



Open mind yields understanding

BY MEG BURIK
Columnist

During the summer I found myself at an Asian Baptist barbecue in St. Louis. What, pray tell, was a white, non-Baptist vegetarian doing there?

One of my friends from Indonesia was attending the barbecue. A corn-fed Iowa boy, doubling as a Christian missionary, wished to speak to my friend about his native country's culture and its receptiveness to missionaries. Corn-fed is headed to Indonesia next June, he said, to spread the Good News. So Indonesian and Corn-fed were meeting through mutual friends at the barbecue and lucky me, I got to tag along for some noodles and veggies.

I become wary around certain Christians, despite the fact that my Lutheran great-grandfather beget my Lutheran grandfather who beget my Lutheran father who beget Lutheran-raised me. I've met some people who call themselves Christians yet do not behave in a Christ-like manner (which, to my understanding, is the derivation of the word). My wariness toward some cross-bearers stems from actual negative experiences. Judgment is the "trespass" I most often face.

Some "Christians" have found various personal reasons to condemn me to my face. I've found there are three reactions to what some people may call my "life in sin": #1: "No big, Jesus loves ya. Peace, Love and Jesus" (These are my favorite kinds to meet). #2: "Well, that's fine. I hate the sin, not the sinner, so we can be friends," (which is obnoxious in its implication that I house sin, but not as bad as ...). #3 "That's an ingenious hedonist way to book yourself a ticket on the Hell train, destination ETERNAL DAMNATION!" (Although people who react this way tend to not be educated enough to use words like hedonist).

Über-Christians and I tend to have limited things in common anyway, so it leads to awkward, stilted conversation. Shaky discussion is a less wary-ing thing than damnation but still uncomfortable nonetheless. However, if we manage to talk about religion (or Chiefs football) in a calm, adult, open-minded way, then we can chat.

Well, Corn-fed turned out to be one of those calm, adult, open-minded people in group #1. Nice guy. My "sinful ways" didn't surface in conversation (it's an easy subject to avoid when I want to), and we had a lovely conversation in which he explained his basic views and reasons for going to Indonesia to spread Jesus' love.

I think his logic is flawed, in

that I don't believe that Christianity is the end-all-be-all of religions and that people need it to survive, and Corn-fed addressed even these issues. Once I explained the basic idea behind what I believe, that religions acknowledge the same higher power in a way that makes sense within their cultural context (progressive revelation pretty much), he validated this possibility. It's not what the Bible says, but sure.

"However," he said gently, "If Christianity is the only correct way to heaven, I need to help people get there."

I let this idea marinate a bit in its sweet sauce. I get it. It's altruistic. It's simple. It's beautiful in its desire to help humanity. He truly wants to immerse himself in Indonesian culture and earn the trust of the people to then spread the word and save them.

Once I got it, I realized the judgment I feared from him is similar to judgment he probably faces all the time. Despite living in a very Christian country, non-Christians will judge, and some-

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times verbally harass, Christians as much as I sometimes get verbally harassed for being me. I didn't verbally judge him, but I despicably judged him in my mind. I judged him as soon as I saw him saunter up in his cowboy boots and Wranglers held up with a braided belt and shiny belt buckle. I thought, "close-minded Christian hick." He easily could have looked at me in my high tops, men's basketball shorts and Lady Gaga shirt and thought, "liberal sinner."

We cordially shook hands and cordially conversed and then cordially said our goodbyes. He was a Christian, and arguably a country bumpkin, but he definitely wasn't close-minded. And he was a Christian with a good cause. Unlike churches that preach hatred and division amongst people, Corn-fed just wanted to bring people to bask in the light that he's found, to help people find a way to what he perceives is a better, eternal, life.

Shouldn't we all want to better the lives of those around us, and around the world? Isn't that the duty of decent humans? Leave a smile where there used to be a frown?

I think religious extremists of whatever belief are nutters. That's another story entirely. But this guy was a not an extremist, just a country boy with an open mind and a genuine heart. What more can you ask for in a fellow human being?

Foreign film emerges as undeserved winner



BY KEN DUSOLD
Staff Reviewer

"The Secret in Their Eyes" won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film this year. One month later, it enjoyed a limited release in American theaters, and last week, it made its Kirksville debut as the first official entry in the Truman State University 2010 International Film Festival.

