AVILA UNIVERSITY
STUDENT REFLECTIONS

First Year Experience
While the World Watched

2016 Truman Lecture Series
Preface

From Carolyn Maull McKinstry

Author: While The World Watched

I received an amazing and exciting invitation in 2015 to come and speak at Avila University during the Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Series for 2016. My book While The World Watched had been selected as a finalist in the Common Reading Project for first year students. I accepted the invitation with much humility, but with sacred anticipation as well. I knew from the first moment that I set foot on the campus that this would be a unique and unforgettable experience. Avila proved to be a deeply gracious environment; and a campus of love, warmth and educational excellence.

I am deeply honored to have had the opportunity to share my book, which recalls my experiences for the first 30 years of my life. I shared publicly with students my personal narrative of growing up in Birmingham, Alabama, during a season of segregation and great unrest that existed all over America. I also shared with students my Ambassadorial calling to the Ministry of Reconciliation; a call that has taken me to cities and countries that I could never have imagined. Wherever I am called the message is always the same: an admonition to love, to forgive and to be reconciled one to another.

Avila University first year students are challenged to interpretively find ways to exemplify and put into action the “lessons learned” from each common reading project. I believe that utilizing world (or global) history as our global positioning system (or GPS) is our most precise insurance that these lessons are not forgotten, and are not repeated. Knowing this intensified my belief that the dream of “a reconciled world” may actually be closer than any of us can imagine. And like these students each of us must identify, examine and cultivate our individual roles and paths as we embrace the journey to reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a biblical imperative and happens one person at a time. And as our world evolves, as we become more global, I believe that individuals that have courageously chosen to love, to forgive, to reconcile to each other and to embrace and adapt to change will be the individuals that enable us to meet the ongoing moral and educational challenges associated with globalization.

My spirit rejoices in the firm belief that we will one day see Isaiah’s vision (11:6-9) become the vision and eventual reality of us all: “lambs will lie with lions, children will lead us, and none will do harm to another ……”

I am deeply humbled and grateful to everyone at Avila University, most especially those who are our future, our hope for tomorrow, our young adults.

I thank God for His continuing witness of kindred souls, for the witness of living epistles all over the world.
Introduction

“…each of us must identify, examine and cultivate our individual roles and paths as we embrace the journey to reconciliation.”
- Carolyn Maull McKinstry

This is a quote related to what Avila first year students were asked to ponder with the Common Reading book selection and the First Year Seminar curriculum during the Fall 2106 semester. The planned experiences of our first year students are designed to encourage them to live the Avila Mission which includes contributing to the global community. We begin this journey in our First Year Experience program.

Each year, Avila selects a common reading for our first year students. Students have the summer to read the selected book and respond with an essay prior to the start of fall class. Additionally, the University dedicates the Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture to the selected book. To complement these experiences, all first year students enroll in a fall semester class, First Year Seminar, which provides an opportunity to further expand on the global topics within the book. This publication serves as the culmination of these experiences shared among our first year students (Appendix A).

The main focus for the 2016 First Year Experience included the Civil Rights Movement from both a historical and current day perspective, race, the variety of ‘isms within society, power and privilege, approaching ‘isms though peace and nonviolence and a discovery of how we might be a change agent in the world.

The book selected for 2016 was While the World Watched by Carolyn Maull McKinstry. McKinstry was 15-years-old when a bomb planted by the Ku Klux Klan exploded and killed four of her friends at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama on September 15, 1963. This was a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement and served as a turning point in McKinstry’s life. McKinstry’s book spans five decades and walks readers through her personal journey while highlighting important events of the Civil Rights Era.

Avila welcomed Carolyn Maull McKinstry to campus on October 20, 2016 as our Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer (Appendix B). She spoke to an audience of nearly 500 and shared that her most fervent prayer is for “a reconciled world.” She encouraged the audience to pay attention and step forward when opportunities become available to make a difference in the world. She shared that you are never too young to get involved and make a difference by treating other people the way you want to be treated. McKinstry believes that change can be made through education. She encouraged the audience to learn and embrace the history, experience it, share themselves, interact with others and learn about people who are different from you. Finally, she articulated that we are all created in the image of God. Therefore, like God we have the capacities of intellect, emotion and will and can make choices and come to decisions. With this, she asked the audience, “How will you end racism?”

The University also hosted an outstanding panel prior to the lecture comprised of Alvin Brooks, Community Activist of Civil Rights and Nonviolence; Diane Burkholder, Anti-Oppression Consultant and Co-Founder of One Struggle KC; Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II, United States Representative; Sister Rosemary Flanigan, Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Selma March participant and Mary Sanchez, Kansas City Star Journalist and Community Activist. Each panelist shared personal experiences including the march from Selma to Montgomery, being present with Martin Luther King, Jr., and growing up in the Jim Crow South. Panelists encouraged us to think about how our personal story impacts our current worldview, introduced us to the concept of unconscious racism and encouraged our youth to understand that this is THEIR movement and THEIR voices need to be heard.

With the Culminating Project in First Year Seminar students could write a traditional essay or create a unique personal project such as the creation of a poem, song, piece of artwork, etc. The project helped students explore complex issues such as civil rights, race, power and privilege, peace and nonviolence and their role and responsibility in these issues. This publication is a compilation of several projects submitted and an opportunity for first year students to do what McKinstry asks us to do… “identify, examine and cultivate our individual roles and paths as we embrace the journey to reconciliation.”

Paige Illum, Ph.D., CSJA
Director of Student Engagement and Success
Adjunct Faculty
Avila University

Avila Community Values

- Excellence in teaching and learning
- The Catholic identity of the University
- The sponsorship and contribution of the Sisters of St. Joseph
- The worth, dignity, and potential of each human being
- Diversity and its expression
- Commitment to the continual growth of the whole person
- Interaction with and service to others
Acknowledgments

This publication is in honor of Denise McNair, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley and Carole Robertson whose lives were taken on September 15, 1963. Amidst a story of evil we have found love and hope.

A special acknowledgment and many thanks to Carolyn Maull McKinstry, author of While The World Watched, and the 2016 Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer. Thank you for sharing your story. Your book DID challenge us all to reexamine our daily lives and our values. As an institution of higher education we are committed to your suggestion that a way to bring peace to our world is through education and we will continue to pray for worldwide reconciliation.

A heartfelt thanks to Bill and Jean (’76) Buchanan and the Buchanan Initiative for Peace and Nonviolence. Your generous spirit and support helped the issues of peace and nonviolence permeate through the curriculum of First Year Seminar and helped to inspire our first year students to find ways they can approach difficult issues through a peaceful and nonviolent manner.

The Truman Lecture would not have been possible without the support of our presenting sponsors Joe and Sue Fahey, Kevin and Connie Fahey, and the J.M. Fahey Construction Company. Your support of this event as well as many others in our Avila community is greatly appreciated and valued. Thank you to KC Studio for its in-kind support of this event.

Thank you to our outstanding Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Panel comprised of Alvin Brooks, Diane Burkholder, Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II, Sister Rosemary Flanigan and Mary Sanchez. Your service and love for others and passion to make a difference is amazing.

A gracious thank you to J. Anthony Snorgrass, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Visual and Communication Arts who provided numerous insights and advice regarding curriculum for First Year Seminar and served as the moderator for the Town Hall Presentation.

Thank you to the Avila University Common Reading Program Committee led by Dr. Paige Illum. Members were Jaimie Kirby, Dr. Sue Ellen McCauley and Dr. Abigail Lambke and undergraduate students Jacqueline Jimenez, Hayley Newlin, Drew Lutzke and Mackenzie Pritchett. The time you devoted to this project and dedication to the process of selecting a book is noticed and appreciated!

The dedication of The Truman Lecture Series Committee impacts students, faculty, staff and community members by bringing talented speakers to our campus. Through the extreme hard work of Robert Foulk, Angela Heer, Dr. Paige Illum, Darren Roubinek, Hannah Meador and the insightful leadership of Dr. Sue Ellen McCauley, our students experienced lifelong memories. Thank you!

Many thanks to Angela Heer, Vice President of Advancement & External Relations, Darren Roubinek, Senior Director of Marketing & Communications, and Hannah Meador, Events Coordinator, for their countless hours of dedicated work to make this entire experience a success. And also to Maureen Reardon and Lori Hemphill who designed this reflection book with wonderfully creative and on-target project management skills.

The members of the Office of Marketing and Communication, the Advancement Office, the Theatre Department and Information Technology Services helped implement a flawless series of events and festivities surrounding the Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture. Thank you for your excellent attention to detail and expertise in your respective areas.

Through the tireless efforts of our First Year Seminar Instructors our students were able to gain important worldview lessons through the First Year Seminar curriculum. A great deal was asked of all of these individuals who were always cooperative and dedicated. You all DID make a difference! Thank you to Chelsia Allen, Dave Armstrong, Jason Baldwin, Crystal Bruntz, Bailey Carr, Cristina Cowan, Julie Cowley, Sara Eckinger, Carol Frevert, Malcolm Gold, Darby Gough, Ashlyn Hull, Paige Illum, Abigail Lambke, Paige Libbert, Kristi Littleton, Alicia Murillo, Joe Roberts, Tommy Thomas, Janine Unness, Eric Winter and Mary Kay Whitacre.

We also thank those who helped educate our first year students in unique and meaningful ways through the First Year Seminar curriculum including Jayasi Hart, independent producer-editor and Director of Sisters of Selma; Dr. Carol Coburn, Professor of Religious Studies and Women’s and Gender Studies and Director of the CSJ Heritage Center at Avila University; Dr. Brad Poos, Assistant Professor of Education; and Avila students Franco Argumedo, Tutku Cavusoglu, Emily Lai, Karis Pruitt and Victoria Surdyke.

Lastly, thank you to all of the Avila University first year students. Thank you for your commitment to understanding the perspective of others and finding ways you can end racism. We challenge you to live the mission of Avila University as you learn more about how you can contribute to our global community.
Table of Contents

4 Preface

5 Introduction

6 Acknowledgments

8 Student Reflections & Projects

22 Presentation Posters

24 Photos from The Truman Lecture Series & First Year Seminar

30 Student Reflections

44 Appendix A: Avila First Year Students

45 Appendix B: Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Program

46 Appendix C: Anticipation Guide Perspectives

47 Common Reading Program
Chalk was used to create this artwork of two female and two male individuals. The top left portion of the face is a male Native American, the top right is an African American female, the bottom left is a Asian female and the bottom right is a White male.
**Lauren Moose**

**Maybe Not**

What’s the first thing you see when you look at me?

- My mind?
- My heart?
- My soul?
- My skin?

His is black.
- Maybe he doesn’t have a father figure.
- Maybe he dropped out of school.
- Maybe he’ll steal your wallet.
- Or, maybe not.

Hers is white.
- Maybe her parents make six figures.
- Maybe she has her whole life mapped out.
- Maybe you can smile and wave to her on the street.
- Or, maybe not.

His is yellow.
- Maybe his parents want him to be a doctor.
- Maybe he just aced the calculus test.
- Maybe he is an awful driver.
- Or, maybe not.

Hers is red.
- Maybe her parents are alcoholics.
- Maybe she lives on the reservation.
- Maybe she’ll stay there her whole life.
- Or, maybe not.

What’s the first thing you see?

- A beautiful mind?
- A kind heart?
- A pure soul?
- Colored skin?

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**Darien Minor**

**Black AmeriKKKa**

Through all my years of life I’ve learned
The knowledge of our past, neglected
The wisdom of our mistakes burned
And never to be fully reflected

We’ve fought and killed and fought again
Until the fight has lost its aim
We try to stand up to the man
But it turns out we’re just a game
We’ve told ourselves to “fight the power”
Hoping it would make us stronger
But maybe we just spent these hours
Forcing our fight to be longer
Maybe we should stop and muse
Of things to make our culture grow
And fill the world with worthwhile news
Until they see that we can glow
But the life we know runs in a hoop
A circle we can’t seem to break
We think the answer is to shoot
It’s a ying-yang symbol made of hate and hate
And soon we’ll have more things at stake
Our lives are esoteric
A language understood by you and me
Too bad we’re in America
Not spelled with “C” but with “K” times 3

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**Major: Radiologic Science**
**Hometown: Weston, Mo.**

**Major: Business Administration**
**Hometown: New Orleans, La.**
My inspiration for my poem, “Safe,” came from my idea that everyone has different viewpoints that define who they are. My poem starts out talking about an average morning for a person who lives a life similar to mine. Many times people take their safety for granted. They wake up and fail to recognize discrimination, therefore, they are not thankful for not being discriminated against. They live their lives without having to struggle to feel equal.

