

# Opinions

## Consequences of a fatal fallacy



Fiona Alfaro  
Columnist

Death. We all know it's coming at some point in our lifetimes, but what is really going to happen to us when the inevitable takes place? Will Death, as cold and scary as we have made him out to be, lead us with his shiny knife through the golden gates of blissful paradise?

What is eternal happiness? A place where, if you have been good throughout your

existence, the big guy will open a place for you in his humble abode. Or maybe Death will take us to a more Dantesque place — a self-proclaimed hell led by an angry, red man who spends his days chastising the souls that may have enjoyed life a bit too much.

But what if none of this happens? What if death is not the beginning of something, but the permanent conclusion of body and spirit, mind and soul?

To the majority of people this is a ludicrous

choice, but for me, this is it. This is my reality — you die, you're gone. That's it. Some find my prediction depressing and warn me that I will be a lost soul, trapped in an eternal limbo between heaven and hell, if I don't go straight into the red man's hot clutches in the first place.

But this doesn't worry or bother me at all. I see this threat as an opportunity and feel flattered by the fact that so many people care enough about my future to take the time to warn me about my sacrilegious choices.

What about those people that have encountered a near-death experience? Isn't that sufficient proof of another life? These questions aren't valid. No human has ever actually met the big guy upstairs or the angry one downstairs, shaken their hands, walked through their eternal gates of heaven and hell and returned to enlighten the rest of us on the subject. Even if there was such a person, how could we prove that what happened was real and not fictitious? If there is no proof, then these two guys are just a theory, and they can never be proven right or wrong.

Call me faithless, but I rely on science as my truth. After all, we do owe humanity's progress to science. Without it, we would be nothing. Maybe all those people who seem to have experienced

floating above a room or a flashing white light just want to meet the big guy so badly that their souls are providing them with a little taste of their death wish before eternal darkness comes upon them. Or maybe it's just the drugs.

Why do I see my atheist thoughts on death as an opportunity? Simple. I am living for today — not the future, but now. I hate to think of our present lives as insignificant, a type of preparation for the future, living my life like I'm walking on eggshells, making sure not to upset the man in the sky.

So, I say 'carpe diem.' Seize the day, and make every day of your life better than the one you lived before. Appreciate the small things: the sun's light kiss on your skin, your family and friends, the feel of a gentle breeze or maybe just the fact that you are alive in the first place. Stop hoping for something better in the future, because all good things come to an end. Don't be scared of what lies ahead — it's inevitable.

Whatever you do, don't live your life trying to please someone or trying to gain acceptance for some little piece of heaven. Just do your thing, be yourself and, most importantly, live for yourself. This is what life is about, and I think most of us, including the big guy above, agree.

## BY THE NUMBERS

**54** percent of near death experiences are considered wonderful.

**37.3** percent of individuals described mixed reactions to their near death experiences.

**8.6** percent of near death experiences are considered frightening.

**53** percent of individuals who had near death experiences are female, **40.3** percent are male.

Information from the Near Death Experience Foundation

SARAH COSTELLO | Graphics Editor

## Letter to the Editor:

To the Editor,

For years, news of the deplorable conditions in Darfur was inescapable. Stories of sexual violence against women, the murder of civilians and the imprisonment of any who dared to oppose the government were widely publicized in the media and discussed by those who were touched by the heart-wrenching stories of victims of the genocide in Darfur. The initial frenzy evoked by word of the crisis in Africa is slowly becoming nonexistent. Images of starving children rarely flash across the television screen and updates on the state of relations between Darfur and Sudan are infrequent at most.

Unfortunately, the decrease in attention given to the crisis in Darfur is not correlated to a decrease in the problems that continue to plague this region of Africa. A recent report from the U.N. panel of experts reveals little progress has been made in the war-torn region of Africa where violence and murder continues to threaten innocent civilians. The U.N. panel reports that the Sudanese government continues to terrorize inhabitants of Darfur who are already suffering from the lingering effects of Sudanese President

Bashir's ban on non-governmental relief organizations last spring.

During the time spent in Africa, the U.N. panel also reported information gathered from Darfur's female population. Of hundreds of women interviewed by the panel, every woman stated that she could relate to some form of sexual violence from the Sudanese. Many named sexual violence as their greatest fear. In 2004, two young girls were raped outside of a displacement site while attempting to gather firewood. These young girls were also interviewed by the U.N. panel, which believes sexual crimes against women continue to be prevalent, especially in situations that require women to travel or leave a site of displacement.

After the announcement of the recent warrant for Bashir's arrest, more violations of the International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law began to surface. Reports appeared of the persecution and torture of any who had opposed the Sudanese government. The panel conducted interviews with 34 individuals who claim to have been imprisoned unfairly by the Sudanese. According to these individuals, they were thrown in jail for indefinite periods of time without proper trial or sentencing.

In-depth interviews with these individuals led the member's of the panel to believe that while incarcerated, the prisoners were all tortured or physically abused in some way.

Obama has stated his current plan to put an end to the violence and denial of civil rights in the region of Darfur. He plans to urge powerful nations to work together in an unofficial coalition to pressure the Sudanese government to end victimization of the Darfur population. Many thought it implicit that Obama would attempt to persuade China to join us in this unofficial coalition during his recent trip there. In spite of the urging of 44 members of congress and advocates of ending the violence in Darfur, Obama made the highly controversial decision not to raise the issue publicly. The decision has many fearing that Obama is not taking the conditions in Darfur seriously and worrying that the Sudanese government will feel no pressure to change its ways.

As Americans, we are incredibly fortunate to live in a democratic nation that values freedom and human rights. It can be easily forgotten that those committing crimes do so without ever facing any charges or consequences. Starvation

and illness constantly threaten the population and their crippling effect on the people of Darfur has only increased since the recently lifted ban of non-governmental relief organizations in the area. Humans are thrown in jail without any explanation or knowledge of how long they will be incarcerated for.

There are many ways to become involved in the mission to end violence in Darfur. One of the easiest ways is to sign on to the "Save Darfur" Web site and sign up for their e-mail list. Doing this will allow you to receive updates on the situation and keep you informed of relevant petitions and events that you may be interested in participating in to raise awareness and aid relief efforts.

The current situation in Darfur is absolutely tragic and needs the attention of those who have the power to change it. It can take less than one minute to sign on to the Web site and submit an e-mail address so that one can receive updates on how one can contribute to a change that must be made to put an end to the violence and constant fear suffered by the inhabitants of Darfur.

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