

Heartbeats



The Company of St. Angela in the 21st Century

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For our February Heartbeats we continue to have our attention on Angela, a woman in dialogue with her times. In an effort to hear different voices, this month we will focus on listening to the young. Being in dialogue with young people will allow us to know the signs of our times from a different perspective and with new vision.

The first young voice we will “hear” is Dismell Gabin, a senior at the Academy of Mt. St. Ursula in the Bronx, New York, who shares with us her thoughts on violence. Then, Racinda, a young woman connected with Angela’s Piazza in Great Falls, Montana, very honestly shares her story which relates to a difficult sign of our times.



SHOULDN’T WE BE MORE SHOCKED BY VIOLENCE?

Headlines like “17 Dead, 17 Wounded in Shooting” plague our nation. This specific shooting happened at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. It was an act driven by hatred and anger. Why is it that people resort to violence? Sure, the headline above is a bit extreme and maybe the reader detaches from it because it “won’t ever happen to me,” but the truth is that we see and maybe experience violence on a daily basis. The problem is that violence has become normalized to the point that violent acts in our community are simply accepted. We live in a culture of violence where people are indifferent to it, are surrounded by it and are taught to glamorize it.

We are also exposed to violence on social media, video games and movies/TV shows. Many children will spend multiple hours a day playing video games that might revolve around the concept of killing. I didn’t realize the impact violent television has on children until I experienced it with my brothers. As three to four-year olds, they loved watching Power Rangers. Soon they became numb to all violence and started to enjoy “play” fighting. These young, impressionable boys started to

believe that the way to respond when another child took their toy was to kick them. They are no longer allowed to watch anything remotely violent.

Recently I was visiting a pharmacy. Nothing ever happened at this place except for this one time when a boy tried to shoplift. Once he had been caught, he dropped the bag with the stolen goods. He kept repeating that he was homeless, pleading with the security guard on duty to let him go. The security guard was choking the boy, at times on top of him trying to hold him down. I was distraught at what I saw, but even more surprised at the reactions of the people in the store.

Many simply went on with their lives, threw a couple glances at the boy, seeming indifferent. Others blamed the boy for bringing about his own physical abuse. I understand how some people might justify the way a guard treated him, but there is a way that doesn’t require violence.

Being constantly surrounded by violence makes it easier for people to detach from its real impact and normalize its presence in our lives.

RACINDA'S STORY

My mom and dad didn't really start drinking until I was about fourteen. They would have me drive to go get more beer. I know my mom and dad were really depressed because they drank from the time they woke up till the time they went to sleep. When my mom and dad fought, I would leave to go to a friend's house. I just kept thinking it had to get better. When I was seventeen or eighteen the drinking was bad; they were fighting every day. I moved out to live with my grandma.

I started using drugs when I was eighteen or nineteen; my drug of choice was weed. I got

introduced to meth and started drinking a lot. By that time, I knew I was addicted. I lost my dad when I was twenty-one and went downhill from then on for about five years. I got in trouble with the law. I found out I was pregnant when I was in jail. I wanted to go to treatment, so I stayed in jail. I knew it was time to grow up.

I have been clean for about four years and am a kitchen manager. I love the person I am. I have two beautiful girls.

Question asked of high school students:

What concerns about our country, our world and our planet do you carry in your heart? What gives you hope?

A major world concern that I have is the safety of our brothers and sisters. With contemporary problems like gun control and increased violence, I worry if there will ever be a day in which my children and their children will ever feel safe wherever and whenever. No one should feel unsafe when walking through the world, and I dream of a day where that is universally the case. Knowing that I am not alone, and that there are people like me fighting for the cause brings me hope and makes me feel at ease.

*Adrianna de la Guardia, Class of 2019
The Ursuline School, New Rochelle, NY*



Educating women is vital to the development of society, as it will not only empower them but also help them build support networks, learn critical skills and access new resources. As I am an enthusiastic supporter of women's rights, St. Angela's work has made me hopeful of the changes I can bring to underprivileged people around me. I am an active participant of the Women for Women International organization whose goal is to empower marginalized women both socially and economically. Seeing how willing people are to support this cause gives me hope in humanity and my generation. I am

confident, therefore, that this generation of young men and women will continue to serve their communities and be the change they wish to see in the world.

*Leah Varghese, Class of 2020
The Ursuline School, New Rochelle, NY*



In my heart of hearts, my concern for our country boils down to two main issues: lack of tolerance and lack of willingness to understand. For our world, I am concerned mainly about the seemingly endless oppression faced by many marginalized groups. This concern grows stronger each day as I see our nation discarding human rights. I am massively worried about the environment, especially as our nation denies climate change and rolls back environmental protections systematically. However, I am not consumed by fear of change, because I have faith in my generation. Globally, young people are becoming more and more active in their communities, pursuing equality across the board. We are coming together to make good things happen, and that gives me more hope than imaginable.

*Chloe Hayes, Class of 2020
Ursuline Academy, St. Louis, MO*

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