2006

The Canon, 2006

Dordt College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/dordt_canon

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/dordt_canon/5

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dordt Canon by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.
"I am learning to see. Yes, I am beginning. It's still going badly. But I intend to make the most of my time.” – Rainer Maria Rilke, excerpted from The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge: a novel.

Dear Reader,

This year's edition of The Canon is trying something different than in previous editions. Each work is connected with the centralized theme of "learning to see." Upon a first glance, it may seem as though the above quotation by the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke is somewhat meaningless, because one does not necessarily need to learn to see visually; we do it naturally. However, Rilke is stating something with a deeper meaning. He is learning to see beyond the surface of what he observes in order to comprehend a deeper truth, a truth that may be easily allusive. The process that Rilke describes is difficult, even frustrating at times; however, most things that are of great importance are difficult to achieve. Intermixed within this edition is a series of essays that are meant to aid in the seeing process. Each of these essays, including the artistic and poetic works, have a deeper meaning that is penetrable only when we have the patience and willingness to understand what it is expressing.

Please, take some time to see what the author/artist is attempting to say as we learn from what others have experienced and captured in their art. The significance of what you will discover from doing so will be invaluable.

Yours,

Jeff Gutierrez,
Editor, The Canon
Editorial Policy Statement:

*The Canon* accepts works from Dordt College students that reflect truth in God's creation, and ultimately God himself.

In sensitivity to those who may be adversely affected by excessive violence, vulgar language, or sexually explicit content, *The Canon* will publish no piece containing such material, nor will it publish material that advocates illegal activities that promotes bigotry toward any race, sex, ethnic group, age group, or religion. *The Canon* will also refuse any factual material that slanders a member of the Dordt community or is libelous.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Wright</td>
<td>&quot;Fog Movement&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jess Brauning</td>
<td>“Psalm”</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Palmer</td>
<td>&quot;Art and Philosophy&quot;*</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jess Brauning</td>
<td>“Stop”</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine Hannink</td>
<td>&quot;A Collage of College&quot;</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Van Dyken</td>
<td>&quot;Untitled #8&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Palmer</td>
<td>&quot;Hibiscus&quot;</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Miring</td>
<td>&quot;The Herald&quot;</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor DeBey</td>
<td>&quot;Submission&quot;</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassie Lane</td>
<td>&quot;Ithemba: a portrait of our friends across the world&quot;*</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Wikkerink</td>
<td>&quot;Water Lily&quot;</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie Mellema</td>
<td>&quot;Autumn Afternoon&quot;</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond Mutava</td>
<td>&quot;A Blonde Wig on a Black Face&quot;*</td>
<td>16,17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Romkema</td>
<td>“Dusk”</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Van Dyken</td>
<td>“Lower Yosemite Falls”</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Vandenberg</td>
<td>“Homosexuality in the CRC”*</td>
<td>19,20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginelle Bakker</td>
<td>&quot;My Surprise Attack&quot;</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Braunschweig</td>
<td>&quot;Fresh Ground Memories&quot;</td>
<td>22-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent Koops</td>
<td>“Prairie Blazing Star at Sunset”</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey Shearer</td>
<td>&quot;A Bad Moment&quot;</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salome Toryem</td>
<td>&quot;Answer&quot;*</td>
<td>26,27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Wilkerson</td>
<td>“Sun Set”</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates Essays
David Wright
"Fog Movement"
My Psalm

Proclaim to the Lord that He is!
Today I know truly that I am his!

He delivered me from my sorrows
To his will I have been bound
He has torn me from my pedestal
As my sandy foundation crumbled
He reached out and stole me away
On the right path He has placed my feet
He has twisted my eyes away from evil
And shown me a lantern at my feet

Lord hold me accountable for my path
Direct my feet in the way I must go
Give me a future that glows with You
And make me at peace with it

Father above you are my provider
You have filled my life with goodness
You have given me every beautiful thing
And blessed me beyond any hope
Beyond my wildest imaginings
You have fulfilled me

Can I ever ask anything of You Lord?
I shield my face from Your power
I hide myself from Your glory
At Your feet I cower and tremble
Can I ever ask for what is Yours to give?

