas soldiers," it'll say "2 Israeli soldiers murdered" as the big bold headline, and "147 Palestinians killed" in the smaller font headline underneath. The facts are usually there, they're just presented in a way that favors Israel a lot of the time. But there are many times where it's completely truthful and almost unbiased, and I really appreciate that.

So How do you inform yourself about the ongoing fighting? What media outlets do you trust, which do you not?

CNN, BBC, Fox News, and many others, are biased to Israel, as they have a strong hold on the Western media. To get the truth, I follow many Facebook pages, like Free Palestine and Palestine Solidarity Campaign. I also follow Mohamed Zeyara, a man who grew up in Gaza and still has family and friends there, so everything he posts is directly from sources there.

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“My Beautiful Palestine”

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Do you think there, was, or ever will be a circumstance when the conflict will find its end?

This conflict has never seen a day of peace, and I don't think it ever will. I've lost hope. I'm so heartbroken for my beautiful Palestine. I long to see a day where the Palestinians of the world can all return home to a free land where we can rejoice with the Palestinians who have lived in Gaza, and have seen more violence than any other humans in the history of humanity, and congratulate them for their spirit and resistance. But I fear it will just get worse. This summer's war is over, but the occupation is alive and well. It's just a tiny bandaid over a huge, huge scar. Israel is so powerful. As long as the USA financially supports Israel, the conflict will never end.

It is so hard to think of any solution that will create peace, because they are very capable of always finding something to fight about. It would be my dream to see a Palestinian state, with no blockade or siege. I wish that they can one day bring in and out goods of their choice, and have the freedom to travel, and be treated as human beings for the first time. I dream of a day where Palestinians can live in Palestine again, and go to sleep without the fear of being bombed in their sleep, where they can walk to school without a soldier pointing his gun at little children and taunting them at checkpoint for hours, where Palestinians can have good medical care, and women won't die giving birth at checkpoint because a soldier won't let her go through to a hospital.

If Palestinians are given rights and a state, and left alone by Israel, I truly believe they won't cause any more trouble. They will live in peace. They don't want much. They just want to be able to know that their children will come home safely when they send them to school. They just want to be able to leave their homes for work without fearing that it could be bulldozed when they return. I believe in a two state solution. Giving Palestinians a state, rights, and freedom, will be giving them everything they have fought and resisted for.

■ Florentine Friedrich

Metaphysics: Explaining Determinism Pt. II

*“Heaven or Hell
The cards we been dealt
Are the cards that we play”
– Jay-Z, “Heaven”*

IN MY PREVIOUS article, I shared a realization that has occupied my mind for quite some time now. To recapitulate, the article discussed the theory that we possess no control whatsoever over our actions; that everything a person does is the result of outer forces and preset personality structure, lying completely beyond an individual's influence. The theory applies to every situation, causing me to question everything I am faced with in my daily life. The belief that we lack any control whatsoever over our lives can be maddening at times and, as I've come to realize, even damage chances at “success”, whatever that may be. Therefore, I have devised some new theories to counter the self-destructive attitude of pre-determinism.

Although I firmly believe in the concept, anyone wishing to reach his or her full potential in life must live as if humans had free will. Believing in pre-determinism leads to a more passive mindset, which can, on one hand, alleviate stress and allow the individual to accept flaws and mistakes, since they can know with safe certainty they could do nothing to prevent them anyway. It can show someone suffering from guilt or self-loathing a path to self-acceptance and happiness. Someone willing to accept pre-determinism into their lives no longer feels hatred toward those who commit acts of evil, but rather pities the unfortunate personality structure that triggered their actions.

For instance, the natural response to hearing about a murder would be to hate the murderer. He is despicable because he has caused irreparable damage to another's life and should be punished accordingly. However, did the murderer really choose his personality? Either he was born mentally unstable and prone to violence, or an outer force drove him to commit his heinous deed. Mostly, I find, it tends to be a combination of both. Of course, individuals who pose a threat to those around them must be imprisoned, but not as an act of punishment or vengeance. They must be isolated to prevent them from causing further harm to others. If possible, they should be corrected to a point where they can coexist with their surroundings.

