

First Reformed: An Interesting Perspective on Climate Change



ALANA CAMPBELL
COLUMNIST

(Note: very light spoilers ahead)

The Academy Award-nominated film *First Reformed* was released two years ago, but its message is more relevant than ever.

It's set in Modern-day Upstate New York and follows Reverend Toller, a pastor suffering from both physical and psychological problems, stemming from his disregard for his own well-being and deep guilt from his past. Toller is introspective and self-disciplined, but his growing alcoholism divests these traits. While he is the protagonist of the movie, it's clear early on that his character is more symbolic than anything. His unraveling is intentionally juxtaposed against the Earth's worsening climate. *First Reformed* is a thought-provoking film that examines who really is to blame for climate change, and who's really affected by it. At the beginning of the film, the question "will God ever forgive us for what we're doing to his creation?" is asked, and it drives the movie's entire trajectory.

Rarely do I see a movie so in your face about its parallelism and messages that manages them with a considerable degree of subtlety. The film does more than say "climate change bad," it tells you why, and does so through the perspective of the last person you'd expect: a man of religion. For once, the discussion about climate change isn't painted as a battle between religion and science, but rather a corporate interest issue, so both atheist and religious viewers alike can take an important message from this film without feeling alienated by the subject matter.

Although climate change is a growing issue that has practically engulfed political discourse in recent years, it's no surprise that Hollywood has made very few films about it. It's not a fun topic, and this isn't a fun movie. But it's a necessary one. This movie does an amazing job of emphasizing the urgency of the issue, while also forcing us to look within ourselves. We may not be the antagonists, but are we enabling them? The movie doesn't explicitly answer that, we have to figure that out.

While I'm technically not allowed to encourage you to watch a rated R movie if you're not 17, it's important for people of all ages to gain new perspectives and knowledge about our society and the problems that afflict it. BBC, the primary news outlet in the UK, predicts that we have 16 months to make drastic changes before the effects of climate change become completely irreversible, which makes the need to watch movies like these more pressing. Sure, *First Reformed* alone won't stop the crisis or have a sizable impact, but it does alter the discourse and spread awareness. A larger group has to recognize the gravity of climate change in order to combat it.

Let's Take Back Our CROWN

Every time I had to roll into school with a throbbing scalp and on the verge of bawling because of my fresh cornrows, it wasn't only because my head had its own heartbeat but because I wish I could just come to school with my hair in its loose state like how people with softer textured hair get to do. But I can't.

Montgomery County Council Member, Will Jawando, and Council President Nancy Navarro have introduced the CROWN Act, which stands for "Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair." This bill would, essentially, end discrimination against people for how they wear their hair. It's about time.

The introduction of this bill, and its eventual passage, brings me joy because it draws awareness to the issues of minorities' image and how it would be considered "unprofessional" to wear their hair in its natural state. It's ridiculous how curls, coils, kinks, and dreadlocks, supposedly conflict with the image of an institution or company. How does one's hair change their work habits or ability to do a job? How does one's hair affect the "image" of a company? The truth is it doesn't, but not everyone realizes this.

Going into any professional setting for minorities with their "hair done" has always been a requirement in order to be taken seriously, which is simply insulting. It should never have gotten to this, however. The fact that people have had to conform to a standard that is suffocating just to be taken seriously for so long is appalling.

Imagine the shaming that was brought upon minorities for embracing their hair, especially young girls and women. For generations, young girls at school have had to suppress the feeling of someone recalling their hair "nappy," which leads to them thinking that their hair is ugly or unattractive. Every girl of color at one point in her life has dreamed of having straight hair. I was one of those girls.

It's because they have been taught over and over again in the media that that's what it takes to be seen as beautiful. It explains why relaxers and heat tools (curling irons, flat irons and hot combs) have boomed in sales and production over the last two decades. This straight hair belief has also led people in the business world and beyond to see the same image as not only beautiful, but also as what is acceptable in the workplace. Everyone's hair texture is beautiful whether it's straight, wavy, coily, or kinky. This act is just a big breakthrough for people with coarser textured hair to be able to fully embrace who they are and halt put downs against unique, carefree curl patterns, especially in professional settings.