Jess Brauning
I was going to be an architect. I was going to be a wealthy career businesswoman with the stiff business suits and pumps, with a corner office, a view of 5th Avenue, and a posh apartment full of modern furniture. One thing I was not going to be was an art major. Where’s the money in that? Where’s the awed utterances of respect from adults who can foresee your future success and wealth?

Yet an art major is what I became. And with the choice of major came all the usual stereotypes—the expectation that I would suddenly chop and dye my hair, get 4 tattoos, 16 piercings, and be able to miraculously play the guitar like Bob Dylan. And then, as if that wasn’t enough, I decided to go for a philosophy major as well. Now the stereotypes were all but set in stone. My friends could almost envision it: starving artist living above the coffee shop she runs, penning pensive prose and pondering the metaphysical reality of the canvas she’s about to paint. The possibilities are rich—believe me; I’ve thought of them myself.

But why? Why reject the large, prestigious art college in New York City (holy cow, what an opportunity), for a small Christian college in Iowa? Why reject the potential for a decent six-figure salary in favor of a low 5 figure salary (if I’m blessed enough to find a job)? Besides, the most obvious (and pat) answer of calling, what is the purpose of getting an art degree or a philosophy degree?

People often remark that my combination of majors is unusual. I never quite know what to say in response. In my mind I can’t think of two majors that are more complimentary. If art exists primarily as a means of expression (as most contend), the question then is what is the art expressing? And if you seek to express a particular message, will your audience understand it or perceive it the same way? One of the best ways to assure the clarity of a message is to understand the opposing views. As a philosophy major, I have studied that extensively—others’ views (and how to assess and critique them biblically), and a clearer expression of my own thoughts and beliefs (or worldview). All that I learn in philosophy allows me to make more cogent, meaningful, and meaning-filled art.

Am I looking for money here? Not at all. But I am commanded to faithfully develop my gifts and talents and to minister to those around me. In art, as an expression of my deepest thoughts and beliefs, I’ve discovered an especially poignant way to accomplish that.

Do I regret not becoming an architect? Nope. The heels would’ve killed me. And besides, traffic in New York is pretty insane.

Rachel Palmer
A Collage of College

A Collage of College

I.
Off to eat?
Hold up for me?
I'll come in a jiffy,
Save me a seat!

Gales of laughter,
Mirthful camaraderie.
Anything goes
In your dinnertime coterie.

II.
Movie night marathon,
three in a row.
Anyone bring cards?
I'm not one for a show.
Donut run! Who's up?
Hand me the keys,
And hold my cup.
Hope I don't freeze.

The last film's over,
Time to head back
Wake up the dozer,
He's out like a sack.

Stagger on homewards
Collapse into bed
Never again. . .
We'll watch one instead.

III.
Drudgery calls,
So do friends.
Can't, guys,
Gotta crank out a paper.

Read, research, ruminate.
Look, learn, lucubrate.
Copy, compile, collaborate.

Piddle, pause, procrastinate. . .
Skim, study, speculate.
Amaze, astound, animate.
Find, figure, fascinate!
Tweak, tune, terminate.

Drudgery bids farewell,
Friends hail.
Off we go,
Gotta find us a caper.

IV.
He grins, she tosses him a smile.
Walking over, self-assured,
He plays the game: harmless guile.
They chatter, both lured?
She by images of roses,
And he by pert and pretty noses.

Good friends next, in many cases.
Not so here, for sparks ignited.
Queen of hearts, with the King she chases,
Fans the fire, both delighted.
She by prospects matrimonial,
He by his lady friend, most companionable.

Ultimatum rears its head here:
"Is this what we intended?"
The game now has to disappear-
It's a lie; they just pretended.
She tears down her nice illusion,
He leaves her in great confusion.