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Girl Meets World: The Revival

AH, HOW WE miss the 90's. Not that we remember them; most of us were less than five years old when they ended. But just because the 90's are over doesn't mean television networks can't show reruns of the decade's most popular shows. That's what we remember: watching reruns of *Full House*, *Saved by the Bell*, *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, and *Boy Meets World* after school.

That is why Disney Channel's new show *Girl Meets World*, a spin-off of *Boy Meets World*, has us reverting to our favorite pastime of reruns. *Girl Meets World* takes the viewer back to a time when America's most famous high school was John Adams High, Philadelphia.

Boy Meets World aired in 1993 and centered around Cory Matthews and his friends Shawn Hunter and Topanga Lawrence. The seven season show started when the gang was in 6th grade and followed them into their college years. Eventually, Cory and Topanga get married and move to New York.

Picking up thirteen years later since *Boy Meets World* ended, *Girl Meets World* has been brought into production. Now Cory and Topanga are back, portrayed by the exact same actors as in the original, and the story follows their twelve-year-old daughter, Riley, her best friends Maya, Farkle, and Lucas, and little brother Auggie.

A lot is being expected of this show and many are hoping Disney Channel will make a turn back to the old days and capture the same essence of *Boy Meets World*, especially since it is made by the same creators, Michael Jacobs and April Kelly.

When the new series aired this summer we could already notice quite a few similarities between the original and the spin-off series. There are two best friends, Riley Matthews and Maya Hart, both learning the ups and downs of life at John Quincy Adams Middle School. Notice how Cory and Topanga attended John Adams and Riley attends the school named after John Adams's son. In the television series, Riley is similar to her father, Cory Matthews; she has a loving family and a nice home. Maya is similar to Shawn Hunter, coming from a broken home, and her friends are her family. Minkus, *Boy Meets World*'s smart and nerdy character, has a son named Farkle, who is a know-it-all himself.

So far, the ratings have been good and the show's contract has been renewed for a second season. We are hoping *Girl Meets World* will give viewers the same feeling and experiences we received from watching *Boy Meets World*.