My next stanza begins to talk about people who live in low-income housing and struggle with being discriminated against. I emphasized on the words “sanctuary” and “tranquility” to show that they want peace and acceptance. They do not want to be hated because of who they are. They want to fit in with society and not feel like they are always being looked at with hate or spite.

From there, I transition to the struggles they have to face every day of their lives. I talk about how they are “shot down” by society, because society lumps whole groups together. That plays in with the line, “They work hard, Just to get blamed.” They work hard not only to live a normal life, but also to prove that they are good enough to fit in. They spend their whole lives thinking that they are not good enough or that they are unworthy of the respect that they deserve. It is pathetic and I feel bad for them.

After that stanza, I transition back into the culture that I am involved in, a culture that has not walked in the shoes of a person living the struggle. We walk out of our house holding our heads up high, greeted by neighbors and friends. We know that we are safe from discrimination.

Next I transition into the persuasive and eye opening side of the poem. I begin to ask the reader questions about society. I attempt to open the eyes of the readers so that they can reflect on their own lives and maybe inspire others to change their actions or beliefs. My goal of this poem was to shed light on the fact that everyone has different viewpoints and that you never know a situation until you walk in someone else’s shoes.

SAFE

We wake up,
We brush our teeth,
We do our hair,
Our makeup,
We put shoes on our feet,
Then we leave.
Safe.

They wake up,
Look for sanctuary,
Search for tranquility,
They spend their whole lives wishing they could be,
Safe.

They walk out,
Shot down by the hate of society
They work hard,
Just to get blamed
They are discouraged by the world
And wish they could be,
Safe.

We wake up,
Smile
We walk out,
Greetings,
We know that we are,
Safe.

Why can’t we figure out,
That experiences,
Differentiate?
That viewpoints are different?
That Love is the only way?
I spend my whole life wishing,
That everyone could be,
Safe.

Major: Marketing
Hometown: Lee’s Summit, Mo.
The Individuals Within

From my very first step on Avila University’s campus, I saw a clear distinction among students. The representation of individuals from varying geographical locations held to be of great cultural and racial contrast to my little hometown. Due to this, I wholeheartedly embraced a world beyond what I had once known. As I passed each of these students, I considered them to be different than myself based on their appearances. Shallow perceptions such as these soon changed through each of my experiences in Freshman Seminar. Through these experiences, I gained a greater understanding of discrimination, saw similarities among differences, learned to treat others how I desire to be treated, and developed future actions to help end racial discrimination.

Through each experience in Freshman Seminar, I became enlightened to societal discrimination through McKinstry’s denial of simple childhood experiences, past mortgage loan statistics, and McKinstry’s experience with her grandmother’s death. One of the first insights I faced into racial discrimination was through McKinstry’s childhood dream of attending the local amusement park. She recalled that “it allowed only white children and no black kids on the fairgrounds” (McKinstry, 2011, p. 122). The reality of a child being unable to enjoy such privileges due to her skin color allowed me to view a world in which children are given limitations and told to resist challenging such restraints. The second event that caused me to obtain a greater understanding of discrimination was found in the quiz taken in class about the past statistics related to racial issues. Within this quiz, one of the statistics stated that over 95% of past mortgage loans in the United States were given to Caucasian individuals. Acts such as this allowed the government to not only prohibit minority groups from purchasing houses, but also prevented economic growth among various races. The third act that allowed me to see discrimination as an issue occurred at the Truman Lecture when McKinstry revealed the story of her grandmother’s death. Through this experience, McKinstry spoke of the final days she spent in the hospital basinment with her grandmother, who was unable to get necessary care or treatment due to her skin color. As a medical oriented individual, I found that denying someone the care she needed in such a critical situation due to race to be inhumane. All of these experiences brought to life discrimination in such a critical time period and allowed me to value the rights I am given.

Through my next experience at The Race Experience Kiosk, I began to see similarities among differences. After the kiosk finished snapping my photo, I was presented with shocking images of myself. Through each of these images, I was allowed to view what I would look like as an African American, Native American, Hispanic, Caucasian, and Asian individual. I stared at all of these pictures, evaluating external feature and characteristics. At first I saw them as different from one another, but then the pictures became crystal clear. I realized I was none of them, yet I was all of them. The Caucasian description, which I commonly identified with looked no more familiar to me than the other images of myself pictured as various races. I am an individual with an ancestry tree that goes beyond the racial categories I saw before me. In essence, this allows each and every one of us to be unique as individuals. As I scanned each of these images, I realized that regardless of what race I was pictured as, I was still me. The goals, ambitions, and personalities were the same for every version of myself pictured. It was at this moment that I realized that regardless of skin color, each and every individual can never fully be portrayed by the outward image of ourselves.

In connection to this unity, it was through the Truman Lecture that I learned the value of treating others as I would care to be treated. As Alvin Brooks and Mrs. McKinstry emphasized, we are all created in the likeness of God, and should, therefore, treat others in this manner. I knew the importance of this Golden Rule as a young child: As we all want to be treated with kindness, we should treat others in the same manner. After evaluating daily activities, I began to realize that in order to be shown compassion and respect, I must give compassion and respect to others. Small acts such as these allow me to contribute to an overall goal of peace and nonviolence among our nation and world. In setting an example of treating others with kindness and love in my daily life, I can only hope that those surrounding me will spread the care to others within their lives.

In addition, these experiences have allowed me to develop a plan for my future actions to end racial discrimination. The first of these actions is to show all individuals compassion regardless of racial or cultural differences. In order to accomplish this, I will need to look beyond appearances to the heart and soul of the people with whom I come in contact. Through this action, I will be able to open my eyes to the world and set an example for others to do the same. The next action I would take is to get involved in groups that can provide equal resources to all individuals regardless of race. As many individuals are unable to reach their full potential in life due to these limitations, it is important to work on providing all individuals with equal access to resources such as education. By allowing people of these minority groups to receive an education and attend college, the economic status of these individuals can be improved. In pursuing this, an adequate education must be implemented in areas where these individuals live. Also, up-to-date resources, such as computers and textbooks, must be provided to obtain the necessary information. Through these actions, we can educate individuals about the consequences of discrimination and its inhumane effects.

Through all of these experiences, I have learned to look beyond the outer surface and value the individual within. Each experience has extended my understanding of discrimination. In addition, I have been allowed to view the commonalities we share as a human race and the uniqueness of each individual. I have come to see the importance of showing others the respect and love that I hope to receive in return. As a result, I have come to develop a plan to provide equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of race. It is through these experiences and actions that we as a society can work to end racial discrimination and spread peace and understanding throughout the world.

Works Cited:
Veronica DeFao

The Aftermath

I question my existence today
Thoughts roll over each other
I turn to a bottle,
And wash all my worries away -

For a day, on which I try not to think
Of explosions, of screams,
Of nightmares come true
My eyes rapidly blink

And my heart starts to sink,
And it screams,
Asking why the world is like this
Hot tears fall down my face,

Shining like beams on my countenance
Of disguise and false contentment,
A countenance I try to subdue
All the hidden pain of a victim

I find myself lost in a sea of blue,
Frantically trying to stay above,
Barely staying above the waves of anguish
Losing my breath

I’m sure there is no way out -
Then a hand reaches out, so tenderly,
So lovingly, to help me up,
My lack of breath, rooted in surprise, calms

And the gentlest voice reminds me
I’m not made for the sea,
Nor for this earth, nor for this pain.
A reminder long awaited,

One which I thought nonexistent -
That I am more than this -
I remember how full of life I was
In years past

Now, my life is above that sea of blue,
Now, I am that hand,
That gentle reminder,
To tell you, we are more than this,
More than taunts and segregations

To tell you stronger than a scream
Is an embrace, because
Beneath color lie identical beating hearts -
For larger than a law is love -
And the pulse of life is forgiveness

McKinstry’s story struck several chords with me, particularly her struggle with depression, traumatic memories, and finding purpose during a dark time. I wanted to highlight this important and pivotal part of her life in my poem, The Aftermath, depicting her struggle after the bombing. It is written from a first person point of view because I felt the best way to convey her journey was to put myself in her shoes and how she was feeling. I attempted to touch on her issues with alcoholism, depression, and her questioning of how the world could be so cruel. I found it fascinating how she found a way out of this downward spiral through faith and support of family and friends, and how she helps others reach healing and forgiveness.

This is a story of someone who encountered real racism, and overcame the hurt. The journey of finding meaning in what appeared to be an only hate-filled world was not easy, but McKinstry accomplished this feat, and hearing her speak of it in person was phenomenal. Her amounts of peace, forgiveness, and hope are something I can only dream of ever achieving.

There was and still is racism in our country and around the world, but McKinstry equips her readers with the most necessary means of combating it: forgiveness. I hope the faith she has in my generation to combat racism is not in vain, because it is up to us to make a difference.
Do not condemn me under labels that don’t define my soul
I am more than flesh and bones, but a spirit that rages out of control
I am art designed by the stars, the same stars that created you
Do not condemn yourself under the labels society has fed to you
since before you were born
We are not genders, races, ages or sexualities
But fiery souls that writhe to be set free
So, we use our thoughts, our words, our hands, our bodies to
express what we feel
Never let anyone tell you who you are
It takes us years to discover ourselves
Let alone a stranger who labels us with one glance
Don’t ever feel ashamed to express what you love
We all take pleasure in something, but that something does not
describe us
Society tries to force us to obtain an image
To stay between the lines of what they believe is right
There is no right way to live or exist
We follow the rules of the unjust but our spirits will be judged by
none other than us

Briana Scott

SOUL

Do not condemn me under labels that don’t define my soul
I am more than flesh and bones, but a spirit that rages out of control
I am art designed by the stars, the same stars that created you
Do not condemn yourself under the labels society has fed to you
since before you were born
We are not genders, races, ages or sexualities
But fiery souls that writhe to be set free
So, we use our thoughts, our words, our hands, our bodies to
express what we feel
Never let anyone tell you who you are
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Don’t ever feel ashamed to express what you love
We all take pleasure in something, but that something does not
describe us
Society tries to force us to obtain an image
To stay between the lines of what they believe is right
There is no right way to live or exist
We follow the rules of the unjust but our spirits will be judged by
none other than us
This project helped me further understand and appreciate the topics discussed in First Year Seminar. The most memorable experiences for me were the race discussion by Dr. Poos, the Town Hall and Truman Lecture Events, and the Peace and Nonviolence presentations by students. Each event presented a different lens to view racism.

I chose this project, a collage of faces of women of different ethnicities, because it captures the experiences mentioned above. The Race Experience Kiosk and discussion by Dr. Poos stressed how there is no biological difference in race. A total of zero genes separate one race from another. Race is a perception made by humans as a society. If people appreciated each others’ ethnicities and backgrounds and accepted them for who they are, then the misconceptions and stereotypes that accompany different ethnicities would disappear.

The Town Hall and Truman Lecture events along with the Peace and Nonviolence student presentations stressed how society as a whole acts in accordance with the topic of race. From the Town Hall and Truman Lecture Events I took away that we must give understanding and grace to each other. Many people jump to conclusions or stereotypes about others. We must educate ourselves about these issues in order to avoid regressing back to worse times and in order to have an open mind and to constantly progress. We must go out and experience the world in order to acknowledge our differences and to appreciate all of humanity.
LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

We have all heard the saying “don’t judge a book by its cover.” The first time I was told this was in a library in elementary school, and I took this in the most literal way possible: just because a book’s cover looks boring, does not mean it is not a good story. But as I have grown up, I have come to understand the real meaning behind this saying: do not judge people based on their appearance. Just because people seem completely different from you on the outside does not mean they are completely different on the inside. There is good in everyone, but in order to find it, we must look past our superficial differences and embrace one another for not only our similarities but our diversity.