Maybe, though, it went like this:
"Is this what we intended?"
It's a tie; the victors kiss.
Proposal eloquently extended,
She smiles assent and grasps his arm.
He grins. "Ready, dear, for life on the farm?"

Elaine Hannink
Philip Van Dyken
"Untitled #8"
Rachel Palmer

"Hibiscus"
The Herald

Come down in might
and guile poor sinners plight
to hold in stead a mighty lamb
Bare forth thy arms
dis-mantle honor once clad in shadow
stir unto light the gentle courses
Gird thy feet about with time
so to slow a time that comes apace
when you shall trample chaff
and persue all men who
have naught and must aspire
unto dark lies and holy fire.

Alexander Miring

Submission

I'm selfish:
Confession
Forgiveness?
I know

I'm selfish:
The problem
The answer?
Unclear

I'm selfish:
Constraining
Not noticed?
It is

I'm selfish:
Unnerving
Why is this?
Idols

I'm selfish:
Pervasive
Affected?
You all

I'm selfish:
Declared
My response?
Submit

Trevor Debey
"I am the product of Africa and her long-cherished view of rebirth that can now be realised so that all of her children may play in the sun." - Nelson Mandela

South Africa presents a unique situation of both hope and despair. The country has made significant head-way in the past decade, yet there continues to be many roadblocks along the way. The people of Africa have seen and experienced the very worst, yet they are hopeful for something better, something greater than their present reality. This sense of reality has led the people of South Africa to trust the Almighty God for their daily bread.

We all hear of the difficulties that South Africans are currently facing, yet many of us continue to ignore them. It is easier that way. HIV and AIDS have been running rampantly across the Country and there continues to be no slowing down. Poverty and the lack of basic resources affect sixty percent of South Africans daily. The lack of understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity is another difficulty that the people of South Africa are living with. To add to these significant problems, high unemployment rates, poor education, alcohol and drug abuse, as well as violence are taking a large toll on the people of South Africa.

All of these difficult realities could make one curse God, as Job was told to do by his family and friends. However, the resiliency of Job is clearly seen in the people of South Africa. Under all of these seemingly hopeless circumstances, they continue to trust and put hope in their faithful Father. Families walk barefoot for miles so can they worship on Sunday mornings; street-children continually give away the piece of bread given to them in order for their friend to feel satisfied. Stories like these show that people truly know what is means to step out of the boat and trust in Him to provide.

*Ithemba* means "hope" in Xhosa.

**Cassie Lane**
Maggie Mellema
"Autumn Afternoon"
A Blonde Wig on a Black Face

During the spring semester in 2005, as I went through English 200 (Responding to literature), I was in a class group that was assigned the novel Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver. We were to read this book and do a class presentation. I was given the task of portraying a character in the book who really cared about her looks, and I ended up with a blonde wig on my head; we took a picture of this image. I thought it would be fair for me to be able to look at a picture and see what other people saw.

Every time I look at this picture it brings into mind so many things, and one of them is how things fit into each other. Does this wig fit with the complexion of my skin? Do I look normal with that hair color on me? When you met me walking around campus wearing this wig what will be the first thing that comes to your mind? These questions can go on and on.

To some extent this tells part of my story of transitioning from Africa to the western culture at Dordt College. One’s culture is a cumulative deposit of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, notion of time, spatial relations, and material objects and possessions within a larger group of people. In very simple terms, it involves what one thinks, does and the material products one produces. Before coming to Dordt College, I had interacted with quite a number of people from North America and Europe and I thought that I had developed an understanding of their culture. I was dead wrong!

Nothing had prepared me for the challenge that met me (and I guess any other student who grew up all his or her life in Africa) when I arrived here.

A few areas worth mentioning are in how the whole society functions. Dordt College is in a society that is individualistic, whereas I grew up in a society that is communal. Here it seems as if people are answerable to themselves; you do what makes you happy, it’s all about “me.” In Africa, even though you are an individual who can make decisions on your own, you are also answerable to the community and in many things one needs to consider “we” and not only “I”.

