

Thomas Skinner

JFA Reflection

Mission to KU—Sept. 14, 2009

Monday was the first time that I ever got to experience the full size JFA exhibit. Justice for All is from my home town of Wichita, and so I have encountered the program before. My senior year of high school, at Kapaun Mt. Carmel Catholic High School in Wichita, JFA came to do the seminar with those of us who wanted to learn how to move the abortion debate to a dialogue. At the time, I decided I was too busy with classes and I was too laid back to actually use the tools JFA had given me at the exhibit outreach, which then was planned for a university in Oklahoma.

JFA came again my freshman year at Benedictine College, planning on going to KU. Once again, I did the training seminar but decided that classes were too important to miss. It wasn't until my sophomore year that I finally decided to take a leap of faith and go with JFA to the KU campus for the outreach exhibit. At the last minute, I was thinking about not going, because I was missing the three most important classes I had. Thankfully, I followed through with my commitment and went to Lawrence, KS on September 14, 2009.

The experience was a truly amazing one. I wish so much that I had skipped my classes at Kapaun Mt. Carmel and at BC my freshman year to experience the exhibit on a college campus. I saw minds and hearts changed before my eyes. It is so interesting to see how the world is on the outside. Most of the students were simply minding their own business as usual, with their headphones in their ears, when they were startled by the graphic pictures on their way to class Monday morning. This created some anger and protest, but mostly it created curiosity—which was essential for dialogue with the students.

I didn't encounter nearly as much hostility as I first expected. Though uninformed about the horribleness of abortion, most students were kind enough to listen and to talk about the issue. I encountered people of all different backgrounds. One young man said that his mind was completely changed on the issue. Another finally admitted his stance was a lot like Hitler's. Others just said they needed some time to think about it. Whatever the case, seeds were surely planted.

I began to talk with one girl, and eventually got her to agree that abortion should be illegal except when harm was going to befall the mother. We soon found out that we had a lot in common, including our faith background. She had fallen away from the Catholic Church because she wanted to make the decision for herself (not a bad desire in itself). I got to share a bit of my own faith and the joy that I had found in actually living it out. She really seemed inspired and even stuck around the exhibit, shadowing myself and other JFA staff and volunteers to listen to what they were saying. I gave her my email and told her if she had any more questions to not hesitate to ask. Of course, now we are facebook friends. Hopefully before long, she'll start going to Mass again.

My experience with JFA was certainly a memorable one. I feel empowered now to take this information and training (which is not complete without the outreach) back to my family, many of whom are very pro-choice. I cannot recommend highly enough how important it is to take the leap of faith and go on the actual exhibit outreach on a college campus. The experience is worth it, as I have seen many fruits, and I'm sure there are many fruits that I cannot yet see. Thank you JFA for the experience, I'm positive I'll do it again!