

A must-see documentary filmscreening of 'The Philadelphia Eleven'

Rev. Dr. Judith Davis
Contributor

Exclusion of women from ordination and other church leadership roles made headlines last summer when the Southern Baptist Convention banned women from the most senior leadership roles. Women in many parts of the Christian church continue a struggle for full inclusion in the sacraments and leadership of the church, a struggle that some women accepted as a challenge more than 50 years ago in The Episcopal Church (its equivalent church is The Church of England).

As an adjunct professor of Religion and as an Episcopal priest for more than 30 years, I teach about the challenges women have faced in the predominantly patriarchal governance in the Christian Church, not only in America, but around the world.

In 1974, a dramatic breakthrough of the so-called "stained glass ceiling" occurred and gave hope to women of faith everywhere. At The Episcopal Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia, a group of eleven women were ordained to the Episcopal priesthood in violation of the constitution and canons of the Episcopal Church — which at the time stated that only men were eligible for ordination. This story is told in a compelling new documentary *The Philadelphia Eleven*, just released for screenings this past fall.

The feature documentary film screened here last night at 7 p.m. in Ingram Auditorium of Dunham Hall. The event was free and open to the public. Donations were accepted to defray the cost of the screening and to support the continuing mission and social justice work of the historic Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia and the mission of the Women's Leadership Initiative of Brevard College. The Church of the Advocate's founders' socially aware goals — abolishing pew rent and making the church "free for all time"— continue. The Advocate was a Civil Rights Movement hub for African-American and women's rights. It hosted the National Conference of Black Power (1968), the Black Panther Conference (1970) and the first Episcopal Church women's priesthood ordination (1974).

This film tells a story that continues to resonate today as women seeking ordination and leadership roles in many faith traditions continue to face



Photo by: Judith Davis

(Left to Right) The Reverends Merrill Bittner, Emily Hewitt, Carter Heyward (our guest panelist), Nancy Wittig, and Marie Moorefield Fleischer at the memorial service in Brevard in 2019 for The Rev. Alison Cheek.



Photo by Angelena Martino

Carter Heyward held a short Q&A after the film, touching on people's most cogitated questions, resistance, disrespect and exclusion from roles reserved by men for men, as recently witnessed in decisions by the Southern Baptist Convention. The documentary explores the lives of the remarkable women who succeeded in transforming an age-old institution despite the threats to their personal safety and the risk of rejection by the church they loved. These women were and are an inspiration for generations of women in the ministry, and a clarion call for the entire Christian Church and for other faith traditions.

One of the eleven pioneering women who become priests that day has deep North Carolina ties and will attend the screening and offer post-screening remarks. The Rev. Dr. Carter Heyward grew up in an Episcopal church in Charlotte, NC and spent part of her childhood in Hendersonville. Following her successful academic career as a professor at The

Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she retired to Cedar Mountain where she was a founding member of Free Rein Center for Therapeutic Riding and Education (<https://freereincenter.org/>), where she is Director Emerita. She is a board member of the Transylvania Chapter of the NAACP and is a leader of the Moral Monday events at the Brevard Courthouse, in addition to other leadership roles in Brevard. She is the author of a number of books, and her latest book, "The Seven Deadly Sins of White Christian Nationalism: A Call to Action," was published in Sept. 2022 and is available at Highland Books. The Rev. Dr. Alison Cheek, also a member of the Philadelphia Eleven, retired to Brevard in 2014. She, too, taught at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge. Alison died in 2019 here in Brevard. During the weekend of her memorial service here in Nov. 2019, some of the footage for the documentary was filmed.

The film's director, Margo Guernsey, of Time Travel Productions is not Episcopalian. She reminds others, "this is a story for all of us. It is about how to break down barriers with grace and be true to oneself in the process. This story reveals ways in which voices that are inconvenient are often buried. It also provides a vision for what a just and inclusive community looks like in practice." Her company, Time Travel Productions, produces films that document moments in history when people have challenged unjust institutions with a demand for greater human rights.

This screening was hosted by Brevard College, Center for Spiritual Wisdom, St. Philip's Episcopal Church and Transylvania Chapter of the NAACP.