I came to a society that is endowed with possessions. People here have been blessed with so many material possessions that they have taken many of the things that others lack for granted. I grew up in a community that struggles for even some of the most basic needs. I remember during my first month at Dordt College there was an item that I needed, and I did not know where to get it. I asked someone where it could be found. The answer that I got was “Sure, you just drive to Wal-Mart and buy it”. I was left with the question: “Does everyone here own a car?” Many students whom I have shared with seem to realise that there are some very basic things (water, electricity, food, security) that many people in other parts of the world don’t have.

Worship services are totally different from what I am used to. A normal service here is timed to the minute and you really have to stick to that and after the service people are in a hurry to get to some place. Back home, a normal service will take two hours and after that people are always visiting. And if a fellow member was not in the service others will need to know what happened. A Christian is accountable in word and deed to other fellow believers and mistakes are pointed out and lifestyles are challenged in Africa, whereas here it seems to be a private affair. We witness with our lives and every moment is a moment of acknowledging what God has done in one’s life.

Even though there seems to be warmth and an
automatic smile from many people here, one gets a feeling of some detachment and for someone who is from a communal society this is somehow unnerving. Adjustment to fit into this type of society is not very easy since it seems as if you need to move from one extreme to another. Within the African culture, there is always someone to walk with you that mile within your new environment. The acceptance that you get from others is wholehearted and is aimed at making you as comfortable as possible. It also gives you a sense of belonging.

There are some things still that will really bother me even though here they will be seen as normal. Like the blonde wig, they will not fit unless they are worked on from what is already existing. This will be in an attempt to be bicultural and it takes time.

All in all, this has been a very enriching experience to me as I see how God works with people within totally different settings. A challenge that has been placed on my feet by this is to strive to bring my culture to conform to scripture, striving to make my calling and election sure.

**Raymond Mutava**

---

**Dusk**

With what brushes do you trace this delicate outline of branches against flame red amber blush purple, colors melding into deeper tones until all fades into blackness, O artist God, each morning choosing a fresh palette on one canvas of sky, each evening displaying another, as if one masterpiece revealed at sun’s rising and setting would never quench your thirst for endless possibility? Grant me that wild joy fresh each dawn until I sink into the indigo of your new creation.

**Craig Romkema**
Philip Van Dyken
"Lower Yosemite Falls"
There is a great mystery to human relationships. Each action and every word that ripples from our mouths indirectly affects how the rest of the world acts. There is nothing that intrigues me more than the sea of humanity that makes us who we are. With my art, I find that I am constantly referring to small specific issues that somewhere down the line make a huge impact on the rest of our world.

This particular artwork uses the issue of homosexuality to comment on relationships that have not only come up in national politics, but those issues that are becoming a very real struggle for the Christian church. I cannot think of anything more beautiful than the relationships people have with each other: the talking, laughing, and singing voices that bind us together; yet human relationships are also the ugliest, darkest threats the world will ever know, and this piece attempts to remind the Church that the question of homosexual relationships is not necessarily the most urgent struggle we have.

There are other relational issues we must plow through first, if we plan to face any other issues with clarity. For example, the focus of this piece of art falls on the two small red central figures. I have made them as two males of a homosexual relationship, but they are only a minor part of the bigger picture. Surrounding them on all sides are other figures that are gender-unknown with the looks of hatred, disgust, and scorn on their human-like faces. These figures represent many wonderful people who are genuinely concerned about the future of the church and the people in it. However, rather than treating their homosexual members as fellow Christians, who are equally concerned and loved just as dearly, they cannot look past the issue and instead, rebuke them for their struggles that are not less valid than anyone else's.

Yes, the contemporary question of whether or not practicing homosexuals should be allowed in positions of church office is a very important one, but it is not the only issue Christians must be concerned about. We must first remember that as individuals we are not better or worse than the person sitting next to us in the pew. In our disagreements, we should make the greatest effort to view things in the eyes of those who oppose us, before deciding that our personal views are the only option.

