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On Waking Up
One Woman’s Experience Becoming Woke
By Becky St. Clair

DURING MY GRADUATE STUDY AT ANDREWS UNIVERSITY, I took a class called Issues in Intercultural Communication. Out of 17 students, I ended up being one of two white people, yet this was an intensely intercultural group. Including the teachers, the cultures represented by the class were Brazilian, Nigerian, Guyanian, Jamaican, American (various regions), Sri, Eastonian, Bahamian, Serbians, Haitian, Salvadorian, Ghanaian and Venezuelan.

One night we were handed strips of paper and instructed to line up outside, shoulder-to-shoulder. We then read aloud what was on the paper：“if your parents are still married to each other, take one step forward.” Some of us stepped forward. Most stayed put. Next: “if you are right-handed: one step forward.” Some of us stepped forward. Most stayed put.


He asked quiet questions and listened, his hand resting gently on my shoulder. I answered him. The answer I could still processing. It’s only in retrospect that I realize how ironic and absurd it was that a black man comforted a white woman for finally becoming woke. The weight of this realization nearly crushed me, and I immediately felt ashamed of ever thinking I’d had a "hard" life. I lagged behind my classmates and, in the building’s vestibule, I felt the tears welling in my eyes. “Hey,” said a gentle voice. “Are you okay?”

How blind.

As I see it, the true beginning of my education was originally "jolting." She and her husband, Sheldon, had been grown up in Adventism and longed to stay active as both sets of their parents. They were used to youth groups, activities galore, and well, worshiping with a large number of their peers. But, at Park View, they would be one of the only couples in their mid-20s. That said, Baptist describes how God had clearly led them there. Now, they just had to trust.

Bloom Where You’re Planted
By Cheri Lewis

“Our friends found us organically committing to the church, says Baptist. “It just kind of happened. We’ve really felt blessed attending Park View.”

But it’s been more than a feeling. She and Sheldon have actively engaged. She’s one of the music coordinators at the church (not only organizing, but playing piano, singing and, occasionally, strumming the ukulele). She’s the Women’s Ministry leader (undertaking an elegant prayer brunch, a secret sisters’ project, and a ladies’ get-away weekend, just to name a few). She’s been heavily involved in a teen girls outreach, and she and Sheldon host a small group study in their Oneida home. Baptist is quick to point out, though, her overall goal in ministry is “to God be the glory!” She admits to approaching any role or project the same way, “with a lot of prayer, time, effort and prep.”

Looking back, Baptist doesn’t think she’d change a thing. “I predict that if we had spent a lot more time with people primarily our age, we may have had a narrow point of view.” It’s possible we would’ve even been part of the schism I see happening a lot between old and young [in our churches].” She’s a strong believer in building connections (and congregations) by focusing on “relationships with all generations.”

Like her faith, Baptist believes her time in Northwest Illinois has been a joy — not thanks to one large event but, rather, a series of little catalysts, “one small moment, leading into another small moment, leading into another.” And that can obviously happen, she says, whether you’re in a big city or small town.