The Rev. Dr. Judith Davis, who retired to Brevard in 2018 and is an adjunct professor of religion at Brevard College and an adjunct priest at St. Philip's Episcopal Church, teaches a course on Women in Religious History at Brevard College this spring semester. She moderated the event. The Rev. Dr. Anne Gilson, also retired in Brevard, was a student of Carter Heyward and Alison Cheek at the Episcopal Divinity School. She introduced Dr. Heyward, who responded to questions following the screening.

Deborah Orloff unveils her collection known as 'Elusive Memory'

Mari Carter
Staff Writer

Deborah Orloff's open reception in the Art Sims building for her project "Elusive Memory" was a wonderful event. It is thoughtful, deep and beautiful work with a message that should be shared with everyone.

From its subtle blurs, out-of-frame faces or the unintelligible faces completely being cropped out as if worn from old age, one can feel the meaning of these pieces.

You might be wondering why this style was chosen and why it seems like old photos rendered to a bigger size for all to see. Orloff's images are all inspired by old family photos she has seen. It drew her to them, especially the weathered and worn down images inspiring her to beg the question, do we remember our past or perhaps are these just memories we've fabricated from images our family or guardians have shown us?

Orloff gives a link between memory and photography. But what happens when we lose that family? What happens when we lose the photographs they took of us when we were young? For



This is a close up of one of Orloff's works called "Anonymous Parents".

Orloff, this was something she was forced to face as a Jewish American; many Jewish Americans searching for their history or lineage can have a difficult time. It often leads to dead ends, making

most names, dates and facts merely useless and sometimes just hearsay. These intimate photographs deny the most crucial part of photography to encapsulate and share this feeling.

THE CLARION

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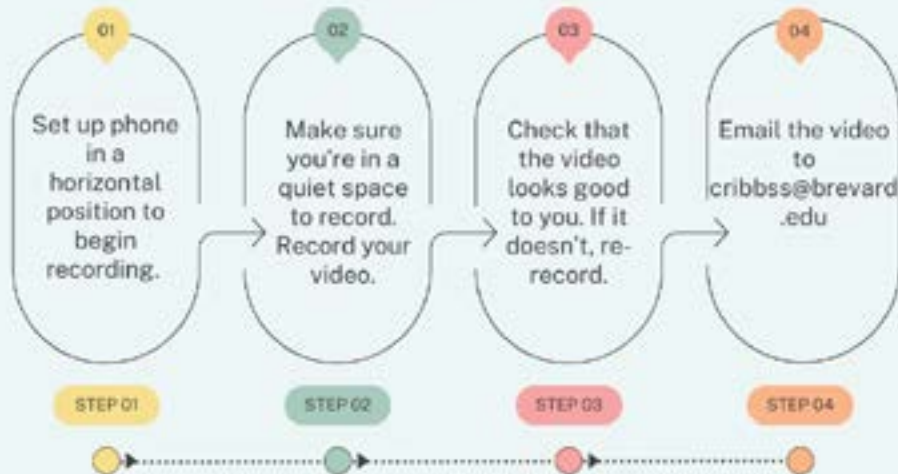
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Anne Chapin

Anne is an archeologist and art historian who served in the arts department at BC for many years, and she has been placed in hospice care. As long as her health allowed her to, she continued to teach and publish. She is receiving care at home and is still lucid but confined to her bed.

Her husband, Bob Bauslaugh (who is also a long-time Brevard College faculty member and administrator) has been reading the many cards, messages, and Facebook posts sent by friends, colleagues, and former students to Anne. Sarah Cribbs has offered to put together a video of personal messages from anyone who would like to share one with Anne. The basic guidelines for a video are: (1) keep it short and sweet, and (2) landscape preferred. Video messages should be sent to cribbss@brevard.edu by Monday, Jan. 29th, at 8:30 a.m.



How to stop viewing your commute to college as lost time in your day

Ovaldo Olmedo
Staff Writer

The daily commute to and from college can often be viewed as lost time. However, Brevard College students have discovered innovative ways to utilize this time effectively for studying and completing assignments.

These students' strategies shed light on what they should know to make the most of their commuting hours.

Commuting can range from a few minutes to several hours. Transforming this time into productive study sessions can significantly benefit students. Here are some expert tips shared by Brevard College students:

1. Plan Ahead: Before starting your commute, create a study plan detailing the specific tasks or subjects you aim to tackle during the journey. This ensures you make the most of the available time and stay focused.