Although it's a very engrossing film with terrific performances, this Argentinean thriller is good but not great. Despite everything that goes right, "The Secret in Their Eyes" suffers from random changes in the field of vision and a rushed conclusion to the mystery that plagues the main character throughout the entire film.

The film begins in the year 2000, with Benjamín Esposito (Ricardo Darín) meeting old friend and crush, Irene Menéndez Hastings (Soledad Villamil) in Buenos Aires. Irene is a federal justice official who once served as Benjamín's department chief when he worked as a criminal investigator. They also were deeply in love, but his shyness and her boyfriend got in the way.

Benjamín wishes to see Irene for two reasons: He misses her — we soon learn that they have been apart for 25 years — and he is writing about an old case involving the brutal rape and murder of Liliana Coloto (Carla Quevedo) in 1974. This case, like his obviously unresolved relationship with Irene, has trapped him in time ... leaving him unable to move on. Not at all happy with the case's outcome, Benjamín hopes to find the answers he needs to finish his story and finally have closure.

The film then flashes back and forth between 1974 and 2000. We see how the sight of Liliana's desecrated body and the shattered state of her husband, Ricardo (Pablo Rago), profoundly affects Benjamín, who becomes determined to catch her murderer.

"The Secret" is both a suspense

and a dark romance film. In fact, there are two romances which carry this movie. This first is the nerve-racking back-and-forth tension between Benjamín and Irene. But the much more powerful romance is the one between Ricardo and Liliana. There are no flashbacks of their life together — she appears in the beginning of the film and then is seen only in photographs. However, Ricardo's heart-wrenching love for his slain wife is evident in simple close-ups of the widower, showing the eyes of a man constantly trying to fill his mind with the loving memories that he still has. Indeed, Rago's performance speaks volumes through innocent gestures and longing stares into a place not seen by the audience.

The romantic storyline in the film is a touching success, however the suspense aspect is — surprisingly — the movie's weak link. There are a number of tense moments. One in particular, which takes place in an elevator with Benjamín, Irene and their number one suspect, is extraordinarily thrilling. However, the rest of the film teeters a bit between short conflicts and dullness as far as suspense goes. Even a chase scene, which takes place during an Argentinean soccer match, lacks in real drama. This is due partially to

director Juan José Campanella's decision to switch the field of vision mid-chase from following the authorities to following the suspect. There is no logical explanation for this, as we are not, in any way, emotionally attached to this character. So why follow him?

As if that were not bad enough, there are a couple of strangely placed fade-into-black scenes near the end. It would seem reasonable to do this if the film were flashing back from 1974 to 2000, after a long stay in 1974. However, the film jumps so often, with so many quick cuts from one year to the other, that the fade-outs seem ill-used and misleading — no, it is not the end.

In the end, Benjamín does solve his unanswered questions, but he does so during a quick montage of significant scenes and quotes from throughout the film (à la "The Usual Suspects"). It does not seem to fit this picture as well. Rather, it seems forced.

"The Secret in Their Eyes" boasts some light humor, which actually is very well-used and placed. Unfortunately, one wishes they could say the same about the film's more agitating moments. In the end, this film is a terrific love story and a so-so thriller. One can easily question if this film deserved its Oscar.



Photos courtesy of rottentomatoes.com. Although "The Secret" is not a convincing suspense-thriller, the chemistry of characters Benjamín Esposito and Irene Menéndez Hastings presents a substantial love story.

had food products in addition to beer and liquor. Westport operates primarily as a liquor store. "It would affect my business greatly," said Janet Mullins, owner of Westport Package Store. "It would hurt us if they shut us down for the four days. It would hurt the employees not having any work for a few days. Westport employees are trained to ask for identification when selling liquor. Mullins said, but mistakes still happen. If any employees make a mistake, they make a mistake." Mullins said, "In that case, we had an elderly gentleman who had years of experience. The guy checked the ID — he put on his glasses and looked at it. He did what he was supposed to do. ... he just missed that particular ID." Mullins said that since the incident, the guilty employee has left Westport. "In the six years since I've been here we've only had it happen a few times when the liquor association sets up these things." Mullins said, "I understand the complexity of selling to minors. 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