Homosexuality in the Church is just one of many issues that has the potential to bring out the best or worst of our community relationships, and it amazes me everyday that our world is always pushing, pulling, giving, taking and yet somehow manages to actually live amongst itself. May the relationships we have both within and outside the Church work to truly love ALL people, whether we agree with them or not.

Nicole Vandenberg
Nicole Vandenberg
“Homosexuality in the CRC”
Ginelle Bakker
"My Surprise Attack"
Each morning, for the past year, Rachel set a goal for herself—to begin each morning by reading a Psalm. Sometimes things didn’t always go according to plan—when the snooze button and “ten more minutes” turned into an hour, when her four-year-old daughter, Joni, awoke at the crack of dawn with the flu, and ashamedly, when she was just plain mad at God, still recovering from the blow of Tom’s death, the husband she thought she’d spend her lifetime with.

This morning, Rachel barely made it to the kitchen table. Though sitting down with her Bible and journal outstretched before her, she came half-heartedly, reluctantly, like a dog being dragged to its kennel. She’d been short with God lately—angry that she couldn’t find that measure of peace—something to fill that gap and replace the pain.

She picked up her Bible, mocking the opening words of Psalm 67: May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us. “If God were gracious—” she was afraid to say the rest out loud, afraid that if she continued, this may be her last morning of reading the Psalms, or perhaps the Bible entirely. She clenched her teeth, anger flowing through her like hot lava. She needed to relax.

“Pour out your Spirit on me, Lord”—would He even honor that request? She slammed her fist on the table in frustration, nearly overflowing the coffee in her favorite red mug, Tom’s mug. Rachel’s agitated sigh fanned a wisp of her auburn hair against her forehead. She pressed her nose into the tendrils of steam that rose from the fresh brewed French roast now enclosed in her hands. Her racing heart began to settle, as she breathed in the scent, reminding her so much of him.

“Coffee does a man good,” Tom would sing every morning to another one of his made-up tunes while dancing a little jig. She could see him eating his cream cheese bagel as he spun around in circles. He waved the butter knife in his hand like a baton. Rachel would roll her eyes at him from across the room, that “I love you, but you’re crazy” look—a look that testified of fifteen years of marriage—difficult but always worth it and always filled with laughter. Tom would waltz his way to her from across the kitchen with a grin, towering his six foot frame behind her and wrapping her in his arms. She savored those sweet moments like honey on her tongue. He’d nuzzle his clean-shaven chin against her neck, loving her arms’ flailing response.

“Don’t—you goof!” Her body shook with silent, ticklish laughter as she fought to hold up her hands in surrender. She shushed him not to wake up the kids.

“I can’t help it, Rachel,” he’d whisper his deep voice into her ear, pouting his lips into a puppy dog plea; “I’m still a fool in love.” And he concluded his declaration with a slobberly smack on her ear. Of course, he knew how she hated those wet kisses, and he grinned like a school boy, expecting Rachel to swat him at once in annoyance. And she did.

Fifteen years—two kids, a home, and a husband who never stopped loving her. Until he stopped living. The pain still hit like a brick.

Already one year had passed since Tom’s tragic death. But Rachel smelled his presence—it was so real, like the trails of wake behind their boat on summer vacations at the lake. She walked across the kitchen, to the bulletin board of photos, posted on the entry way wall. Her fingers traced Tom’s wide grin. He was leaning back in the driver’s seat, shirtless and tan, drinking a coke and giving the thumbs up sign. Oh, to go back…

Rachel toyed with the engagement ring on her finger. It felt wrong, out of place. She wasn’t ready—why had she said yes? Jim had popped the question last night—their four month anniversary.
was a great guy. They’d met at an office party last Christmas. He was the CEO of the city’s largest accounting firm, but his demeanor was down-to-earth. His dark black hair, handsome face, and muscular features were on the minds of most of the ladies that night. But not Rachel’s. He had come up to her that night, though. A few glasses of wine, many bursts of laughter, and a couple hours later, she found herself enjoying his company, and she hated herself for it. It had only been six months after Tom’s death. But soon they were spending more nights together, and he met little Joni and Timothy.