2. Digital Resources: Leverage technology to access study materials digitally. E-books, online lectures and educational podcasts are excellent alternatives to carrying heavy textbooks and can be accessed conveniently on smartphones or tablets.

3. Utilize Mobile Apps: Explore various

study-focused mobile apps designed to enhance productivity during short study time. Apps like Evernote, Quizlet and Forest help organize notes, create flashcards and deter distractions.

4. Audio Learning: Consider incorporating audio-based learning tools into your commuting routine. Podcasts, audiobooks and educational lectures can provide valuable information while allowing you to multitask.

5. Offline Assignments: Optimize time without Internet connection by working on offline assignments or reading course materials that do not require an Internet connection. This way, you can make progress regardless of the availability of Wi-Fi.

While making the most of your commuting time can be highly beneficial, it is crucial to consider specific considerations. Here are a few things Brevard College students should be aware of:

1. Safety first: Ensure you prioritize your safety while studying during the commute. It is best to refrain from engaging in activities that distract you from fully concentrating on the road or public transportation.

2. Noise-canceling headphones: Invest in noise-canceling headphones to minimize external distractions, creating a focused study environment irrespective of the commuting surroundings.

3. Ergonomics: When studying for extended periods, pay attention to your posture and maintain a comfortable and ergonomic position to prevent physical strain.

4. Time management: Balance your time effectively between studying and personal well-being. It is essential to allocate time for relaxation, socializing and self-care as part of an overall healthy routine.

Through implementing these strategies and being aware of potential challenges, Brevard College students can unlock the true potential of their commuting time. Embracing a proactive approach toward education will enhance academic performance and foster lifelong learning habits.

Remember, every moment counts — including those spent commuting. So, transform your daily journey into a productive and enriching experience!

Campus Critters:

A new start: Luna

Olivia Ervin
Staff Writer

Welcome back to Campus Critters! My name is Olivia, and I hope you had a great break. I briefly tried to learn how to play the spoons, but here I am still unable to capture the art of the spoons. With the new year, there are some changes being made to this whole series.

Previously, all of the animals mentioned were ones that live on campus. That was doing good in the beginning, but slowly, I ran out of submissions. I have decided to also showcase the pets that we had to leave at home as well to not only open the selections up a little bit, but to also show some love to the animals we can't always visit.

Another change is that you are now allowed to submit pairs of animals. That means if your animals are a bonded pair or are just better together, you can submit them. An example is from the Halloween issue of the Clarion where Fishstick and Lampshade the fish were both featured that week.

This week we do not have a technical pet of the week, but I do have a dog that I love to talk about. My dog is named Luna, short for Lunatic. We got her as a puppy from our city's animal shelter. She

is a ball of energy but also loves a good nap. Luna also mothers all of our cats and our oldest dog, Rosie. She loves to clean the cats. I will walk into a room and see wet spots all over my cats from where she had been trying to give them a bath.

She is a dog full of personality. She hates being told no, especially when she's laying on the couch with me, and I tell her to get down. She also gets jealous when I try to give attention to other animals. Luna loves any treats with meat in them, and she likes to play tug of war with her rope. She also enjoys going on walks and playing outside.

I love my dog, but she is not the sharpest tool in the shed. I once walked into our sunroom, and she had gotten an empty chip bag stuck on her head. Even so, she is a force to be reckoned with. Luna has been known to end some chicken's lives. She has not done that recently, but you never know when she could make her next move.

Luna was asked, "If you were a sauce, what sauce would you be?" She said, "I would be pesto. I don't know why, I just would." Thank you, Luna. She will probably never be on campus because



she lives five hours away, so though you won't be able to say hi to her, she knows that you want to.

Thank you for reading. If you have a pet you would like to submit please fill out the google form where you can find through this LINK or by scanning the QR code. All types of animals are welcome. I love variety.



Luna

Photo by Olivia Ervin

International students' views on Christmas break

Ivelysse Leighton

Staff Writer

Time away from your families is never an easy task, and we all handle it in different ways. A decent chunk of students here at Brevard face these challenges every day by the distance between them and their family. Earlier this week I sat down with a few of our international students to see how it felt to finally be able to visit home after a long and demanding semester.