GIODONA CAMPBELL
COLUMNIST

Gun Reform: How Many More Deaths Will it Take?

Did you know that it takes only 15 minutes to buy a gun in Virginia? How about the fact that on an application to purchase a firearm your social security number isn't required?

These two facts tend to be quite surprising to people as is the fact that, according to the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) statistical records of death certificates, in 2017 (the most recent year for complete data), close to forty thousand people died from gun related injuries (39,773). According to a Pew Research Study by John Gramlich, "This figure includes gun murders and gun suicides, along with three other, less common types of gun-related deaths tracked by the CDC: those that were unintentional, involved law enforcement or whose circumstances could not be determined."

With access to guns still quite open, one can only imagine how high that number is as we arrive in the last two months of 2019.

I could go on with more statistics about the level of gun violence in the U.S., including mass shootings, school-related acts of violence, and even suicide by gun, but it's safe to say we all know that there is a huge issue involving gun control in America. To me, the big question is how many more innocent people have to die until it's finally resolved? My guess is millions.

To some, background checks are the key, but there is already a required FBI background check for in store purchases of firearms, though its overall effectiveness is questionable. Jose Pagliery and Arraon Smith of CNN reported that "all federally licensed gun dealers must run checks on every buyer, whether a purchase is made in a store or at a gun show." However, they add that denials are less than one percent.

Additionally, Pagliery and Smith make it clear that some guns are sold legally, "but without any background check, since the system is only used by gun sellers with a federal license."

There are no specific statistics for the number of illegally obtained guns, but a number of sources place the number quite high. How individuals obtain these varies with stolen guns and the illegal market being the two most prominent sources. Additionally, people illegally obtain guns from other individuals, including family members. No matter how a gun is obtained, the truth is, we have an issue- an enormous one that's affecting citizens' everyday lives. It has gotten so bad that Active Shooter Drills take place in most schools and stores sell merchandise to help children protect themselves in an active shooter situation.

We have become a country that teaches its children how to protect themselves instead of doing it ourselves. Change won't come unless action is taken, starting with ending gun ownership in America, stricter punishments for firearm crimes, and politicians working together.



DIAMOND SCOTT
COLUMNIST

Change Yourself Before you Try to Change the World

Now more than ever, we see a rise of social justice concerns among the population, and an increasing level of youth involvement as more and more people attempt to advocate large-scale social and political change. This shift of culture seems like a great phenomenon on the surface--after all, "change the world" is an idea we've been told since childhood. But, I'm here to advocate for an idea that seems to be left out of the change agenda: the idea of changing oneself before attempting to change the world.

The world is harsh. Buddhism's first noble truth is that life is suffering, and it's only natural that the right response would be to act as a hero, and take the moral high ground by advocating changes that could give us the illusion of being part of something great. Although it is true that we have the ability to make a difference in the world, we can only do that by changing ourselves first. Jordan Peterson, a recent controversial figure, professor, and clinical psychologist, writes about this in his best-seller book, *12 Rules for Life*. In the book, he lists as his sixth rule: "Set your house in perfect order before you criticize the world." Peterson suggests that we should start small and work on changes that we can control before we try to champion for bigger ones.

An excerpt from a 12th century poem written by an unknown monk also talks about this: "Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realize that if long ago I changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family. My family and I could have made an impact on our town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed have changed the world."

Our self-righteous nature makes it easier to judge the world, blame our problems on the feet of reality, and advocate for large scale changes that we have little to no idea about. More difficult is to focus on ourselves. The truth is, life will always be difficult, it'll be harsh and full of suffering. You can change that, you absolutely can, but you need to change yourself first. It's only through changing yourself that you could change the world.