During the panel presentation, Mary Sanchez said, “Your story or personal narrative has an impact on your feelings associated with other people.” This is important for everyone to keep in mind in order to keep from judging one another too quickly or harshly. We must remember that everyone is going through something we do not all understand. As a result of her traumatizing childhood experiences, Carolyn Maull McKinstry had trouble trusting people which caused turmoil in her life as an adult. McKinstry overcame these obstacles and is now a very well respected insightful woman. This statement is also true in my life. The way I view the world has been greatly impacted by the way I was raised. Growing up, my family not only went to church together every Sunday, but we were all involved in ministries also. My parents lead the youth group and sang on the Praise Team. My sister and I helped in the nursery and with the preschoolers. Given these circumstances, I became a Christian at a very young age and as a result my beliefs are built upon a strong religious foundation. I was raised to not judge people based on their appearance and superficial standards, but by their fruits and character. I was also raised in a small town, and the kids I grew up with as well as the adults I was around were mostly white. Therefore, I was pretty naive about the racial discrimination happening in the world. I always knew it existed, but it never impacted me or those close to me, so it seemed like a foreign problem.

McKinstry’s story helped to reinforce the idea of just how important it is to be understanding of people’s situations in life. Looking and judging from the outside is not fair to those around us. For example without knowledge of McKinstry’s childhood experiences, it was easy for her neighbors to judge her for her drinking problem and for not keeping a close eye on her children. However, those who knew of McKinstry’s past felt sympathetic towards the situation, since they knew the reason behind her pain. If people would simply take the time to get to know one another rather than forming prejudices against them, everyone’s lives would be impacted for the better. Most often, if people would just talk to one another they could find something in common and consequently form a mutual bond and respect. I believe that if McKinstry were to struggle with these same problems of depression and alcoholism today, society’s response would be much different. Today’s attitude of love and reconciliation could greatly alter her coping mechanisms after the racism and bombings she experienced. It is vital that we allow people to heal after suffering traumatic experiences.

Ephesians 2:10 says “for you were created in Christ Jesus to do good works which He has planned in advance for you.” This verse coincides with how Carolyn M. McKinstry and Alvin Brooks say we should treat one another. They say we should treat others the way we want to be treated because we are all created in the likeness of our creator. This should put into perspective that despite our physical, political, or religious differences we should respect everyone because we are all children of God. We are all of the same race: the human race. No matter our situation in life, we can all be examples of how God wants us to love one another. We can all love our neighbors as ourselves by getting to know people rather than making snap judgments and evaluating who a person is based on his/her character instead of appearance. It is important that we remember we are not defined by our physical characteristics or our pasts, but rather by the fact that we are all created in the likeness of God and loved by Him. God does not cast judgment on us based on superficial characteristics, so who are we to do so?

The love and acceptance we have learned to display in this semester of First Year Seminar directly relate to the values Avila University is built upon. Avila’s mission and values include being accepting of others and embracing diversity, as well as loving our good neighbor. These values are centered around the basic principle of being kind to others, which are very similar to the goals of the experiences of First Year Seminar. Through reading While the World Watched, listening to and interacting with the panelists, along with the Race Experience Kiosk, and various lectures from students and faculty, the importance of being kind and loving has been illuminated.

In order to change the world, we must remember to display these characteristics of love, kindness, and acceptance. It is easy to be kind to those we have a lot in common with, but it is by showing love and acceptance to those we hardly relate to that shows courage and grace. People often fear the unknown, and, therefore, fear diversity. However if we attempted to be understanding instead of fearful, the human race would make great strides in the right direction.

Jessi Bradley

Major: Radiologic Science
Hometown: Grain Valley, Mo.
#MyLifeMatters

My hands are up don’t shoot!!

I’m a black man, with feelings and a valued life,
Please, I’ve done nothing wrong, point the gun the other way.
At my home, it holds the love of my valued wife,
There are no kids, but we talk of having children one day.

Is my tail light busted, was I speeding too fast?
If so I apologize, may not have been paying attention.
So what made you suspicious sir of me through the dash?
Tell me now, in the future I can maybe prevent it.

Don’t want to be a statistic, I will soon be forgotten
After my brief CNN mention of me being shot.
Of me being SHOT, dash cam flashing nonstop when
The masses see another man dead by the hands of a cop.

My hands are up DON’T SHOOT
I didn’t kill 9 members of a church
I don’t even have a weapon to cause hurt.
My hands are up DON’T SHOOT
I’m 3 credits away from my degree
Check my I.D. no history of batteries or felonies.

At my home, it holds the love of my valued wife,
There are no kids, but we talk of having children one day.
#MyLifeMatters

The experience has impacted my thinking greatly when
talking about reconciliation, forgiveness, discrimination,
stereotypes and privilege. It impacted me as much as to write
the poem, showing counter contrasts between police brutality and
then forgiveness of the racism within the institution. It is my inter-
pretation of what I have been hearing throughout all of First Year
Seminar. What really inspired me was to include both sides of the
stories (good and bad). My hopes were to show the contrast between
police brutality and police doing their jobs.

I also wrote on this topic because it really resonated with me
because of the current publicity that the police force is receiving.
However, I did not want to just write the classic poem bashing the
police force and saying that they are murderers. I wanted to explore
more of the side of the police trying to protect a person not willing
to follow orders. Furthermore, I also just did not want to show the
police force as a saving grace. We all know that there is always going
to be that one trigger happy cop that shows no self-control. There
are also those that hate cops so much that at any moment they will
take the chance to act out against the police force.

Overall, I appreciate the experience I have received from this
class. It has taught me many things and opened my eyes to all of the
“isms” and to the privilege some people receive. This class was also
one of the factors that inspired me to write this poem. I felt it was
the best way to represent my learning and knowledge I gained from
First Year Seminar.
First Year Seminar has taught me a lot about life. There are going to be bad people in this world and you are just going to have to live with that. When I came to Avila I did not know what to expect. Avila University is a Catholic school and I am Muslim. I did not think they would be racist but I thought there would be at least some people looking the other way. There was none of that. People are just really accepting here and nice. It does not matter where you are from, what color you are; we are all one. It has me thinking about a lot of things regarding society. Society has come a long way since the Civil Rights Movement but there is still room to grow. It is sad that there is still racism today.

This experience has impacted my thinking of forgiveness. We should forgive people; there is no need to hold grudges. Our lives are too short to be holding grudges. Discrimination is disgusting. People need to know no one is better than any one else. We are all the same. That is how we should act. Stereotypes are so wrong and we need to stop. Every time there is an explosion, it was not committed by a Muslim. The media is really the devil; the way they phrase things to what they want us to believe really hurts. Just taking one individual’s action for an entire religion is not right.

When I went to the Race Experience Kiosk, I did not know what to expect. I was just trying to get in there, get my class points and get out. But when I went there, I was really amazed, while I was changing my face to black, Asian, etc. to compare it with my own. When I was doing it, the images looked so similar. Then I thought we are all alike. It does not matter if we are white, blue, black, orange, pink; we are all people. We are all the same. If we started acting like we actually were, this place would be so much more loving and safe. There is no one that is better than the other. We should never look down on somebody just for their color. That is totally wrong.

This experience connects to the mission and values of Avila University. Everyone accepts people here. There is no racism. If the world would take Avila’s approach this would be a lot safer world. If you fear God, you would not be racist. These people who are racist need God fast. There is no one to trust but God. If you believe in that, racism would go away in a hurry. This is going to impact my future actions by wanting to start an organization. People need to stop thinking they are better than everyone else. It is going to be an organization where you have to get out of your comfort zone and start thinking outside the box. People are going to have to bring strangers, meet with them, and get to know them and their culture. People will meet others from different religions: Do not just stick to the religion your parents got you into. Learn about all religions.

In conclusion this class was a great experience. It was definitely a success. I learned things I did not know about myself. I saw different peoples’ point of view on different issues. Black lives matter; all lives matter. There are a lot of different takes on that and that is a good thing. Keep the topic going. But knowing different people’s point of view is the best part. Learning about McKinstry’s life and her story and then getting to meet her in person was amazing. I am glad the school was able to bring her here. That was a great experience. I cannot wait to learn more about life and myself as I continue my college journey.
The Truman Lecture events have taught me the importance of my role and responsibility in the issues all around us, such as racism. I have learned what actions to take to make a difference. Before this project I did not realize how important certain topics were. I grew up in a majority black neighborhood, so I did not hear many racist remarks. I was sheltered more than others and blind to a certain degree regarding how big an issue it still is. After this experience, I have changed my perspective on many things.

This project opened my eyes to the power of forgiveness. Before I thought forgiveness was just a word. You forgave somebody for them. Now I know better; you forgive them for yourself. It frees you from all the hurt and pain you have been bottling up inside you towards that person. It is also done with reconciliation. I know that I need to acknowledge what I have been through and come to grasp that I am okay and a stronger woman because of it. I cannot change my past but I can change the way I view the things that happened to me. It is justified for me to be upset, but I should understand why these things happened to me and know that God would not have put me in any situation if He did not know I could handle it and come through it a better person. This experience showed me that discrimination comes in many forms. I never knew people were judged on so many different things. I thought the world was getting better before this experience and now I feel like my eyes are open to what is going on. People get discriminated against for some very silly reasons; like someone not liking the way they dress, talk, look, school they attend or where they live. It is like people now-a-days have nothing better to do with their time than to tear others down.

The Race Experience Kiosk changed my perspective of the similarities and differences races have. I looked almost the same in every race, they just changed my eye shape and skin color. It was unreal how I looked. I always thought different races had many different facial differences. It showed me that we are more similar than we think. There are only small differences between races. I view people a lot differently now; I can relate better to them. I feel more closely connected to people.

I am heavily impacted by McKinstry’s story. In her childhood she witnessed so much tragedy; her church bombing and losing four close friends; people’s homes in her own neighborhood being bombed; how her view on life shifted; the mid-life depression she went through, where she drank her days away, feeling like she had no purpose in life anymore; the way she got through it talking to her husband and getting help; and now her attitude of love and reconciliation brings joy to me that we can overcome anything life throws at us. She gives me hope that one day everyone will reach that reconciliation they need and the world can be like it should be, in peace. (McKinstry, 2011, p. 218-229)

During the Town Hall, Mary Sanchez said, “Your story or personal narrative has an impact on your feelings associated with other people.” I interpret that as your personal experience impacting how you view others. This is very true for me; I judge people on what I have been through in the past with people like them. My personal experiences have shaped me and changed how I treat others because I thought that people who looked alike acted alike. Now I know better than that and try not to judge people on what others like them have done. Mary Sanchez showed me it was my story that made me think this way and I might have to adjust it.

McKinstry suggested, “hearts can be changed” through education. I feel that it could happen when schools and parents realize that their children need to know both sides of the story before “choosing” a side. When the youth only know half of a story about what happened they cannot form genuine opinions without knowing the whole truth. We need to help the children be better than we are, educating them about what happened in our past and all the stories that go along with it. They will be able to express how they feel and help educate others around them, including their parents.

During the Town Hall, Congressman Emanuel Cleaver suggested that, “unconscious racism” is one of the greatest problems in the United States today. To me unconscious racism is when you make a racist comment, but say “it is okay, I have a friend that is black.” Or, when you say you do not see color, you just see people, you try to justify why you are doing what you are doing. People try to act like they are not racist, but it just makes things worse. A real man can admit his faults and does not have to try and justify everything he says and does.

This experience has impacted me to change the way I view others and taught me what I want to do to change it. I want to be an example that racism will not be tolerated and help educate people so they know why they should not be racist. I want to help people dealing with racism, both victims and perpetrators, to find ways to cope and move on. I can help end racism by educating others and being an example to others that racist comments are not okay and they hurt other people. If others do this as well, I feel like the future can be a peaceful and racism will end.

After doing the culminating project I now understand things others have gone through and can sympathize with them. My eyes are now open to what struggles still go on in the world and now I know ways to help and try to stop racism. I do not judge people on their exterior or my experiences with others like them. I make judgments now based on their character. I have taken a lot away from this experience and have become a more educated person.