José F. Garces was born and raised in Panama and decided to travel to the U.S. to attend Brevard as a student-athlete. Garces chose Brevard College to play soccer and found that he has the most opportunities to pursue a professional soccer career after school here. Garces described how it felt finally being able to see his family as, "Amazing. Finally, after four months, hugging my family and friends was very good."

He further went on to say that coming back to Brevard this time was easier since now he has friends that he can look forward to seeing. Even being back at Brevard now Garces makes sure he is in constant contact with his family and says, "Of course they are sad, but they know that I am chasing my dream," which is a beautiful outlook.

Another freshman, Louise Rodrigues better known as Lou, came all the way from Brazil to be a part of our volleyball team. Rodrigues said, "This is my first time being this far from home totally alone, and I didn't know anyone, so the beginning was really hard, but my busy schedule allowed me not to dwell on it too much."

She described finally being able to go home as "So exciting because I missed them so much, and I was so homesick". Her family was so excited to finally be able to see her and many happy tears were shed, but she was struck by the fact that everything throughout the semester was worth it to finally go home.

Taking a different turn, we have Tom Dussauge, a junior from France and has been a part of our soccer team for the past two years. Dussauge pre-

viously attended a school in Kansas but decided to transfer there when he discovered he liked North Carolina significantly better. Dussauge enjoys the U.S. a lot because "we don't judge each other, and we are very accepting of each other."

Dussauge said that it felt great finally being able to go home and spend time with his friends and family. Since this isn't his first time traveling back home after a semester at school he describes coming back as "easier because I already knew I was coming back to my friends even though my English has gotten worse." After college he plans to either go home or to another country, like England, to pursue a professional soccer career.

Martín Moguel Aguliar is yet another student who traveled a great distance to attend school here at Brevard. Aguliar is a sophomore from Mexico and is on our soccer team. He said he chose Brevard because "I wanted to come to the U.S. because it was a good way to keep playing soccer while at the same time being able to go to college." He values both his education and athletic career and found a way to have the best of both worlds.

Aguliar said it was awesome finally being able to see his dad and dog again after a long semester. He is no stranger to distance because both his mom and sister live in Australia, so that is already really far from his home. Despite the distance, he is in constant communication with everyone to stay connected with his family.

I had an amazing time talking about these students' experiences of going home after a long semester. One thing that all of these students had in common was their opinion on the worst thing about being away from home, and that's the food! Truly nothing is better than a home cooked meal by your family filled with your favorite dishes. I'm sure we are all excited to see what these students achieve while attending Brevard and what they decide to do after schooling!

2024: a crucial year for geopolitics

Martín M. A.

Staff Writer

2024 will be a critical year for politics all around the world, with elections taking place in 76 countries. Almost half of the world's population will elect new rulers. Let's look at some of the most relevant elections.

On Feb. 4 elections will take place in El Salvador, with Nayib Bukele seeking re-election in a constitutional controversy that, in theory, prohibits consecutive terms, but his popularity is so high it seems he can pull it off. He has gained popularity thanks to a firm security strategy that has drastically reduced homicides and recovered areas that were previously controlled by gangs. Nayib Bukele is an amazing example of what a political leader should look like, as he has drastically improved the lifestyle of his country and doesn't focus on his competition, rather he proves how good he can be as a president.

On Mar. 17, Russia prepares for a crucial presidential election. Vladimir Putin, a dominant figure in Russian politics since 2000, is seeking another term thanks to a, once again, controversial constitutional reform approved in 2020. The political landscape in Russia has witnessed growing repression against the opposition and civilians, especially after the conflict in Ukraine. These elections will not only determine the future of Russia but will have a significant impact on global geopolitics, especially in Europe.

Jun. 2 is an important day for our neighbors to the south, as elections in Mexico will take place. The presidency, congress, and thousands of political positions throughout the country will be renewed. These elections come at a crucial moment in Mexican politics, as Morena (the left-leaning party) seeks to remain six more years in power, while the opposition will try anything to remove them from power. Moreover, it will be the first time a woman will be the president of Mexico, with Claudia Sheinbaum being the candidate from Morena and Xochitl Galvez the one from the opposition.