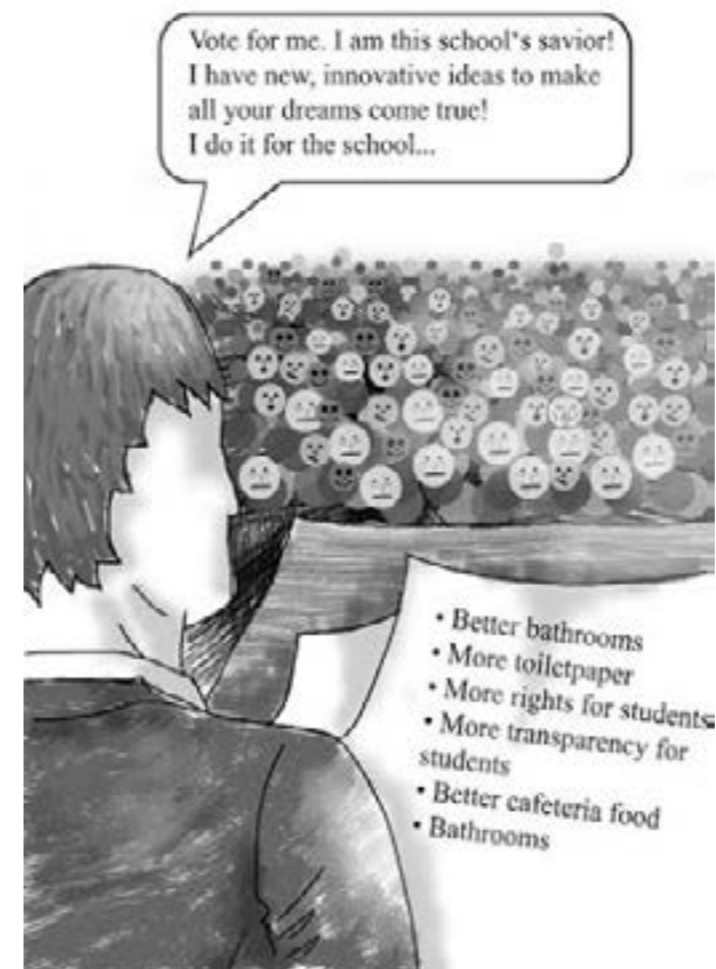
■ Aqueena Crisp, Elsa Kienberger

Metaphysics: Explaining Determinism Pt. II

This is why I am often disturbed by the typical reaction to these “evildoers”. If you ask someone what should be done with, for instance, a murderer, you will find many who suggest most disturbing suggestions involving torture, suffering and maximum discomfort of the perpetrator. I ask those who condone such behavior, what makes you better than the killer? Are you not equally psychotic with your twisted fantasies of another's pain? Are you not equally demented and cruel?

Nonetheless, we can never allow the mentality that life is pre-determined to be adopted, because it would excuse crime. As long as one believes in free will, one will try one's best to do right, avoiding evil behavior. One will not accept failure, but, with the belief that one is in control and able to change one's situation, push onward to achieve goals. The theory is a double-edged sword, and should be treated as such. For more detail on the concept, please refer to my previous article.

■ Niko Severson



Credit: Jakob Eckhardt

Mister E's Mullings: On Uniqueness

Always remember you're
UNIQUE
just like everyone else



WHEN I WAS in graduate school, I took a course in classroom management and the professor told us he could boil students down to six basic types. This flies in the face of everything holy and wholly politically correct. After all, we are a diverse people wherein differences are celebrated. Especially in as liberal a place as Portland, Oregon, the place Bush Jr. once dubbed, "Little Beirut," for a learned, experienced professor to claim we are not so unique ... well, watching these soon-to-be-teachers respond viscerally was like watching a bag of cats trying to take a bath – it was both hilarious and sad.

In reality, the analogy was not without allusions to some of history's greatest minds. Plato's forms, Truth with a capital T. Beauty with a capital B. I would add to that Vindictive with a capital V and Petty with a capital P, but this is off-topic. Nonetheless, much like my classroom management professor's archetypical student analysis, Plato's forms can only be represented but not experienced, and therefore we can't pin every student into a category because we – all of us – are human, and Malice and Austerity can exist within us simultaneously.

When Professor Peterson said to our class, "There are six types of student ... your loner, your grade grubber, your teacher's pet, your pleaser, your self-alienated, and your apathetic," he made sure to allow for variations. Much like analysis of a text can elicit more than one literary device, so can a student encompass more than one archetype.

When I heard Peterson's claim that students can fit into these categories, I was not as young as my cohorts, but I was still shocked regarding the audaciousness of his saying it in front of us. A friend of mine pointed to Jungian arche types and that got me to thinking about Aristotle's rules regarding Drama, his notion that there are only seven stories total in the history of the world and all this fiction around us is just variations on one or another of these seven. It made me

think of intelligent design and God and purpose, fate, free will, and coincidence.

But these are always ideas I enjoy thinking about.... I am teaching *The Summer of My German Soldier* to my seventh graders for the first time. I read the book over the summer two times. Once while I was biking through Southern Sweden and Denmark and again the weekend prior to the beginning of school. The foil in the story is an escaped German POW hiding out in the narrator's abandoned garage who tells her, "But you see, the only questions I like to raise are those that are unanswerable."

Well, I'm sure we teachers fall under the same tutelage regarding Form, Fiction, and Archetype and that students have fitted us already ... by now ... at least. It is with this spirit I remind – myself in any case – to read between the lines, look with 3D and let metaphor mix with math. May we all have a great year and prost, cheers, salud, and nazdraví.

If you have any questions which you would like to see discussed in Mister E's Mullings, send them to themuckraker@gmail.com or post them on our Facebook page!



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to find out about meetings and to
submit articles!**