Work Cited
McKinstry, C.M. & George, D. (2011). While the world watched: A Birmingham bombing survivor comes of age during the Civil Rights Movement. Tyndale: Carol Stream, IL
Congressman Emanuel Cleaver; Carolyn Mauil McKinstry; and Mary Sanchez: Town Hall Panelists, Truman Lecture, Avila University; Kansas City, MO 10-20-16.
Devon Young

Being Black in America, Land of the free, Justice for...
What America has always meant to mean...
White America
Not wanting us Dark, Brown complexion to say A Word...
Don’t fight back, take what’s coming

Travon Martin, Alton Sterling, Michael Brown,
Oh there’s plenty more all gunned down
Martin Luther King, Jr. may your name rest in peace
While we’re still livin’ in this grief of...

Being Black in America, Land of the free, Justice for...
What America has always meant to mean...
White America
Not wanting us Dark, Brown complexion to say A Word...
Don’t fight back, take what’s coming

Our voice isn’t being heard so...We fight back, perhaps do the same
I should say...
It’s a problem though...again our voice isn’t being heard
Wouldn’t want to go about this way, but how else are we supposed
to go about it...
Dallas shooting five officers killed, for no reason...Right?
“They killed the good cops.” “All cops aren’t the same.”
Okay

All Black men aren’t the same, what about the good Black fathers
that were murdered, and
couldn’t go home to their loved ones...
Who cares though...
Travon Martin, Alton Sterling, Michael Brown, oh there’s plenty
more...there was a reason for them though? Right?
All Black men aren’t the same, but we’re looked at as one which is
true...
The don’t look at me the way they look at you...
Black Lives Matter
That’s a problem, But...
All lives matter...Right? But they don’t come at you the way they
come at me...you’re protected

So what do I expect myself to do? Have my guard up whenever
I’m around a cop
Yes, yes I do. I look at every single cop that murdered all 194
“armed,” “violent,” Black men in the year of 2016 the same...

Am I ashamed to say? Why would I be? I’m a Black young man in
America, land of the free, and Justice for...what America has always
meant to mean...

Just transformed...

“Now we all think what we want about each other, but for us to
come together as one, the heart has to change, like Mrs. McKinstry
said, and stop discriminating.”
One thing that I enjoy so much at Avila, and college in general, is the vast diversity of students on campus. People from all backgrounds whether they be from other parts of the country or even from countries on the other side of the world attend Avila. One thing that must be realized is that behind every face, there is a story. Each and every person sees the world through a different lens and sometimes that lens is crystal clear showing every beauty that the world has to offer. Other times that lens may be fogged over or out of focus only allowing the person to see partially what they are allowed to see. This analogy describes the idea behind perspective. Every student, whether they are white, black, Arabic, gay, straight, rich or poor, sees the world through their own experiences.

When reflecting upon myself, as much as I wanted to imagine that I had a full understanding of the world around me with issues of discrimination and racism, I had to realize that I had absolutely no clue of the giant hole in our society before coming to Avila and being exposed to these issues through the presentations of McKinstry and Poos. I can remember sitting in Dr. Poo's presentation when he asked the students to raise their hand if they had ever had an experience of being discriminated against or witnessed someone being discriminated against. As for myself, I had never in my life been discriminated against so I did not raise my hand, but then I grew curious to see who in that room had raised their hand. As I turned and looked around the room, I saw all the hands that were raised. At that very moment I realized that maybe the idea that I had about racism was wrong as well as my perspective and that maybe I had it better off than I had thought, whether it be through privilege or from where I grew up as a child.

As I was reflecting, I came to the best conclusion that my ignorance towards my privilege had come from my upbringing as a child. I grew up in a very small Missouri farming town with a little over 5,000 people. I went to school with the same kids all the way from pre-school to high school with a very small graduating class. In all honesty, I graduated with only one African American student. It was easily clear to me that I had been deprived of the diversity of the rest of the world growing up in that small town environment. From the time I was a child I was only seeing the world through the tunnel vision of my own experiences and from the experiences of those who looked like me, dressed like me, talked like me, and were raised like me. With the lack of knowledge or absence of exposure to other racial groups, there becomes a habit that breeds misunderstandings and ignorance of others which then in return promotes racism and bigotry. In my childhood, I never witnessed someone that was outright racist and expressed it openly and proudly. However, I can acknowledge the presence of unconscious racism. I did not realize this until after the panel discussion with Congressman Cleaver that such a thing as unconscious racism even existed. Sometimes people themselves may not be racist or do not want to be, but due to their upbringing they have tendencies to express views or do things that are outdated. An example of this is common back home where the African American population is very small, so many people will refer to African Americans as “them” or “those people” which to my understanding is unconscious racism. No one in my community is a member of the KKK or has denied service to African Americans, but I had not realized the tensions that still lurk in that town until after I had left.

Racism itself is fueled by ignorance and hate. There is only one way to counter that problem and that is through education and love. I truly believe that if people become more educated on the issues of racism and discrimination in America then they will be able to see the world through a new light and with an open mind. We as people are all the same once the superficial characteristics are eliminated, because there is truly only one race in the world and that is the human race. The color of our skin is not due to further evolutionary advancement or whatever debunk-able theory that racists may use, but is instead caused by the amount of pigment in our skin that correlates to the latitude of our origins. People need to be educated about why we may look differently. Truly, we as people are not that different at all. McKinstry and Alvin Brooks shared their beliefs during the panel and lecture that we are all created in the likeness of our creator. No matter what divine power you may or may not believe in, humanity as a whole all came from the same place, so we should not treat people as though they are any different than ourselves.

While reflecting, I realized how much this whole experience has impacted me. I know and understand just how lucky I am and how fortunate my life has been. I know that in the future I will be more consciously aware of my actions and how I treat others. My generation can be the generation that can make great change to the world by ending racism and tackling other issues. One of the first things that must be done is to educate people about the impact that racism still has here in America. Educate people that at the end of the day the human race is the only true race in the world.
Hate is taught, Love is **genuine**
Habits can be broken, but change won’t be made until love is **chosen**

Racism is not a dead heart, it is just one that is **frozen**,
Racism is taught, a pure mind that has been **stolen**

Does color make a person important, what is the color of any **heart**?
Is our generation special, can we be the beginning of a positive **start**?

From California to Maine we are all unique **Americans**, Black lives do matter, the same as white or brown

**Man,** we have more **urgency** in making green **currency**
than building unity by thinking **externally** our nation is wobbling, our kids’ future is not held sturdily, is the size of our pockets the real **emergency**?

The problem has been noticed, step 1 is **initiated**. Doing nothing is unaccepted stagnant minds cannot be **tolerated**. If your mind is not adapting you are the reason why equality is **contaminated**. Our future is not set in stone, it is not **laminated**. Action must be made, let’s be where movement is **generated**. The problem is not **complicated**, there is no median to be **negotiated**. We all want to be one, but are **separated**. “Someone else will fix it” is the stupid thoughts of someone **intoxicated**.

The future can be a beautiful picture that is equal and **authenticated**. Let’s be the people and the generation who picked up the paintbrush and **illustrated**.

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I was raised with two very loving and compassionate parents who taught me the correct way to treat people, love people and understand people. Although I am not perfect with any of these aspects I was taught I am no different than any other human being. I was raised in a God-fearing house and that was the basis of our family morals. Everybody is not the same; we all have our differences and that’s what makes us unique. Every Spanish person is different from every African-American person who is different from every Caucasian person. And, every person inside of each race is different from each other in a completely different way. We should not be fighting for all of us to be “the same”; we should be fighting for understanding about why we are different.

A month after I turned in this poem I read Zora Neal Hurston’s essay titled, *How It Feels To Be Cold* and she did a great job articulating my thoughts. She said there is a black bag, an orange bag, a yellow bag, and a white bag all on the wall. The only way for us to truly understand each other is to pour out all our unique traits, cultures and ways of living and put it into one big pile. Then, we should refill our bags by grabbing traits, personalities and styles from every different culture to truly understand how to fit like perfect puzzle pieces and understand one another better. It is possible; especially with “ONE NATION UNDER GOD.”
Presentation Posters

Posters created by first year students and used during presentations to classmates.
We live in a world in which
Anger, pain, and hate
Have led us to believe that
Confusion, fear, and hostility
Are states that are expectable to live in

We live in a world in which
Irrelevance, insignificance and worthlessness
Are constant emotions that go untouched causing
Mass shootings, murders and suicides
To take over our news feeds

As a society we have always faced injustice leading to
Sit ins, picket lines, and protests
Losing effectiveness, we progressed with the times to
Hashtags, broken windows, and riots
Until we had control again

As a society we have always faced crowd control
Before it was police dogs, firehoses and arrests
When we didn’t conform
Now it’s rubber bullets, tear gas and assault
Until they have control again

As a nation we have decided to mask
Inequality, discrimination and social tension
Through lies and lines containing
Melting pot, freedom, and the Bible
To satisfy our own needs

As a nation we have decided to expand
Segregation, brutality and the classification of lives that can be lost
Slowly, making the United States
Divided, unsafe, and a war zone
For more people than it has ever been

We live in a world in which changing
Hearts, minds and views
Has become a daily struggle in order to create
Comfortable, safe and peaceful
States which may actually be expectable to live in

We live in a world in which
Education, awareness, and understanding
Are constantly failing to be up-to-date allowing
Stereotypes, walls and options
To take hold of our social media

As a society we have always valued education
Laws, societal norms and global competition
Have lead to an increase in
Regulation, pressure and difficulty
Until we have reached a proper standard

As a society we have failed to include
Acceptance, view points and humanities
In our school but rather focus on
Math, science and test taking
Until our students can prove we taught them well

As a nation we need to decide to be
Honest, open and true
Throughout all the levels of education so
Children, adolescents and adults
Can satisfy our human needs

As a nation we have to decide to
Reflect, join and commit
Slowly, making the United States
One, safe, and a happy place
For more people than it has ever been

We live in a world that has called for me as a
Future Teacher, mother, and wife
To provide my
Students, kids and family
With a nurturing environment

As a society we have indirectly
Plead, begged and forced
Teachers to bring
Strength, consistency and unity
To the children they may come in contact with

As a nation we have been
Torn, battered and bruised
In the search for people who will lead with
Actions, words and ideas
To fix the mess we have made

They claim we live in the land of the free
I claim we live in the land of the scared

I define Freedom as forgiveness
Allowing yourself to be set free from feelings of
Anger, pain, and hate

I define Freedom is unity
Allowing yourself to be set free from feelings of
Confusion, fear, and hostility

I define freedom as being unapologetically you
Allowing yourself to be set free from feelings of
Irrelevance, insignificance and worthlessness

I will only accept my freedom when everyone is
Comfortable, safe and peaceful
When everyone is presented with
Education, awareness, and understanding
And when we can all come together with
Acceptance, honesty, and strength
To treat everyone with
Love, joy, and compassion
Allowing us to live in a world of
Dignity, respect and fairness

Major: Special Education
Hometown: Brentwood, Mo.
Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA, President, Avila University presents Bill and Jean ’76 Buchanan with the Fr. Jean Pierre Medaille Society Medal. The Buchanan’s established The Buchanan Initiative for Peace and Nonviolence at Avila University which includes allowing multiple educational opportunities for first year students.

Carolyn McKinstry graciously signing books for students, faculty, staff and guests.

Carolyn McKinstry, author, *While the World Watched*, and featured speaker shares her life experiences and responds to questions from an audience of nearly 500.
First year students Jessica Dunn and Victor Famodimu presented Carolyn McKinstry with a gift from the first year students.

Students, faculty, staff and community guests gave Distinguished Lecturer Carolyn McKinstry a standing ovation for her lecture.

Panelists included Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II and Diane Burkholder, Anti-Oppression Consultant and Co-Founder of One Struggle KC who enjoy conversation among one another.

Sister Rosemary Flanigan greeted McKinstry after the Truman Lecture in Goppert Theater.
Moderator and Chair Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D., entertained a question from one of the youngest audience members.

McKinstry shared several eye-opening and memorable comments during the Truman Lecture.