Finally, to end the thrill of elections around the world, on Nov. 2, is the United States presidential election, where a confrontation is anticipated between the current Democratic president Joe Biden, and his Republican predecessor, Donald Trump. After a 2020 election marked by controversy and misinformation, the political climate in the United States is more divided than ever. The central issues of the campaign will most likely include the economy, foreign policy (especially immigration), civil rights, international security, and global economic relations.

In 2024, elections around the world will not only define the future of their nations but will also define international coexistence in the coming years. It is important to remember that our vote matters and being an active member of a democracy is what makes it work.



How to define art in today's world

Jake Thomas

Staff Writer

Art is something perceived differently by each and every person. With that, there will always be disputes between different groups of people about what qualifies as art and what doesn't. Why?

It is widely accepted that a painting on a canvas qualifies as a piece of art. There are no logical people disagreeing with this point. However, there are people who would say that only some music is art, such as instrumental music or orchestra. Many people would disagree with that point, saying that songs are written with passion and emotion, and letting out a vocal ensemble is just as much art as putting paint on a canvas or playing the saxophone.

This brings up the question, is all music art? Is the TikTok kid making "Skibidi Poptart Raps" worthy of being called an artist? Should this child be in the same class as great artists such as Picasso or Wahlberg?

What qualifies as art in today's world? I decided that I would reach out to experts on this subject. Brevard College's own Jaylen Dickerson and Cedric Wesley weighed in on the matter. These two gentlemen are among the most talented musicians I know.

Cedric, or Wes as he prefers to be called, is a music major and is very impressive on the electric guitar. So what qualifies as art in today's world? According to Wes, "For something to be art, it

must have passion behind it. Anything can be art and with every person you ask the answer to your question will vary." Wes is an artist in the truest sense, as he has spent hours and hours perfecting his crafts, but he doesn't have the stereotypical "artist" feel to him. Wes is a very polite, patient and helpful young man who will find great success in everything he does.

Jaylen Dickerson is an outstanding artist, and just like Wes, he is a great person. Jaylen, or Jay as I call him, is a music major here at Brevard, and is extremely talented on the drums, but he's well versed in a variety of instruments. What qualifies as art in today's world? His insight in music is far beyond mine regardless of word count. Jaylen's take on the question is that "Anything that evokes emotion and portrays creativity is art."

At first this seems like a textbook answer that took little thought. When you think deeper you can see that despite the brevity of the answer, Mr. Dickerson gave as close to a perfect answer as you can get.

So what does qualify as art in today's world? To give a conclusive, all encompassing answer would be near impossible, so I too will throw my opinion in the ring. I believe that art is whatever you make it, whether that be a painting on the wall by Picasso, or a painting on the fridge by your little cousin. Art is whatever you make it.

No longer just a dream

Alex Bolton

Staff Writer

From the youngest to the oldest, we all have motives. From the drive to survive or the desire to overcome the odds, when facing life, motives always take precedence.

Living on campus day to day you see and hear many things. Of course some good but also a lot of bad. You may think immediately of jokes when I say such a thing, but truly it is the "I don't care" mindset of a college student.

I can't say this is true for all students but definitely something many struggle with at some point. It is evermore important now that we re-evaluate ourselves while there is still time in this new semester.

From childhood we all dream a dream praying for it to be made reality. Sadly many will forever live the dream through imagination due to lack of motor to achieve. This lack of motor is one I call lack of motive.

I don't want any college students to fall short of their goals. Therefore it is time for us to call about the importance of prioritization. According to the Oxford dictionary, the word prioritize means to "designate or treat (something) as more important than other things:". This is what we all must do in order to better ourselves and our future. We have to set the things that will better ourselves and our futures as a main priority in our lives.

It is nonsensical and illogical to believe you will achieve anything near your desired outcome when you lack the drive to do the work. Hence why we must set such priority on the matter. The higher the priority, the higher the drive.

Why is the priority I set so high? In a simple explanation I hold to, it is the advancement and growth of yourself in the present and future. The true want and desire to see better, more wonderful things for yourself.

When driven by such a thing it is impossible to lack motive. It now becomes a question of priority and execution. If you truly seek such a goal to be achieved, then you have to be willing to move on the motive provided unto you.

So I implore all of you to no longer stare but reach for the sky. No longer observe but interact. Make dreams reality by moving on that motive!