Timothy. He had changed so much during the past year, not for the better either. Rachel would have to tell him, soon, because Jim wanted to be married in six months—six months. She desperately hated to think about telling Timothy—fear sank her heart like an anchor at sea. Should she tell him this morning? No, he’d be up in about ten minutes—she wasn’t ready to face the whirlwind before 8:00 in the morning. Tom’s wise words resonated in the air, “Choose your battles, hun.”

With Tom still around, they had only minor problems with Timothy, like his sometimes edgy attitude, the curfew argument, and the occasional disrespect. But for the most part, he was a good kid, and Rachel had always made it a point to thank God for not having one of those fifteen year olds that so many of her friends were dealing with—tattoo-pasted, smack-talking, piercing-filled boys. But it appeared that Timothy was well on his way, already painting his fingernails black and spray-painting his hair blue. And she couldn’t control him.

The scent of Tom’s Cool Breeze cologne brought Rachel back to the present. The smell still wafted in the entryway, mixing with the coffee house aroma. She could see him standing there, at exactly 7:55, with his jacket strung over his shoulder, his black leather brief case in hand. He perched his arm over the banister of the stair case. “Love you, babe.” And he’d always leave her with that coffee-connoisseur kiss. She couldn’t stand the taste—the bitter flavor was like vinegar, puckering up her lips. But it reminded her of him. So, she started to drink it just to remember.

Rachel wandered back to her chair and took another slow swig of her now-cool coffee. His last goodbye-greeting replayed in her head—with a wink, he was gone to work. But in the blink—of her eye, of their family’s eye—he was gone from this earth, and she hadn’t been ready. She wanted one more day! “Oh, Lord,” Rachel’s heart cried out in despair, “Help me.”

Rachel hugged her arms to herself, wrapped up in her baby blue house coat, the one he’d given her four Christmases ago. Whenever she wore it, he called her his little sheep, rubbing his head against the soft layers with a “Baaahh.”

He pretended to sleep on her shoulder, and she laughed at the expression on his face—eyes closed, nose scrunched up, and his twitching mouth soon gave way to an uncontrollable grin. But her laughter now was forced, awkward, the painful twinge of happy memories brawling with the present. Rachel turned her head towards the fresh rays of sunlight pouring in from the large bay window. She studied the flecks of dust dancing in the streams of light.

“Mommy!” Rachel smiled at hearing Joni’s heart-warming greeting, savoring the sound of her four year-old’s bare feet pattering across the wooden floor behind her. A wave of joy surged through her life like a pack of butterflies, as Joni ran up to her with that same mischievous grin, wrapping her arms around her mother’s waist.

“Hi honey,” she set down her mug and lifted Joni up into her lap. She ran her hands through the four year old’s golden locks, captured again by her blue eyes and her long, dark lashes. She sighed at the resemblance.

“What’s wrong Mommy?” Joni’s pudgy fingers framed Rachel’s face. “Do you miss Daddy?”
“Yes, sweetie, I do.”
“Me too, Mommy. But he’s in heaven, right?”

Rachel could only nod her head, barely able to swallow her guilt. She’d have to tell them soon. “Time to get ready for school, baby,” Rachel said, prodding Joni off her lap. “And time to get ready for a new life,” she whispered to herself, watching Joni pad off to the bathroom. She stood up, closed her Bible, and took one last, cold swig from Tom’s mug.

**Jessica Braunschweig**
Lindsey Shearer
"A Bad Moment"
"Who gives a damn if a black man invented the traffic lights?" Unsigned.

It was the question I came back to one last February afternoon and found on my board in response a tribute I had hung on the walls of my wing in celebration of Black History Month. My initial reaction was surprise and shock, but the more I thought about that insulting question, the more I realized that there were no elements of surprise in it. Although I was offended and insulted, I knew this was an outward expression of inward feelings and thoughts.