Panelist Diane Burkholder greets McKinstry and gets her book signed during the reception.

McKinstry shared several eye-opening and memorable comments during the Truman Lecture.

Attendees enjoyed a reception after the panel and before McKinstry provided the Truman Lecture.
Many students were eager to meet Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II including first year student Jeremi Barnes.

First Year Student Jessica Dunn and Paige Illum, Ph.D., Director of Student Engagement and Success share conversation after the Truman Lecture.

Panelist Alvin Brooks, Community Activist of Civil Rights and Nonviolence shares his experiences as a police officer with the Kansas City, Missouri police department during the 1950s.

Many students were eager to meet Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II including first year student Jeremi Barnes.
Panelist Sister Rosemary Flanigan shares her experience in the historic 1965 civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery.

Moderator Sue Ellen McCalley thanks the panelists for their insights.

Panelist Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II shares his childhood memories growing up in Wichita Falls, Texas.

The Town Hall Presentation and the Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture would not have been possible without the passion of many who contributed to the experience. Pictured l to r: Moderator and Chair Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D.; Panelist Alvin Brooks, Community Activist of Civil Rights and Nonviolence; Panelist Mary Sanchez, Kansas City Star Journalist and Community Activist; Panelist Sister Rosemary Flanigan, Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Selma March participant; Carolyn McKinstry, author, While the World Watched and 2016 Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer; Panelist Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II, United States Representative; Ron Sleptiza, Ph.D., President, Avila University; Panelist Diane Burkholder, Anti-Oppression Consultant and Co-Founder of One Struggle KC and J. Anthony Snorgrass, Ph.D., Moderator of Town Hall Presentation.
Senior Avila student Pedro Argumedo shares a moving presentation with first year students regarding where he has found passion to make a difference in the world.

First year student Ike Adigwu shares his culminating project with classmates.

First year student Jessica Dunn shares her poem to fellow first year students during class.
Kennedy Bacon

It Ends With Us

It Ends With Us” is a statement that can be interpreted many different ways. In my case, it is the ending of the “isms”. We are here to end racism, sexism, ageism and so forth. No one likes to be degraded or put down by others. In today’s society that is called bullying and not treating others as equals, and it should end.

For my project I decided to ask several people from my hometown, work and college how they felt when they were being oppressed or being degraded. As one would expect, all of them said they did not like it. Some even said they hated it. After I asked them how they felt, I followed up with another question. “Did they want it to end?” When I finished with the questions, the ones that said they wanted it to end, I took their picture with a sign saying “It Ends With Us.” Then I had them sign it. I had them sign it so they will help put an end to the all the “isms.”

Once I took their photos I decided to then turn it into a video featuring the song “We are the World” written by Michael Jackson but redone by the Artist of Haiti. Although this song was redone in prayers for Haiti during the horrendous earthquake, they endured back in 2010. Its meaning is also very powerful and goes well with my topic.

I feel as if by talking to my peers about how being oppressed felt, we will all remember to put ourselves in each other’s shoes when we say something. Whether it’s a “You hit like a girl” joke, or a racial slur you think is a funny inside joke with your buddy, those things can still be hurtful. You do not need to watch what you say if you see the bigger picture. Which is, not everyone is like you. Or has the same advantages as you. If you are in the state of power or privileged, stay humble. Do not be the oppressor, because you once knew what it felt like to be belittled. This is the generation of knowledge and hopefulness. We have all the power to end the “isms.” And that is why it needs to end with us.

View It Ends With Us video at https://youtu.be/zH0ZBPG71b4

Major: Radiologic Science
Kristina Young

WHO AM I?

Well let’s talk about… who I am not. India Ire said it best, “I am not my hair, I am not my skin” .... So what do you now see?

I can tell you because it is hard to tell, some say I’m a bitch... but I have a story where the holes can not be stitched.

I am 18 but I still remember a 6 year old wish list. I was a mother of 3 at 13 & still today I feel bad that I couldn’t save them & keep them from separating.

I am an athlete in a sport that does not always please a crowd, a black playing soccer... I know big mama’s proud. Not that I plan to become a professional but I told my Aunt Kristi, I’ma get us out the ghetto.

I’ve been a victim of gun violence, & I never how much pain came when some many people seen it & stay silent.

Once I was told to open up & yet this is as far as I got before I started turning red & all my thoughts get distraught.

So now you can judge me by what you see, or you’ll understand that my story & my background are what made, & makes me me.

This is just a sketch of an 18 year old’s life. I guess you can say this is about race and ageism. I’ll explain some of the things you are probably questioning.

For my 6 year old wish list, I asked Santa to let my cousin out of jail for my graduation. When May 12 came he still had a long time remaining. Being a black soccer player, I ran into some racial discrimination in the games and yes, I let it affect the way I played. Then, going on to the 3 kids I mothered… they were just my youngest cousin’s children whose mother got sick. So we took them in and since they were not very old, we missed a ton of school.

When it comes to gun violence… I have had my fair share. I still go to sleep with a little scare that maybe I will lose my brother, or maybe my best friends, or maybe even my boyfriend since the theme is to kill black men.

Landen Nealy

Racism

If people learn to hate, then they can be taught to love.

They say that time is a healer,

But as time goes on all I see is darkness as the light at the end of the tunnel is fading.

Our country claims to be one nation under God,

But if God made us in His own image why do we claim our skin to be better than our brothers’.

When we love like Jesus, we become color blind and only see a person’s heart.

There is only one race.

The human race.

Change starts with the youth and change starts at home.

Society needs to change so we don’t tolerate racism, rather than think it’s always been around so it will always be around.
While reading the book *While the World Watched*, I could never understand how so many people could live in this chaos. There was so much bitterness and hate in the world. I was amazed at how much ignorance there was in society. Fear is the real enemy. Without knowledge we can never understand each other. This will only leave us with fractioned-out groups afraid of one another causing uproars and social tension. We in the end decide how to treat other people in our lives: we can make an impact for the better. Each person we meet is a chance to start anew. We can brighten their day and create a chain of good hope.

Even today, the racial tension in the world is frighteningly reminiscent of the Civil Rights Era. There is too much fear between races causing many misunderstandings. Society has gained so much knowledge from technology, but no one is using it. We still rely on our stereotypes, just like in the past. Without understanding, we will never be able to survive. So I tried to imagine what I would write about for this project. I was at a loss for words for a long time, but then as I was flipping back through pages in the book, I reread McKinstry’s experience of marching. I could not imagine actually putting your life on the line in order to have equal rights. I would most likely have been selfish, and tried to protect myself. So I decided to write my poem in the view of a person marching in the streets, and what might have been going through their head.

I hope that someday our society will be able to create peace and end racial tension. We need to create an understanding that is deeper than knowledge. Because there can be many people that know you, but to understand someone’s plight, that will make the difference. Only then can we stand together as brothers.
A ll freshmen at Avila University are currently enrolled in a class called First Year Seminar. When I received my schedule and read the course name, I assumed that I would be taught what to do and what not to do in college and it would also act as some form of study hall where I can get tips and pointers as this is my first year here. I figured this was a class that helped with the transition from high school to the wonderful independence that the world of college brings. What I was unaware of is the amount of introspection and growth that I would be doing in the following months after the first day of class. The first assignment was to read a book and write an essay that was due over the summer. I had not thought much into what it was really about other than an assignment to get us thinking about our experiences in the world thus far and to teach us about how different everyone's experience can be even in the same area or experiencing the same event. After reading the book and writing my paper, it made me think about all of the current events that stem from similar feelings and actions in a previous time period. Other than looking at this assignment as connecting with history using experiences I have had and my personal views, I did not expect to learn so much from a single story. While learning about myself and what my point of view is on a topic that is so often hidden under the rug out of ignorance or fear of something happening, I learned about the people around me and how they influence my thoughts and words. I learned from people who were not raised here and people who have lived completely different lives than what I have ever experienced. The one thing that we all have in common is that we see this as an issue whether we see it in real time or in a history book. We know that what happened and is still happening today is wrong and all that there is to do is be a catalyst, move past the mistakes others have made, and move forward for the sake of a better tomorrow.

As a child who was raised by parents whom were raised by your typical southern white families, I did not experience anything that I viewed as wrong. My father and his father would go on rants about people and I would not pay much attention because for one, I did not quite understand the words being used and also, my grandmother and my mother would sit and listen as they went on, but only one person would ever say something contrary to everyone's opinion. My mother would always defend whoever was being discussed and I can still hear her say to everyone, "It is wrong of you to say these things, move on, its history for a reason so leave it behind." My mother's father was a Captain in Troop C of the Missouri Highway Patrol and in the Navy, Coast Guard, and National Guard, so he was no stranger to diversity, which in his time period was a huge issue. My mother's family chose to be the change they wished to see which then carried over to me. As I got older, I started to realize what was being discussed and the words that were being used. I would then sit through holidays listening to the hatred spewing from their mouths and biting my tongue because it seemed that my mother and I were the only people in the room who shared the same belief: that it is in fact wrong to single out people for things they cannot change and it is wrong to let hatred resonate in every thought about things that do not matter unless you make them matter.

The First Year Seminar experience has opened my eyes to what I was actually experiencing and why it is such a good thing that I chose to be like my mother who made the choice to be like her parents and have zero tolerance for bigotry and racism. It has also taught me that although stereotypes are cruel, first impressions are made involuntarily, and white privilege is very much alive and well in today's society. We can move on and we need to move on. Forgiveness is the first step, forgive each other and forgive ourselves so in the future, we will not have extra emotional baggage that will stop us from treating everyone how we should.

As I have been learning all of this information and evaluating myself, I have often thought about how things could be changed and what we can do to change things. A huge question I always have though is why have we not already changed? I then remind myself that although we have advanced at what seems like the speed of light in just my lifetime with technology, space travel, and our knowledge exponentially growing, some people will not change their ways because they feel threatened, offended, and hurt by being told their actions and thoughts are not okay. The only way to move past these feelings is to forgive, not forget, and become educated. With more education, it becomes easier to spot issues and then handling the situation becomes less of a task, because early identification will allow for earlier change. In essence, being "educated and present" can nip racial issues in the bud. The more you are educated, the more you learn about what others have experienced which makes you want to act to where people will not have to experience those things again at the expense of someone's ignorance. If I had to change hearts through education, I would strongly advocate people hearing others' stories of times they have experienced racism and that way the perpetrators then can see a real life example that this is happening: this is real, and these are the effects. This makes it impossible to be blind to what is happening because testimonies are real, the people are real, which makes the situation real. I would also suggest that people who are helping in the educational process advocate involvement in the community because not every community is perfect. There are groups and movements available to everyone. If there is not, then encourage people to start them. There has to be a start and someone pushing, because nothing ever comes about from letting things go by and not acting on them.

This First Year Seminar experience has led me to change my thinking. Instead of becoming angry at ignorance, I choose to educate instead of belittle. I choose to accept that even though people will resist change, it is still possible for things to turn around. It has also caused me to accept that I am human and I make mistakes, but forgiveness and recognition can help me move past these mistakes. Instead of accepting who I am and not acting out on what I believe in, I am now more involved in speaking out and changing the way people perceive these issues. I have made a plan to help end racism by educating others. Instead of accepting your roots and letting things continue to grow towards hatred, I tell people that you can plant a new tree and let love grow. Your current thoughts and actions can always change and be productive and positive, so you should not be tied down to old ways of thinking. The future offers endless possibilities for everyone, so why spend your time holding a grudge that is not yours to hold in the first place. Racism needs to end and it starts with your actions, how will you improve society with your words and actions today?
The War

A war is being fought
But not always with weapons
This war is fought with harsh words,
And never-ending threats.

A war not fought over money or power
But still a war nonetheless
This war is fought over the basic color of one’s skin,
And will not end until changes are made.

A war recognized by most
But not many try to end it
This war is not difficult to fix it just takes love,
And acceptance.

A war that needs to be left in the past
But instead hatred still runs through
This war can only be stopped if we accept differences,
And forgive the past.

This experience has impacted my way of thinking in a sense
that sometimes we need to look ourselves in the mirror
and ask ourselves, “What are you doing to make a positive
change in the world?”