NIGUS GETAHUN
COLUMNIST

The Pisces Prophet:
Oct. 23-Dec. 1



SONCHEREE MCCAMPBELL
FEAUTURES EDITOR

Astrology is more than just a fun way to know what your crush is thinking. If used in the accurate way, evaluating the positions of the planets, it can also predict someone’s feelings for the day. According to the cosmos, October 23rd to December 1st will be a time filled with deepened emotions, low communication, drastic new beginnings, and opportunities in leadership. The week of October 23rd is when the sun shifts into Scorpio season. Since the Scorpio sign is a fixed water sign, we can expect emotions to be deepened, and for there to be a universal urge to discover truth and to search for change.

The week of October 27th introduces new beginnings. On the 27th, a new moon enters Scorpio, encouraging us to open up emotionally to our loved ones. It is also important to note that Mercury will enter *retrograde on October 31rd and will not stop until November 20th. Because Mercury is the planet that rules communication and technology, people should avoid making any large commitments or purchasing any new devices. Starting a new job or initiating a new project should be postponed. Also, the impulse to let people from your past back in will be present. Don’t give in! Instead, reflect, and if your feelings are the same after retrograde, you may engage.

Another notable event occurs on November 12th, where a full moon enters Taurus. Taurus energy stresses the importance of comfort and security, and is fixated on the five senses. That day, you may long for a cozy night near loved ones. Maybe burn a candle to elevate the good smells or listen to more vibey music in a bubbly bath. Try jazz!

In the week of November 25th, Venus will enter Capricorn, a new moon will enter Sagittarius, and Neptune will go direct in Pisces. Venus’ shift into Capricorn will call for people to want more self-control and responsibility within romance. Capricorn energy is traditional and prefers for surroundings to be predictable. The new moon in Sagittarius on November 26th will challenge our way of life, making us heavily ponder if our current routines align with our lifetime goals. Lastly, when Neptune goes direct in Pisces on November 27th, it will bring a long-lasting atmosphere of love. Because it takes 165 years for Neptune to travel through all of the zodiac signs, you can expect this atmosphere to stay the same for 13 years.

Find out what’s happening in the cosmos again on December 1st in the next paper!

Astrology Jargon:

***Retrograde:** when a celestial object appears to be orbiting backwards

Trinity’s Take: New Music

TRINITY GOPPY
FEATURES EDITOR

The Kids are Alright by Chloe x Halle
Rating: 4 ½ stars

Chloe x Halle is reshaping hip-hop and R&B in their own image on their debut album. The Beyonce-approved sister-duo is definitely ones to watch. The Bailey Sisters were signed to Beyonce’s Parkwood imprint in 2015 and she took them on the road as an opening act on her “Formation” tour. This gave them the experience and a ready-made audience to explore and grow into their new and improved album. *The Kids are Alright*, an 18 song album, shows the amazing vocals and creativity of the Bailey sisters. The message that is constantly being delivered is that it is okay for kids to be kids and the future rests in good hands. This is shown recurrently throughout the album in songs like “Warrior” and the title track “The Kids are Alright.”Like the album before it, “The Two of Us”, this album provides smooth and soulful vocals. You can hear the growth in their range, although at times listeners may want to hear more musical instruments to give a more leveled out experience. They make up for this by keeping the listener engaged and wrapped in their songs where you can hear their individual voices, but also hearing how they come together to make a powerful and raw sound. Standout tracks include “Grown”, “The Kids Are Alright” and “Hi-Lo”. *The Kids are Alright* is a true experience and now everyone can see why Queen Beyonce signed the sister-duo.

“Noir” by Smino
Rating: 5 stars

If you haven’t heard of Smino, then you should definitely check out his eccentric style of music. His style consists of futuristic funk and soulful rap. Although he hasn’t made his big debut into the mainstream yet, he has been a musician all of his life. He has recently collabed with artists including J Cole, Big Sean, No Name and Chance the Rapper. This just ensures that Smino is climbing on the competitive ranks of the music industry. *Noir*, an 18 song album, introduces new listeners to a unique side of what is considered hip hop. Smino is not conforming to a box that the music industry tends to put artists into. This album shows more of a fun and versatile side of Smino than his previous albums BLKSWN. The album’s production consists of funk and soulful beats that help pull listeners into the music. *Noir* shows Smino’s ability to use different voices and change tones, sometimes at the same time, a skill that he makes weightless and honeyed. You can hear the relaxation and rawness in his verses and that makes everything come together to make beautifully. Standout tracks include “We Got The Biscuits”, “Low Down Dirty Blues” and “HOOPTI”. Whether or not Smino becomes a mainstream artist, his music has quality and brings something special that the music industry is lacking deficiently.