Here's why TJ Watt should win Defensive Player of the Year

Alex Spangler

Staff Writer

TJ Watt, at the height of six foot four inches and the weight of 250 pounds, is coming off the year dominating the league with 19 sacks, which is 1.5 more than any other player. Though Myles Garret and Micah Parsons are the top two favorites to win the award with only 14 sacks each.

Looking at other important stats, TJ Watt leads in tackles for loss (TFL), pass deflections (PD), interceptions (INT), and fumble recoveries (FR). The only stat that either of them has over TJ Watt is assisted tackles. Micah Parsons has 28 compared to Watt's 20.

Is TJ Watt the most talented Defensive Player of the Year (DPOY) candidate? Is he more athletic? Is it all about the stats? Or is impact factored in?

Myles Garret is beating TJ Watt in QB pressures and a pass rush rating of 10.8 compared to TJ's 10.3. As you can tell, the numbers aren't as big of a gap as the networks portray them to be. So why is TJ not the favorite to win the award?



TJ Watt

Photo by Joe Sargent

It's like the MVP discussion. Why are the majority of candidates QBs? When you think of MVP you think of the most valuable player of that team who led them to success.

Maybe it's not about just the stats. Maybe it's more about how they contributed to the team. The Steelers have a losing record without TJ and a winning record with him, even if he is not padding the stats, he is making a difference in the outcome of the game. He is the obvious MVP of his team and should be recognized for at least the top 10 for the candidacy.

11 Fingers:

No secrets in this cage

Isaiah Collison
Managing Editor

Warner Bros. Animation made a magic trick with “Mortal Kombat Legends - Cage Match”. It made me feel as though a tab of acid was flowing in my bloodstream, and I was watching the movie with rainbow sunglasses. What ruined the film is I can no longer watch movies as just a fan; I watch them like a screenwriter, and the trend in animation where the story and dialogue hide behind the animation must come to an end.

Everyone hates “on the nose” dialogue even if they can’t explain what it is. On the nose dialogue is destructive and lazy. It plays on the notion that the audiences are not bright enough to follow a story. Digesting this lie is why screenwriters make characters say action we see them doing.

Blame controlling executives too, but screenwriters make the final decision when they type. Any screenwriter who plays into the “audience is dumb” trope is a disgrace to themselves!

I am on the quest to solve this mysterious conspiracy, which, honestly, is probably better described as an annoying tendency. At the end of the line, I can’t say I expect to find a corrupt “big man” chewing on a cigar with ice cubes for eyes, but I still want answers. My best, most realistic prediction is that there are screenwriting formulas.

And there are screenwriting formulas.

Flat characters preaching Sunday-morning messages are knock-off motivational speakers. This version of Johnny Cage is stepped on like fallen leaves. “Mortal Kombat Legends - Cage Match”, as a whole, makes you simultaneously toast a celebration and pour one out. RIP Johnny Cage.

MK Cage Match’s retrowave style of 2D animation blends skaters, punk vampires and pop music with tsunamis of psychedelic visuals and off the wall, over the top fighting. It is the reason I get in my feelings when 2D animation is overlooked. Visually, the movie is a flawless victory. Redefine your definition of highlights. An ’80s fueled blast of nostalgia (including the aesthetic of “Miami Vice”) with flashes, fashion, drippy illustrations and vibrant infrared sequences brightening your room for an hour and fifteen minutes. This beautiful example of colorful cinematography is enough to cause an overdose of visual sensation.

The shadows, fight scenes and action lines are all incredible. They’re shiny, unique and glistening — it’s as if the animation was hand-drawn with stars from the sky. It is completely called for.

Yet at the same time, the movie dealt itself a fatality of epic proportions. It is clear that there is not a lack of creativity because the animation, character designs and backgrounds are on point.

The story is cool but forgettable because the dialogue is lame, paper thin too. I promise you the subtext is on their lips. A larger problem within the medium exists. I could let it go, but enough is enough. Dialogue is not the ugly middle child.

Good stories have good drama. Story is like a smoothie. Each flavor of story should kick at just the right time. When the story is bland, it usually has on the nose dialogue. Good dialogue makes you say things like:

“How will other characters react?” “This flows.” “This feels natural, and I want more of it.”

Bad dialogue makes you shout:

“Who wrote that?” “Can this person act?” “Why am I watching this?” “People don’t talk like that! Hello!”