Carolyn McKinstry’s story impacted me to be a better person.
Reading her book and hearing her speak was a really moving experience because I was able to see just how severe things had really been. Hearing her tell her story years later in such a calm and forgiving way really inspired me to be a better person.

Panelist Mary Sanchez said “Your story or personal narrative has an impact on your feelings associated with other people.” What Sanchez is trying to convey is that it is our past experiences that shape how we act and feel towards others. I believe her suggestion holds true when it comes to how I interact with others.

I cannot necessarily agree with McKinstry’s claim that racial tensions of her childhood and today are “frighteningly reminiscent” only because I was not alive during the Civil Rights Movement. But from what I have learned from that time period, I would agree that there are racial tensions and injustices today as shown from past history.

Both McKinstry and Alvin Brooks shared their belief that we are all created in the likeness of our creator so we should treat one another how we would like to be treated. I fully believe in this because we are all human and deserve respect from each other no matter what the color of your skin. I liked Brooks’ idea that we are all connected in some way, shape, or form so we should all treat each other as equals. I can be a part of this by being accepting of all others regardless of skin color, beliefs, or sexuality.

This experience is connected to Avila’s mission in a sense that Avila promotes racial diversity and educating the young generation to lead by non-judgment and understanding of others.
Living The Dream

White, tan, yellow, brown, or black
Why does it matter what color is on our back?
Treating others with disrespect
When will we take time to stop and reflect?
What makes us each unique?
Is not the color of our skin,
It is truly what lies within.
So, let us all watch what we speak
Because racism will leave us weak.
Many people have died
Because their color was denied.
But the ability to change is in the heart
All we must do is stop tearing each other apart.
Learn from other people’s mistakes
It is time for our generation to become awake
Stop with all the hate
And inspire people with all the changes we have made.
It doesn’t matter who you are
Change takes an open heart
View this bullshit from afar
And begin to make a new start.
Leaving the Civil Rights Movement in the past,
Let’s try to make this life time last!

For my project I decided to make a poster about change and civil rights. On my poster I created a poem about how we should change and not keep making the same mistakes we did in the past because we have come too far as a nation. To keep making progress, we need to start with ourselves and change ourselves, because we cannot change other people.

On the left side of my project I used pictures from the Civil Rights Movement to show how bad things used to be with the racism, bombing, beatings, assassinations. But I also included how they decided to make a change through marching, people, and motivational speakers. This shows that we can continue to make that change.

On the right side of my project I put pictures of our greatest problems today. I decided not to include racism because although it does still exist, it is not as bad as it used to be. For example, I am a black female and I am capable of getting my education and being independent, and the only person that can stop me from doing that is myself. Therefore, I decided to do the bigger issues of today.

From the research that I have done, the bigger issues of today are bullying, cyber bullying, rape, substance abuse, education systems, media, and equality. I like to tie bullying and equality together because people get bullied for not being like others. They get bullied because they do not look the same or act the same, or because they like the same sex. These are no reasons to treat people with disrespect, which my statement from my poem, “it takes an open heart” comes from. We need to learn how to love each other and not break each other down.

As for the media, media can be a terrible, terrible thing. Media lets you see what they want you to see. They do not always put the full story of what has gone wrong. That is why the whole “police brutality” thing has been taken out of proportion. They want people to think things are wrong in society when in reality, they do not even tell the whole story.

To change our ways we need to keep an open heart and not judge people for the way they look, act, or for their gender. We need to change ourselves and support others. I like the quote by Martin Luther King Jr. “darkness cannot drive out darkness, only love can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.” I love this quote so much because it speaks for itself, and we cannot hate each other and expect results to change in a positive way. So, in conclusion do not hate, just love.
At first glance, our world might not seem like such a bad place. After all, we have plenty of diversity and methods of self-expression. In the United States, all citizens are considered "free," but are we truly free? Throughout this experience and exploration of diversity acceptance, I have learned that the world in which we live is not as picture-perfect as it is put out to be. As a nation defined by unity, we have a lot of work to do regarding acceptance of differences.

Throughout this experience, one area that stood out to me was the amount of discrimination that different groups still face today. Although we have made significant progress since the days of slavery, some individuals have not moved past this thinking. I am surprised to hear of stories regarding some sort of discrimination such as interracial couples not being tended to at restaurants and even my own brother being used for entertainment because of his social and learning disabilities. Just when we take a step forward as a nation, it seems like we almost always take two more steps backwards. Sometimes it almost feels like we are afraid of progress. People, in general, do not like change. I think we are scared of moving forward and learning to be content when things are different from what has been acceptable in the past.

As I read through McKinstry’s book, While the World Watched, it was not the acts of violence and hatred that stood out to me as being something prevalent in today’s society, but rather McKinstry’s attitude through each traumatic event she faced. McKinstry hurt for not only herself and her own losses, but also everyone else that was hurting. Her compassion was astounding, and her strong desire to take action was even more admirable. McKinstry was determined to get involved and correct the injustices inflicted on her lost friends and all other overlooked groups. It is even more incredible that McKinstry faced severe depression on top of all the trauma she faced, and she still managed to make it through everything. McKinstry’s character serves as a great model because it shows that change is possible with hard work and perseverance. We should all look to be the change we wish to see in the world because our world could be constantly improving. McKinstry’s work also goes to show that there is definitely strength in numbers. She could not accomplish all of her work to bring her friends and her town back from being forgotten all on her own, but a group of several individuals commonly working together made the recognition possible. This should inspire us because we desperately need each other. We need each other to lean on and to lift each other up, and we need each other to make a difference together. McKinstry faced horrible trauma and constant violence all through her childhood. Today, we still experience some of that, but it is not at the same extent that it would have been back then. Now, we are more privileged and possess more resources to act accordingly on the issues we are exposed to today.

Most of all, McKinstry showed me that love can go a long way. We all deserve to know that we are loved. McKinstry’s story demonstrated that violence is not the answer. The police heinously beating and hosing the African Americans did nothing to stop them from pursuing their rightful freedoms. We need compassion and the comfort of knowing that we are loved and cared for because that is what ultimately keeps us going.

Through the years, it could be said that overall our hearts have hardened in society. We have faced plenty of hardships and witnessed plenty of traumatic events. If we never talk about it, it never happened, right? As a society, we like to focus on the good and forget about all the bad. Maybe if we keep pretending like everything is fine, it will eventually turn out that way. However, ignoring the problem does not make us any stronger. I think that deep down, we all recognize that. We need to address the issue in order to get stronger, and the issue lies within ourselves. It is no longer about our neighbor who brought us to anger and made us act a certain way. The real problem is in our hearts and our constant obsession with ourselves and how we are personally doing. In order to address this problem, McKinstry says that we should look at education. She claims that hearts can be changed through education. Perhaps the problem is that we are ignorant of the past. How well does this generation truly know important historical events such as the Civil Rights Movement demonstrated in McKinstry’s book? I know I am guilty of not having as much knowledge on the subject as I should. Maybe if we had more background information on our history and important events, we could better understand people and their feelings on the subject. I think it would certainly make us more aware of how bad things were and how bad things still are in some ways. It also might allow us to be more sensitive to people and their feelings. If we are all more sensitive, it will allow us to open up more and open our hearts and our minds.

In conclusion, this experience has overall made me more aware of the amount of conflict that our world still faces. We have to worry about every little action we take and everything we say because almost anything could be taken offensively by someone. This exploration has also shown me that our world could use some big renovations. We desperately need some brave leaders to step up and start making changes to the way we treat people. We take so many things for granted in the world today, and that is so disheartening. In reality, we honestly do not have a great amount of time together. People are precious. Right now, all we have is each other, and we have to lift each other up, or else we will never make it. We no longer have time to sit and watch while the days go by. Now is the time to learn to be an active world.
Thanks to this experience, now I have a better understanding of the topics covered during the semester, such as discrimination, stereotypes and privilege. Before coming here, I did not realize how painful and important the topic of discrimination was, I think especially due to my background, but now I can affirm that discrimination is still present. Personally, I think it is stupid to judge people because of body features, because what matters for me is “what’s inside,” not the “outside.”

Another aspect of this course that I have appreciated was the possibility to listen to Carolyn Maull McKinstry’s story and understand how painful it was for her and for the rest of the black population at the time to live in a society where there was no freedom and no rights.

When she told us her story and how to change the society, a change of the hearts of people is necessary. I realized that one effective way, if not the most important, is to educate the next generation and tell them about the violence and the reality of the segregation period, because only showing them what happened can lead to a social change where there will be equality and acceptance.

I chose to do a unique personal project, because I thought it was the best way to show my understanding of the topics that we have covered in the last few months. These concepts are really important for me and I wanted to demonstrate how everything has changed from the past up until now.

My project is composed of a wood board divided in four sections in different colors around a black placard. In every section I tried to show some influential and prominent moments of American history regarding the concept of racism.

In the first part, I wrote two words “segregation and discrimination” and with these I wanted to illustrate the beginning of the battle for freedom in a period characterized by hatred, injustice and violence.

In the second part, I decided to put the names of “Martin Luther King Jr. and Carolyn Maull McKinstry” as praise for the people who fought for their beliefs and to make a better world with no discrimination. The keys words are “equality” and “love.”

In the third part I wanted to put something that in my opinion would have been able to explain my view of the topics of race, discrimination, inequality and injustice. I thought a lot about that and I decided for this sentence “the color of our skin does NOT make us different, it makes us unique.” I believe it points out that our physical characteristics are not important. The relevant thing is what we have inside. Our appearance only makes us special, unique and extraordinary.

In the last part, I decided to write “We are the change.” I took this sentence said by Ms. McKinstry because everything that happened in this country is amenable today to us. If we want a better world free of discrimination and hatred, we have to start with ourselves, with our thoughts and our actions. “Treat the others as you want to be treated,” is the Golden Rule.

To complete my project, I put pictures of Avila students, not only my friends, but people that I saw once or that by chance they were in my dorm while I was doing this project. When I told them that it was against racism, no one refused to help me and I think that this little thing shows us how this country is evolving, and becoming every day better. If we want, we can change the world. So, let’s start!

Finally, I would like to state that I admire Mrs. McKinstry, because after what she went through, she was able to forgive the people who caused such pain in her life. I think her story impacted not only me, but all the people who listened to her words. It made us reflect about the meaning of life and that in a single moment everything can change, so we have to enjoy our lives and try to live it full of love and not hatred.

The color of our skin does not mean anything. It is only a characteristic that makes us special, unique, and it does not make us different. When we will be able to take off all the prejudices and stereotypes that we have, we will be able to change the world and make it a better place for the future generations.

I would like to finish this reflection with a sentence that is really important and deep for me: “The color of our skin does not make us different, it makes us unique.”
Mica Pledger

Insight

“While the World Watched”.  
A Civil Rights war that not everybody fought,  
Colored kid eating skittles walking down the block,  
Call it profiling got shot by the cops,  
Still no justice,  
Just seen as minority,  
Passing off judgment,  
Before getting to know me.  
Back of the bus,  
Never a priority,  
Europeans settled in,  
Celebrating Columbus for taking land,  
Enough is enough time to take a stand,  
Past generations couldn’t even vote,  
Thanks to MLK he gave us hope,  
America united is crucial,  
“Separate but equal”,  
Such hate, is not useful.  
1960s wasn’t that long ago,  
Even though amendments got invoked,  
Jim Crow laws were on the low,  
Oblivious to the madness in Birmingham,  
Young waking up and their home was bombed,  
Friends and families homes were gone.

I didn’t even march to assist my community,  
Fear of being harmed,  
Passing opportunities,  
I am a bystander,  
Staring at my TV,  
No more excuses!  
Who’s held responsible?  
We put our minds to it,  
Then nothing’s impossible,  
“One nation under God”!  
“In God we trust”?  
Tribulation will be hard but endure we must,  
Diversity part of God’s divine plan,  
To love all his children and creations,  
Reminiscing in the past,  
Remember what was done,  
A lot of heartache but we won.  
Our freedom....  
Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist, Christian;  
We all believe in something,  
There’s just few small differences,  
why don’t we awaken and pay attention  
to the things most important  
how we treat one another  
before the world ends.
Ever since I read Carolyn McKinstry’s While the World Watched I knew I was going to have a different perspective on all the things that have been happening around my community and country. Throughout this semester, I have also been forced to think about the idea of racism and discrimination on a deeper level. Before this semester I never really had to deal with racism or discrimination because I am not a person of color, so it is not something that really affected my life in a huge way. But after learning about all of the things that have been going on in people’s lives, I have realized that I could do something to make a difference. We have had plenty of people throughout the semester come and talk to us about things we can do to make the world around us a better place. And I have realized it would not hurt to try.