“Cuz I Love You” by Lizzo
Rating: 5 stars

Lizzo is finally being recognized for her amazing artistry after being an indie artist for about 10 years. Today she is dominating the charts and finally getting the appreciation that she deserves with her first major label debut album . The first thing to know about Lizzo is that she is always in an energetic mood that says what everyone’s thinking, so you know she has to be lit!!! *Cuz I Love You*, a 14 song album, exhibits the layers of her artistry as she raps, sings and plays the flute in songs like “Truth Hurts” and “Bye B****h”. This album really shows a message of internalized and externalized confidence and when you listen to it you can relate. *Cuz I Love You* really centers on body-positive and self-love messages as she shows off her shiny, soulful voice. Unlike her last album, *Big GRRRL Small World*, Lizzo establishes that connection with her audience more that allows people to become their own cheerleaders. Every song has a new mood, vibes and rawness and this is shown especially on tracks like “Jerome”, “Tempo (feat.Missy Elliot)” and “Juice.”

BSU Looks to Expand Reach
Group Events Focus on Education, Unity

BEVERLY YIRENKYI
STAFF WRITER

Have you ever wanted to join club at school and felt like you couldn’t? A very common misconception about black student unions is that only black people can attend meetings. A black student union always emulates an open space where people from all different walks of life can come together and have deep and open-minded conversations about `an array of topics. Paint Branch’s Black Student Union is no exception. The Paint Branch BSU is meant to be the intersection, the bridge between all generational divisions implemented in society throughout American History that divides our nation. Social divisions often control societies. From divisions between socioeconomic classes to unconventional dietary

habits, black people have been separated, defined, and demeaned, which is why the BSU tries to find a common ground. As members of the Paint Branch community, students live in a time where one can not afford social divisions to rule over the perceptions of each other. In the past few years, Paint Branch BSU was mostly developed because of upperclassmen. This caused the organization to scramble every new school year to elect officers, build a plan, and then solidify a captivated, consistent audience. This year, BSU wants to change that and get underclassmen more heavily involved. This plan will create not only an organization that reflects the school’s demographics, but also one that is sustainable - something that is the ultimate goal of the BSU. Marika Mwansa, the

current Vice President aims to “integrate and diversify the union, along with educating our generation on pressing issues of today.” BSU holds events such as the Black History Month potluck, Talkback Tuesdays, and Forum Fridays, with many more exciting events being added to the mix as the school year progresses. Along with holding events, they will begin selling club t-shirts in the upcoming weeks. So make sure to look out for those announcements. Joy Kuria, a junior officer created events such as “potlucks, movie nights, field trips, and forums.” She is excited for the endless possibilities this can bring. “Where everyone is welcome to come and join in on some fun within our community!” One way that BSU

hopes to attract new members and satisfy current members is by bringing in speakers who reflect the goals and aspirations of those in BSU. “We are expecting more guest speakers this year outside of Paint Branch Staff,” says BSU Secretary, Senior Giodona Campbell. “These speakers won’t only be here to talk about race-based distinctions but also about profession-oriented struggles they have faced, and possible volunteer work opportunities.” The Paint Branch BSU is spearheaded by Mrs. Jennifer Walker, a PB social studies teacher, who is an advocate for equal rights and education and who understands the importance of introducing younger generations to social and political topics that are not generally taught within a classroom. Without her help - as

well as the help of a combination of other Paint Branch staff and administration who support the program in a variety of ways - the BSU would not be where it is today. *BSU Vice-President Marika Mwansa aims to “integrate and diversify the union, along with educating our generation on pressing issues of today.”*