For me, and perhaps others like me, that incident was not the first encounter. As I have observed over the years, racism and prejudices are acts that have been suppressed on this campus. This community hides itself behind a "Christian community" façade so much so that it overlooks and denies the things that are "unchristian." I see a community so engrossed in its "Christian-ness" and has essentially forgotten what that even means. No one talks about the touchy stuff, no one dare criticize our way of living, and everybody seems comfortable; we are okay with being a "Christian Community" as if such a community is sin-proof.

One of the weaknesses of this community that continues to surface is a lack of attention to the hypocrisy that exists here. I do not intend, by any means, to point fingers at anyone, but I feel that there are issues that need to be addressed and after years of waiting for someone to speak up and not hearing any voices, I feel an obligation. Incidents such as this happen even on our campus in spite all the diversity we claim to celebrate. I see these not in the big issues necessarily, but in the smallest of ways. What did the campus do in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. day? I heard no mention of it in any of my classes or any other gatherings I attended that day—it was virtually ignored. What did we do as a campus-wide celebration of Black History Month? Then there are those who walk right past me on the sidewalks and hallways, their faces turned miles away me when these are the people who have interviewed me days earlier to fulfill a class assignment. Interviewing me does not incur any ties to me, but I'd appreciate an answer to my greeting. In addition, there are the strange stares from parents who also ignore my greetings; stares that one parent rightfully expressed last Parents' weekend:

"I didn't know there were any black people on this campus; how did they get here?"

I was tempted to answer:

"The same way your kid got here because somehow, I missed the 'Whites Only' sign."

I resisted.

Keep in mind, we are a "Christian community," then, I wonder what that really means. That description has become nothing more than a cliché, a catch phrase.

It is not coincidental that students leave Dordt College, because they do not feel welcome; it isn't only that they do not see different skin colors around. They leave because the little difference there is on this campus is rejected. Students do not leave because they do not see a hundred black students on campus. They leave because they do not see diversity in the hearts of the people around here. We may have all the blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and all the color there is to have, but if the hearts of people do not embrace diversity, this campus will still not be diverse; diversity starts with the heart, not with numbers.

One of the biggest mistakes this community makes is thinking that these problems simply do not exist, because we profess Christianity. Certainly, being a Christian makes a difference, or at least should make a difference, but there is much more work beyond being a Christian community. Remember that pastors, ministers, evangelists, men of God also owned slaves while living in their Christian communities and homes. What makes this community think professing Christianity exempts it from immorality? As I have told others before, racism is a white man's problem, Christian or non-Christian and until white folks are...
ready to claim their share of responsibility and ask people of color to work alongside them on this issue, there is no hope in achieving racial reconciliation.

I do not undermine the difference this college has made in the minds of hundreds, perhaps thousands including mine. But what I warn against is the tendency to think that somehow, we have arrived at the level where all things are perfect and everyone acts Christianly—we would be naïve to think so. What I hope is that the people in this community come to a point where they realize that it is time to dig out the dirt that has been hidden for years and start talking about the “touchy” stuff; we have to start to admit that sin and prejudice happens even here; we have to admit the things we’ve done wrong. This community needs to come to a point where comments like these are not tolerated, because they are spits on the faces of all who ever fought for justice and spits on the faces of all people of color who were lynched, beaten, shot, jailed, hated, and deprived, because of the color of their skins. We can not afford to tolerate such behavior. I am not okay with people telling me that I am an “image bearer;” what I need is for people to show me that I am indeed accepted for who I am, and I need them to be interested in learning about my culture and my history. Every day is “Dutch History Day” on this campus; in a similar way, black history cannot be relegated to 28 days out of the year because Black history is American History.

As for whoever my questioner was, sorry your answer has been a long way coming: I “give a damn;” Black people “give a damn;” people of Color “give a damn;” God “gives a damn” and so should you.

Salome Toryem
Adam Wilkerson
“Sun Set”