Sitting through the Truman Lecture was one of the events that I really enjoyed attending. When they had the panelists up on stage you could really get a sense of how much these people cared and they were really trying to help us make a difference. When one of the panelists, Mary Sanchez, said “Your story or personal narrative has an impact on your feelings associated with other people,” it kind of hit home with me because a lot of people have certain feelings towards different races based on how they were raised and based on what their parents believed. For example, in my family I was just four years old when that attacks on 9/11 happened. Being that young I never really knew anything different besides hating Muslim people and believing that all of them were bad. That is just how I was raised to think. But as I grew up and became more educated on the subject, it was easier to understand that was not the case. I have learned you cannot judge people based on the color of their skin or the things they believe in. For example, in my family I was just four years old when that attacks on 9/11 happened. Being that young I never really knew anything different besides hating Muslim people and believing that all of them were bad. That is just how I was raised to think. But as I grew up and became more educated on the subject, it was easier to understand that was not the case. I have learned you cannot judge people based on the color of their skin or the things they believe in. For example, in my family I was just four years old when that attacks on 9/11 happened. Being that young I never really knew anything different besides hating Muslim people and believing that all of them were bad. That is just how I was raised to think. But as I grew up and became more educated on the subject, it was easier to understand that was not the case. I have learned you cannot judge people based on the color of their skin or the things they believe in. So I agree when Sanchez said that statement, but those feelings are not anything you cannot change.

Education can help change the way people think if they are willing to change. When McKinstry spoke at the Truman Lecture she mentioned “hearts can be changed through education.” I would not say she was completely right on this because people have to be willing to change the way they view these aspects of our society. Many people would be willing to change and the ones that open their minds up will become better people in the end. I think you could change people’s hearts through education and some ways to do that are sharing true stories that will make a person’s heart break. Most people will feel the effects of how bad something is when you tell them stories of how children suffered or women suffered. These both are things people never want to see happen. So when you educate them on how to stop this useless pain for kids and women, people will take a stand to change.

McKinstry was also asked about the parallels between racial tension in her youth and what is happening today. She described it as “frighteningly reminiscent.” I partially agree with McKinstry’s statement because a lot of African-American people have been dying lately due to things like police brutality. But I would not say it is as bad, because back in the 1950s and 1960s African-Americans had very few rights and they were fighting to gain their equal rights. Many people died back then and nothing was ever done about it. I see that as a time where black lives actually did not matter to a lot of the white people who held power. In the present day African-Americans do matter but they use a lot of violence that is not necessary. They have all the same rights as white people, but they try to use violence to get their point across and that is what is putting their lives in danger.

During the Truman Lecture, the person I enjoyed listening to the most was Alvin Brooks. His stories of back when he was on the police force and the things he saw and got involved in were very interesting to hear about. As he spoke, at one point he suggested that “unconscious racism is one of our greatest problems in the United States today.” I would probably agree with what he said because not a lot of people go around every day speaking out about how racist they are towards certain people. I would say there are people who will avoid somebody on the sidewalk because they are scared to walk past them or people would avoid a certain part of town because they think it is not a safe place to be because a certain group of people live there. These are things most people do not consciously think about, but it is racist to an extent because you are avoiding these things because you believe that these people are unsafe to be around.

I have learned a lot throughout this last semester. It was not really historical facts that I learned about, it was more of what we could do as a society to help end racism. There are groups that we can join that help support equal rights of all people, especially African-Americans. This experience has taught me that everyone is equal and we cannot judge people by the color of their skin.
Throughout the first semester of my college career, I have learned a lot about the history of discrimination and hate towards the African-American communities and the effect of stereotypes on our view of those who are different from us. We have seen this from reading and hearing about the experiences Carolyn McKinstry went through and many different perspectives that our First Year Seminar classes hold. I have chosen to create an original artwork to share my viewpoint and to inspire people to change their own.

The title of my artwork is “I am Human.” The meaning of this piece is to show that our stereotypes, misconceptions, and categorization of people blind us and the world. Depicted in my artwork are four people of different races blindfolded, with descriptions, stereotypes, and demeaning words written around them that were crossed out. In the foreground are the words “I am Human.” I think this is important to remember that no matter how different people are presented through our own inner stereotypes, political fear-mongering, the media, or the actions of a few – we are human.

One of the things presented in the Race Experience Kiosk was that there are no genetic or biological differences between us. How we classify each other through our many different skin colors, religions, and cultural backgrounds is simply a social construct. I hope that one day we view each other the same no matter what we look like, how we talk, or what we believe. It sickens me that we have elected a man like Trump who wants to block people of the Islamic faith from entering the country and calls Mexicans rapists; even going so far to want to build a wall to keep out these so-called “Criminals and Rapists.” Allowing people to say these things and act upon these things, such as taking away marriage equality and removing Roe V. Wade, does not just further us as a society but, takes away equality from those who need it the most. Ideas and rhetoric like that not only build a wall along the border, but also between us as a society. I think it is important to recognize that no matter what the politicians say and make people feel, we are all human and nothing can change that.
**Ana Maggard**

**Compare**

Am Red and yellow black and white
G They are precious in his eyes
Am How can I ever know
G How much you love me so

Am You’re too young too old to go
G Am You’re too wise too dumb to know
G Am People always say it doesn’t
Feel right
C Sometimes you can’t win the fight
G

Am You live you die don’t you cry
C Forgive forget I’m losing it
Am Hurt and broken never spoken
C This hate we have has been awoken
Am As time flies the child cries
C As time unfolds her story’s told

(chorus)

Am If we are all together here
C Why must we live in fear

(chorus)

Am You’re too short too tall how can you have it all
Am You’re too black too white why should you put up a fight
Am You’re too thick too thin why can’t I ever win

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**Morgan Berhorst**

Born in a stereotypical white community
There was a lot of German Catholic unity
With little to no diversity
But moving to the big KC, meant a new life
Different cultures and backgrounds brought strife
But the inspiration of Carolyn Maull McKinstry brought light
Yes, racism is a problem but we will not go back, we will fight
Equal treatment is a civil right
So why are some still treated like garbage?
Certain social groups are still of privilege
So what is my part?
How can I make someone have a change of heart?
Becoming educated is a good start.

For the end of First Year Seminar, I have decided to write a poem reflecting on all of the things we have learned. I have reflected on the book by Carolyn Maull McKinstry and all of the other influential activities that have taken place this semester.

My life did drastically change when I was put into a college with a high level of diversity, but I never once looked down on anyone else. I personally was not extremely informed when it came to racism in the world today. I knew that people were still discriminated against, but I did not know it was to the extent that it was.

One of the most powerful things that I experienced in this class was when Mrs. McKinstry came to the school to speak. When asked if she believed we were reliving the 1960s, she quickly responded that we will not go back. This inspired me to believe that we can fight through all of the discrimination in the world.

After participating in the Race Experience Kiosk, I truly cannot understand how some people are treated poorly based on the color of their skin. In a matter of seconds any person could be transformed into any race by that kiosk. It was so easy and simple and really put the issue of race into perspective. There is no difference between us except a simple color.

Overall, this class has taught me many things about how I can make a difference. Like McKinstry, I believe that education of the matters is key to finding the solution. I just hope that I and the rest of the first year students at Avila can be the beginning of a new era of love and acceptance.
Gabby Walton

America is known for being the “land of the free and the home of the brave.” This is one of the major selling points as to why people want to move and live here from other countries. The goal of the United States is to hold its people together in one large unified group. Achieving this goal of social unity seems effortless. However, it is in fact the complete opposite. I have had the opportunity to be a part of an amazing experience by taking the First Year Seminar. As a class, we have all participated in the following events: the reading of While the World Watched by Carolyn Maull McKinstry, watched the film The Sisters of Selma, listened to the Truman Lecture, participated in the Race Experience Kiosk, completed the “Power and Privilege” assignment, and listened to a multitude of guest speakers. This has taught me many lessons and I have learned a lot of valuable life skills that I will hold onto for a lifetime.

This experience connects to the mission and values of Avila University in many ways. One of the values of Avila is “The worth, dignity and potential of each human being.” This can be connected to the idea that the people in Birmingham and people of all different kinds of backgrounds have potential no matter what the color of their skin is. This experience has taught me that everyone is worthy and has dignity. It is not fair for people to be treated any differently because we do not look like each other. This leads to another value: “Diversity and its expression.” Avila University strives to have a diverse culture, which I think is highly admirable. People can learn a lot from one another, especially if they were raised in totally different cultures. This experience has changed my perspective and allowed me to move outside my comfort zone and feel more at ease striking up a conversation with people of different backgrounds and cultures.

My interaction with the Race Experience Kiosk impacted my thinking about how there is only one race, and that is the human race. The kiosk makes students consider the value of diversity in our society by presenting influential quotes. It helps people understand that commonly used every day words are both positively and negatively associated with race. Lastly, it impacted my thinking regarding racial similarities and differences by reflecting on the factors of society that perpetuate racism and discrimination, while creating a dialogue for further conversations. “It is not our gender or skin color that we have to change, but systems of oppression that benefit some groups at the expenditure of others” (Rosado, 2016).

This experience has impacted my way of thinking regarding stereotypes and privilege by putting these two concepts in a completely new perspective. I have always known that stereotypes are a problem, but I did not realize until now just how prevalent they really are, and that they show up in my everyday life. For example, I have a friend who works as a waitress and she told me that the other servers she works with argue when a family of color walks in the restaurant about who is going to serve them because they do not tip well. This is a stereotype of people of color. This assumption that the servers are making stereotypes the black race and creates the idea that white people are of privilege and tip better. However, there are just as many privileged and successful black people as there are white, so it is unfair to stereotype them all when they have only experienced a small group in their work. This is just one of the many examples of stereotypes and privilege that unfairly label different groups and cultures.

McKinstry’s story is very inspirational and a great deal of valuable information can be learned from it. McKinstry was not dealt the best hand in life as a child. She lived through and witnessed a multitude of events many children, including myself, have never even been close to experiencing. Even though she went through a stage of depression, she found her way out of it and found a way to heal. McKinstry mentioned at the Truman Lecture that she is the only one of her siblings that has shared the story of their childhood and the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church. It is very admirable that she decided to open up to the world what she has been through. I cannot imagine it was an easy thing for her to do. I myself have struggled with bottling up my past and emotions and letting them get the best of me. So, to hear her speak about how she has changed her attitude to love and reconciliation made a deep impression on me.

Everyone has either been rejected or granted a privilege whether it was based on gender, status, or appearance. Specifically focusing on race/ethnicity, you also get unique privileges that you are given or denied. This whole experience has transformed my way of thinking about these so call “touchy” subjects. Racism needs to come to an end and the only way that is possible is if it is talked about. As McKinstry said, “That step is going to start with our youth.” In order to attain social unity, we as a whole, need to understand that race should not be a deciding factor in anything, so that we can ultimately get to the point where everyone is treated equally because of who they are, not because of their race or ethnicity.

Works Cited:
Personal Reflections

**Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D.**
Chair, Truman Lecture Series
Professor of Education and Psychology

The Truman Lecture provides our students with an opportunity to meet inspiring individuals who have had a significant impact on the lives of people around the world. This wonderful program allows them to experience the Avila mission personally. It encourages them to explore their own potential to help the dear neighbor.

**Paige Illum, Ph.D., CSJA**
Director of Student Engagement and Success Adjunct Faculty

Our goal is to provide the students with a meaningful academic experience while living our University mission and the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph to help our dear neighbors. Avila’s mission shares that we will “prepare students for responsible lifelong contributions to the global community.” This experience is the initial step in accomplishing this commitment to our students and honoring our relationship with the Sisters of St. Joseph.

**Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA**
Avila University President

The power of the Truman Lecture Series and Avila’s Common Reading Program is to inform and educate our students of global issues that need to be addressed. The revelation is they can begin to change the world, right now.

Jessica Dunn

**WILL IT EVER END?**

Will we always look at the other person as being better than the other?
Will we consider the white man’s power to be more superior than any other ethnicity?
Will we judge one’s self for their physical appearance rather than by their talents?
Will we keep rejecting one’s religion because it doesn’t relate to yours?

Will we allow these conditions to destroy us?
Or will we come together and love others for being themselves?

Racism is something that has been in existence for many centuries and it is going to take everyone to end it. You do not have to be a public figure to stop racism, instead it all starts by taking action in your community. If you see someone being targeted, be that person to do something about it or find resources that can help you end the problem. If you think about it, Jesus sacrificed himself for all of us, so why not take action and sacrifice your voice to end racism once and for all.

Major: Radiologic Science
Hometown: St. Charles, MO.
Appendix A: Avila First Year Students

Andrew Acton
Ikechakwu Adigwu
Marcos Aguirre
Haylie Albert
Isaias Alberto
Gabrielle Appl
Karen Arellano
Kennedy Bacon
Savannah Bailey
Autumn Bankes
Jeremy Barnes
Danielle Bauman
Christopher Begg
Garrett Bell
Joshua Benford
Morgan Berhorst
Fyfe Berry
Joshua Berze
Johnny Biondo
Makayla Bittiker
Shandon Boone
Delaney Bouska
Scott Bower
Jessica Bradley
Christian Bredow
Dalton Brewer
Ian Burlingame
Grant Burns
Katelyn Carcione
Jordan Chandler
Mitchell Chandler
Kaliana Chrisman
Abby Clark
Jacob Clarkin
Jordan Clarkin
Madison Cole
Zachary Collins
Jacy Cooksey
Greg Cooper
Jordan Counts
Charisma Davis
Emma Davis
Kelsei Davis
Rachel Day
Keven De La Cruz
Anthony De La Torre
Myron DeBerry
Veronica Defeo
Traneece Dickerson
Kaitlyn Drake
Breanna Drury
Megan Duffy
Jessica Dunn
Josh Dyson
Valencia Eason
Reagan Eastabrooks
Chiiokie Eguzo
Kathryn Elliott
Katherine Emmer
Austin Epperson
Chelsea Espino
Noah Esprecion
Oluwatoba Famodimu
Taylor Faulkner
Penny Fenn
Anna Fleming
Kailey Fraher
Douglas Frost
Jacob Gamboa
Samara Gant
Pedro Garcia
Paige Gerkin
Jordan Givens
Lee Gordon
Devin Graves
Aerial Griffith
Sarah Hahn
Kathleen Haley
Shania Hall
Alex Hambrick
Edsel Hanna
Annalisa Hansen
Elizabeth Harris
Colin Hendricks
Tanner Holland
Ryon Holmes
Deanna Hood
Gracey Hopkins
Yasmine Hora
Cheynenne House
Christian Howe
Samuel Hudson
Kirklyn Humphrey
Clinton Hunt
Kendall Hunter
Tajah Hyde
Laurie Inwards
Jenna Jacoby
Paige James
Dakotah Jones
Elizabeth Jones
Katie Jones
Lindsey Jones
Raven Josiah
Alanna Justice
Austin Kennard
Olivia Kerr
Brian King
Reilly King
Taylor King
Tyler King
Hollie Kloser
Cheyenne Kupka
Sebastian Ladd
Nadja Landor
Keyann Lesui
Stephanie Lewis
Madison Lillemann
Blake Lodde
Justin Loman
Jonathyn Lopez
Ana Maggard
Breonne Maltbia
Alexis Mancilla-Rosales
Megan Manestar
Konnor Manley
Kaitlan Marshall
Zoe Matje
Riley Maulsby
Brian McClenann
Zaria McDonald
Lauren McElhinney
Fallon McGinnis
Madison Mckinney
Alfonza Meeks
Whitney Meers
Juan Mendoza
Gavin Merrill
Darien Minor
Naeem Moore
Lauren Moose
Mary Morgan Nanney
Landen Nealy
Jordan Nichols
Amber Nowakowski
Cody Oberly
Favour Oparaji
Megan Oshel
Jackson Ozburn
Katriana Payne
Tremone Perry
Brandon Phillips
Demarquice Phillips
Parker Pitts
Mica Pledger
Laura Presler
Marissa Pruitt
Danielle Rehor
Megan Resch
Alexandra Ruiz
Mason Saldana
Alexis Sanchez
Raiven Sanford
Autumn Saulsbury
Chelsea Schiltz
Meghan Schulte
Broiana Scott
Tya Scott
Devin Senerius
Briana Shaw
Mackenzie Sibon
Abby Simon
Kristopher Sinisterra
Madelyn Slump
Allison Snapp
Savannah Spencer
Jacob Sproat
Paige Stanphill
Gerson Sterling
Kristen Stockdale
Hazem Tariq
Tiffany Tarpely
Jamad Thomas
Tierah Thomas
Cole Thornton
Heather Timmons
Alexander Towler
Austin Trent
Erika Vallone
Janeth Valverde
Daniela Verdugo
Charles Waldron
Gabrielle Walton
Jacqueline Ward
Brooke Westrom
Mercedes Willis
Brooke Wilson
Keyshawn Wright
Addy York
Devon Young
Tina Young
Appendix B: Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Series Program

**AVILA UNIVERSITY**

**HARRY S. TRUMAN DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES**

featuring Carolyn Maull McKinstry

Author

**While the World Watched**

October 20, 2016 • Goppert Theatre

**Presenting Sponsor**

J. M. FAHEY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

Highway and Heavy Construction Since 1971

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**Town Hall Presentation: Peace and Civil Rights in Kansas City: Past, Present and Future**

Goppert Theatre • 4:00–5:15 p.m.

Moderator .............................................................. J. Anthony Snorgrass, Ph. D.
Avila Professor of Communication

Panelists .................................................................
Alvin Brooks
Diane Bushholder
Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II
S. Rosemary Flanigan
Miguel Morales
Maria Sanchez

**Reception**

Goppert Theatre Lobby • 5:15–6:00 p.m.

**Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer**

Goppert Theatre • 6:15 p.m.
Carolyn Maull McKinstry

Welcome ............................................................... Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D.
Chair, Truman Lecture Series

Host ................................................................. Ron Sliperza, Ph.D., CSJA
President, Avila University

Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer .......... Carolyn Maull McKinstry

Reception and book signing immediately following.

Special thanks to our presenting sponsor:

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**Historic Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Series**

Avila University received exclusive rights from former President Harry S. Truman to establish a lecture series in his name in 1970. The permission was granted to Sr. Olive Louise Dallavis, CSJ, who served as President of Avila University from 1960–1985.

**Past Lecturers**

William F. Buckley
Joseph Califano
Alexhendia Drag
Nancy Landon Kassebaum
Clarence M. Kelley
St. Helen Prejean, CSJ
Louis Zamperini
Jonathan Katz

―

**We would especially like to recognize and thank the following:**

Avila University Theatre Department
Campus Services
Jean ’76 & Bill Buchanan
J.M. Fahey Construction

**Committee Members**

Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D.  ·  Committee Chair
Professor of Education and Psychology

Robert Fouk, M.F.A.  ·  Director of Performance Studies
Associate Professor of Theatre

Angela Hearn, CFRE  ·  Vice President of Advancement and External Relations

Paige Illum, Ph.D.  ·  Coordinator of Retention and First Year Experience

Hannah Meador  ·  Events Coordinator, Advancement

Darren Roubinek  ·  Sr. Director of Marketing and Communications

---

Sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.
Students were asked to express their opinions regarding statements related to topics discussed in First Year Seminar both at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester. The idea was to gauge how their opinions changed. The most significant changes occurred with these three questions:

1. I feel educated regarding the civil rights issues and events that occurred in American in the 1950s and 1960s.
2. Power and privilege relate to everyday liberties of Americans.
3. I have a peaceful and nonviolent action to help end civil rights injustices.

Students were also asked to write about the most significant changes and why those changes occurred. Here are some of those responses.

The most significant changes are that I have a better understanding of the Civil Rights Movement and I have an action plan. I now understand the intensity of the movement; I know the participants were often children or students my age. I found it interesting that kids like me could make such a difference. My action plan involves treating others the way I want to be treated just as Carolyn McKinstry suggested. I plan to spread kindness and compassion through my daily activities. I know that my efforts are small but I believe that if everyone makes the same efforts, it will make a big difference. First Year Seminar helped me realize that everyone can make some sort of difference.

My biggest change was Question 6 (“America” means the same to all citizens and people who live here). I changed my answer from “yes” to “no.” The reason I changed this answer is because the foundation of this country is life, liberty, and justice. I feel we are falling away from these principles because of the way different religions and races are treated.

At the beginning of the semester I didn’t have a plan for helping end civil rights injustices. After hearing McKinstry’s words at the Truman Lecture, it motivated me to get something accomplished. Otherwise, we are going to take two steps back after taking a step forward.

After learning about past and current civil rights struggles in the United States, I have a different mindset about civil rights. Before, I thought there was a place for violence on issues related to civil rights. After being exposed to new information, I believe violence must not be tolerated in order to achieve civil rights. I began to realize that violence, whether to prevent or strive for civil rights, was what prohibits progression toward civil rights. The second difference is my plan to end civil rights injustices. Before the class, I had no clue how to end a denial of liberties. Now, I have concluded that coordinated peaceful protests in addition to gathering statistics and visual evidence of injustice will bring attention to the subject and will move us toward a world where everyone can be given civil liberty.

After experiencing this class, I see how far America has come from racism but also how much further we have to go.
Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Series

Avila University received exclusive rights from former President Harry S. Truman to establish a lecture series in his name in 1970. The permission was granted to Sr. Olive Louise Dallavis, CSJ, who serviced as President of Avila from 1960-1985.

Recent Past Lecturers

- William F. Buckley
- Joseph Califano
- Clarence M. Kelley
- Nancy Landon Kassebaum
- Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ
- Louis Zamperini
- Bob Harris
- Alephonsion Deng
- Jonathan M. Katz
- Political Analyst, Author & Columnist
- Secretary of Health, Education & Welfare
- Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Kansas Senator
- Social Justice Activist
- WWII Prisoner of War, 1936 American Olympian
- Author, The International Bank of Bob and Jeopardy! Champion
- Author, They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky: The True Story of Three Lost Boys from Sudan
- Author, The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster

Common Reading Program

Avila University provides a common reading for all first year students as part of the First Year Experience. Student success research is clear about how this type of program can assist in emphasizing academic importance prior to the start of classes and assist in building community within a first year cohort. All Avila first year students receive information about The Common Reading Program during the summer prior to the start of classes. The topic of the Common Reading Program is always global in nature which connects with Avila's mission of providing students with opportunities to prepare for contributions to the global community.

2015
The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster
by Jonathan M. Katz
On January 12, 2010, the deadliest earthquake in the history of the Western Hemisphere struck the nation least prepared to handle it. Jonathan M. Katz chronicles the terror of that day, the devastation visited on ordinary Haitians, and how the world reacted to a nation in need.

2014
They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky: The True Story of Three Lost Boys from Sudan
by Benson Deng, Alephonsion Deng, Benjamin Ajak with Judy A. Bernstein
The memoir of three boys who walked with tens of thousands of other boys across the Sudan as a result of civil war within the country. These boys, many of whom came to the United States as refugees, became known as the Lost Boys.

2013
The International Bank of Bob
by Bob Harris
An inspiring memoir of an ordinary American who turned his brief brush with opulence into a joyful adventure of investing in the world's working poor.

2012
Unbroken
by Laura Hilienbrand
A World War II story of survival, resilience and redemption of Louis Zamperini.

2011
The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind
by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer
A remarkable story about human inventiveness and its power to overcome crippling adversity.

2010
Series of Articles Related to Hunger and Poverty

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2009
Series of Articles Related to Hunger and Poverty

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