If you sip a smoothie that tastes like a cup of water and the waiter says, “This is a stirred, blended, and shaken cup of H2O”, raise hell. Don’t relax until they take the water away and bring you flavors you want!

Perhaps there should be (like the parental advisory labels) a formulaic dialogue warning.

“Screenplay written by a math book.”

To write a screenplay without good dialogue is a hollow favor, a slick diss or burn, an intentional disservice, and screenwriters who hack screenplays as a gateway to fame are not professional experts. In my time studying animation, I have learned that people feel animation is for kids. How then did “MK - Cage Match” fall into this trap? The Mortal Kombat franchise is famous for outrageous gore and bright red guts in their games, films and shows.

I feel closer to my goal. Here’s what’s in my head so far.

INT. STAN’S OFFICE - NIGHT

STAN and MR. STICK2DAFORMULA sit across from each other. Stan lights a cigar.

MR. STICK2DAFORMULA

I’ve read every screenwriting formula. Statistics show this medium is for kids and single men above the age of—

STAN

You think you can come to the real world with freaking metaphors freaking dialogue and freaking gags?!

Stan drops his legs, wobbles over to the bright-eyed recruit and blows smoke in his face.

STAN CONT’D

People want dumb. Ya gotta make cartoons with math dialogue. Understand?

MR. STICK2DAFORMULA

Sir, Control vee, sir! ... that was an example of the kind of jokes I’ll be—

CIGAR STAN

Now you get it! All this subtext \$h!t makes no sense, ya know? But’cha know what, the less it makes sense the easier it is to understand storytelling. The easier it is to tell stories, the quicker I get rid of screenwriters and replace them with AI!

Stan doesn’t realize he’s tapping all ten of his fingers together. The scared screenwriter pretends he’s in fantasy land with ponies and red carpets.

STAN CONT’D

Why ya still standin’ there? I’m plottin’...

Mr. Stick2daformula wipes his hands on his graphic tee. He’s peeing himself.

MR. STICK2DAFORMULA

I believe you hired me to help you spread misinformation. Maybe if I tell young screenwriters there’s a buncha writing hacks ... they’ll get rid... of themselves... sir.

Back to Johnny Cage... who is FLAT!

Johnny Cage is impossible to misunderstand because his lines torture us with simplicity, and the one liners are delivered like loogies. I think it was easier to write this screenplay than it was to think about it.

His backstory is Peter Parker’s high school life with martial arts lessons as opposed to a spider bite. Cage is bullied for being weak, but there’s no reason why we should believe he’s any weaker than the other kids who don’t get bullied. The rest of the story is written by soccer moms who hate bullying.

After becoming a beast with no fear, Johnny Cage breaks his bully’s arm and becomes cocky, sarcastic and sex-craved. He never does the right thing for a good reason. A classic antihero is ruined by ridiculously shallow motivations. Cage is looking for his kidnapped co-star so they can resume filming his breakout film. Also he wants to hit on her. He is an extraordinarily self-concerned d*ckhead, and so are you if you bark orders at your assistant and catcall “babes”.

There was still hope for Johnny Cage to mold into a loveable character in his own film, but he never grows, treats his team better or learns anything throughout this cartoon. Johnny’s masculinity is over the top even for the extreme gore. Thanks to that writing formula, everything he says is cringe.

“Kick first. Be awesome. Make money.” - this is his motto.

“W-W-J-C-D ... What would Johnny Cage Do?” - this recurring line is used in the climax to motivate Johnny’s geek assistant, Chuck, to engage in hand-to-hand combat with a demonic goblin twice his size from another realm.

This is what happens when too many ad libs and too-Hollywood-for-the-screen fails to inform the audience on what Johnny Cage was in his original storyline, a professional fighter before becoming an action star.

Some franchise content Warner Bros. Animation produces have plots that at first appear to be enticing, mysterious and interesting. But cracks and holes always show themselves. When they do, it is hard to finish the story because you already know how it ends without wanting to. With such clear artwork there is no reason to explain what we are seeing onscreen.

If you like dialogue where demons tell the heroes they’re not demons then admit it was a cheesy lie, where Johnny bullies you into understanding bullies shouldn’t bully, or if you just want the ’80s vibe, watch “Mortal Kombat Legends - Cage Match.”