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CD702- *Working with People*
Irreligious Person Interview

4 March 2023
Interviewee: Davinna Vails

Overarching Question: “*If I were to speak to you or your family about God, how would you like me to represent Him?*”

The individual I interviewed was Davinna Vails. Davinna is currently an intern at my place of employment. She was more than willing to have a conversation with me regarding how she would like God portrayed. Initially, I was a little apprehensive because I have never sat and had a conversation with someone that does NOT believe in God at all (or no longer does) and I never want to come across as though I am being judgemental.

Before we began our conversation, I wanted to get some context on her life and her upbringing as I am aware that oftentimes the practice of any kind of faith tradition is rooted in the home and one’s childhood. Davinna was born and raised in Wilmington, North Carolina. My perception of people born and raised in the South is that they grew up with some belief system; that was the case for Davinna. She was born and raised in the Baptist Evangelical faith. She had a typical upbringing that was pretty much centered around the church. Her family was very involved in church activities and she was a part of the church choir. She said that her family, “Pretty much slept at the church”.

As she continued to tell me more about her childhood, into her teenage and young adult years which continued to be centered around the church, I couldn’t help but wonder at what point in her life she began to withdraw from the church, her faith, and God. As she continued to share, I asked her what happened in her life that caused a shift in the faith and belief that she was grounded in. She then began to tell me about the time in her life when she “realized” that there was no God when one of her friends was killed and the person that killed him was *never* brought

to justice. She refused to believe that there was God if he would “allow” all of that to happen. Since that happened, she has become increasingly hostile towards God and “religion” and admitted to me that the fact that she was having a conversation with me at all about anything related to God was a big deal for her. She has no intention whatsoever of returning to her faith at all and totally rejects the idea of God despite her deep Christian roots.

Despite all of that, I asked her the overarching question for this assignment: *If I were to speak to you or your family about God, how would you like me to represent Him?* She had to really think about this question for a while. She would want God to be represented much in the way he is represented in the Old Testament; as a wrathful and just God. As she put it, “A vengeance is mine kinda God”. A God that does not offer grace to those that kill and destroy and does not allow them to get away with what they have done. She wants a God that keeps his word; a God that in time will always remain on the side of the innocent by severely punishing those who kill and destroy.

It was clear that how Davinna wants God to be represented is a direct result of the events that happened in her life and the lack of healing that she has experienced. I asked her if these feelings towards the existence of God would differ if the individual that killed her friend had been brought to justice. She responded that she didn’t think so. When I asked her why, she responded that considering everything that is going on in the world, especially all of the black lives that have been violently taken away at the hands of Officials who are supposed to protect and defend, it is impossible for her to believe that there is a God.

At the conclusion of our conversation, I wanted to ask her if I could pray for her but I did not want to overstep any boundaries. I thanked her for her willingness to speak to me about such a personal and sensitive topic. I told her that if she ever wanted to talk, I was always available.