

Photo of the Day |



Families play in the grass while watching the baseball game at Elliot Ballpark on Saturday, April 18, 2026. Fans took advantage of the spring weather to enjoy the outdoors and cheer on the UConn Huskies from the hill overlooking the field. PHOTO BY PARKER MEYERS, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

American Christianity and the romanticization of suffering

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Last November, University of Oklahoma student Samantha Fulnecky filed a complaint against graduate instructor Mel Curth, who had given Fulnecky a failing grade on an essay. The essay in question, which was meant to be a reaction to an article about gender norms, was less of an academic paper and more of a biblically-inspired rant on how gender norms and assigned genders at birth are natural, God-created and should be followed.

Despite Curth stating in her feedback that she was not deducting points for Fulnecky's beliefs, Fulnecky cited religious discrimination as the reason behind her failing grade, and used this claim as the basis of her complaint against Curth. The university eventually fired Curth.

Just to be clear, I think the whole thing is abhorrent. Fulnecky's essay is terribly written and Curth (who, by the way, is also transgender) should absolutely not have been fired. But rather than focusing on this specific incident, I want to look at the situation as belonging to a larger problem. That issue is the Christian persecution complex, which essentially refers to Christians claiming to face mistreatment on grounds of their religion when they aren't.

Now, there's probably a multitude of reasons for this, but I think a significant part of the complex stems from Christian doctrine itself. There's a series of Christian teachings that make it easy to glorify suffering. The first belief is that if you're a person, you suck.

Or you should believe that you suck, anyway.

If you're not familiar, according to biblical lore the first humans, Adam and Eve, initially lived in perfect harmony with God in the Garden of Eden. At first, there was no such thing as sin (wrongdoing against God). Adam and Eve were free to eat everything but fruit from the tree of life and the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil. In what's known as the fall of man, Adam and Eve ate from the latter tree. By doing so, they created an irreparable chasm between them and God. According to the doctrine of original sin, since every human is descended from Adam and Eve, every human is born with that chasm and the stain of their predecessors' sins. Every human is born into sin and inherits sin. Because of that, you're already guilty before you've ever even lived. Even disregarding the doctrine of original sin, the Bible still teaches that every human is a sinner (see Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.")

Now that we've established every person is terrible, the second belief is that since we are all terrible, we need redemption. In Christianity, the only way to redemption is to follow Jesus Christ.

As the C.S. Lewis Institute puts it, "To Follow Jesus is to Become Like Him," meaning that a devoted Christian should strive for their lives to reflect Christ's.

Jesus' life is one of unbelievable suffering. He lives his entire life without sinning. And yet, in life, all his efforts seem to be for naught. Jesus is betrayed and abandoned by his closest friends and wrongfully sentenced to death. The man who sentences Jesus can't even find a crime to accuse him of. Jesus is nailed to a cross and slowly suffocates, all while a crowd mocks him. He spends his final hours in excruciating physical and emotional pain.

But despite all the pain he endures, Jesus is ultimately rewarded for it. After his death, Jesus (spoiler alert) comes back to life and ascends to heaven. The model of Christianity is someone who did nothing wrong, suffered greatly and was rewarded for it. Not only that, but the Bible promises that as a devoted Christian, you will suffer, in verses like 2 Timothy 3:12: "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Jesus himself warns that following him isn't an easy path. If you want to follow Jesus, you will suffer like him. Not only that, but

you will be rewarded for your suffering.

So the message from all of this is: There is no redemption without suffering. If you're Christian in America, a nation where Christian persecution has been against the law since its establishment and Christianity is dominant, how exactly can you suffer in the name of Christ?

I think this conundrum is why so many evangelicals love to cry religious discrimination; in the absence of true suffering, they feel the urge to invent some. If you're Christian, suffering is incredibly attractive. The alternative is to admit you might not be redeemed. And if you believe that all who are not redeemed are doomed to eternal suffering, your lack of redemption is genuinely a terrifying thought. That doesn't make the approach any more correct, but I think it makes it more understandable.

I want to note that that historically and currently, outside of America, Christians are and have been legitimately persecuted. I am not trying to discount that. But actual persecution of Christians doesn't change the lack of it in America.

I am not writing this because I want to villainize Christians. I grew up in the faith myself. I am writing this because I think Christian doctrine very easily lends itself to unhealthy mindsets, and it's important to acknowledge those. By critiquing unhealthy trends, we can consider how we can develop healthier relationships with religion, and how our relationships with religion should and shouldn't influence how we treat the world around us.

While it is incredibly uncomfortable and difficult to reconcile how suffering and redemption are linked, and what it means for your redemption when there is no obvious suffering, neither is it correct to claim persecution where there isn't any. Rather than constantly trying to be the victim, Christians should not let their desire to suffer like Christ blind them from legitimate persecution of groups both like and unlike them.

The Cost of Construction on a College Campus

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If you walk outside your dorm in any direction, it doesn't take long until you see a traffic cone, crane or blocked-off street. That is, if you don't hear it first. This academic year there has been a significant amount of construction projects to update facilities and change things around campus. While campus revisions are welcome, the decisions on why certain areas of campus are being worked on has left me wondering if the trouble of construction is really worth it.

As of right now there are five active construction sites on campus, with more expected to come. Only the new School of Nursing and renovations of Gant are academic-related remodels, with the rest being for campus aesthetics or student-athlete use. In addition, the university proposed a golf practice facility to be constructed on the acreage behind campus in December of last year. The golf team, which is currently made of nine members, has been practicing in a simulator in Gampel Pavilion and looking for a real course that would support them. This facility would be for private use by the golf team, not benefiting anyone else besides these nine athletes. Despite the need for remodels for safety, I would argue the construction is causing more disruptions to life on campus than what will be added to campus when the projects are complete.

One example of this disruption concerns the McMahon Residence Hall. The South side was previously closed for three months to fix the stairways. This forced residents of the South side to walk to other exits when they wanted to leave the building, leaving only one parking lot accessible. Now that the South side is open again, residents were looking forward to having both sides available. However, construction is now taking place on the opposite side, once again inconveniencing residents. That side is closer to the Rec and the Union, both popular spots for students.

In terms of other dorms, Garigus, Werth Tower, Hale and

Ellsworth Hall residents have also experienced the effects of construction. The Field House construction has been going on for over a year now and is said to take two more years to complete. Construction vehicles frequent the area from early morning until the afternoon, and as of late several road closures have made the area even less walkable. The disturbances from the Field House construction will only get worse as the Gampel renovations start soon, leaving residents of the same dorms impacted. Both areas are adding to refurbishments that are catered towards benefitting student-athletes.

These projects, which are costing the university hundreds of millions of dollars, should be exciting to witness as a campus. But when it only advantages a small percentage of the student population, it is hard to look forward to them. Instead, we only see how much of an obstacle they currently are for everyone on campus. It is also hard to see why fairly recent facilities are getting updates when there are dorms and buildings that are decades older that could use the same attention. The construction also comes at inconvenient times, whether it be beautification projects just to make the school nicer for prospective students before a Bound Day or just weeks before the end of the semester. The preparation for Gampel's remodel has already thrown a wrench in end of semester plans, including annual championship basketball watch parties. The pressure for colleges to renovate is at an all-time high not just at UConn but nationally, with the argument that without updates enrollment will suffer. This sentiment comes with drawbacks because it leaves current students on the back burner while they prioritize the future of the university.

The cost of construction is about more than just money. It's about the unnecessary strain it puts on students that makes us question who and what it is all for. The construction occurring has revealed a lot about where the priorities of the university lie, which are seemingly focused on future students and athletes.