Community Engagement Assignment

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 Seena Monjazeb, from Houston, Texas introduced and discussed one of the world’s youngest major religions. The Bahai Faith is a religion founded by Bahaullah in 19th century Persia. Seena believes in the oneness of mankind. All the Prophets: Moses, Mohammed, Jesus, and Bahaullah (founder of the Bahai Faith), were sent down at different time periods, for that specific time period. He believes in the previous religions and accepts them, but thinks that religions are created to address issues of the present time. The believers of the Bahai faith believe in equality in all forms, man and woman, black and white, middle eastern, Chinese, etc. He states, “We are all the children of God.”

 Seena addresses a difference within his relationship with his girlfriend, Marrisa Gutierrez. He says, “The major difference between my religion and Marissa’s religion is that Christians believe Jesus was the last manifestation (prophet). My religion believes that Bahaullah (our prophet) came after Jesus. Although, we do believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and is sent from God, we believe Bahaullah marks his return.” Seena does not allow this difference to affect his future plans with Marissa. He plans to live and become what Bahaullah wants him to become. Medical school, marriage, and starting a family (that will branch out from his religion and his girlfriend’s religion) are a few things Seena prays that are aligned with Bahaullah’s plans for his life.

 It seems to me when someone who practices beliefs of a religion such as, Bahai, at the University of Texas at Austin, they would become unsure and doubt his or her religion solely because they are a minority. This is not the case for Seena. He is confident in stating the Bahai Faith has made him into who he is today. He is an active believer who is not embarrassed of his religious beliefs. He proclaims, “It has helped me learn to love others and to not pay attention to differences and to trust and give my everything to those I trust. My faith and my life are in Bahaulla’s hands.”

 Without the community engagement assignment, I would have never been introduced to the Bahai Faith. I was blessed to have an interviewee who was willing to have an elaborate discussion about his religious views. Because Seena was cooperative, I was able to learn several insights about his religious beliefs and compare or contrast them to my religious beliefs. I am a Christian. Therefore, I found a difference in the time and place of origin of our religions. Bahai began in Persia in the 19th century, while Christianity began in Jerusalem in 33 A.D. The founder of the Bahai Faith is Bahaulla, while the founder of the Christian Faith is Jesus Christ. The last difference that I found interesting is the belief that the Bahai Faith accepts previous prophets from various religions, but Bahaulla will end the cycle that began with Adam. However, Christians believe that there are many prophets such as Moses, Abraham, John the Baptist, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Nahum, Elijah, Elisha, Obadiah, Amos, Hosea, Zechariah, Zephaniah, Malachi, Daniel, Nathan, and many others. After my interview with Seena, I have become more open-minded in learning about an unknown religion, while acknowledging the differences between our beliefs.