

My Experimentation with Buddhism: A Conformity Addict's Story

I am a Buddhist. No, let me correct that statement. I am a non-practicing, “in theory” Buddhist. If an image of myself could transcend to the page, I would not appear Buddhist. I look in no way Thai, Chinese, or any other traditionally-Buddhist culture. I also have no relatives or friends that practice Buddhism aside from one Thai-American kid named Tripoom Jala; I can safely say, though, that he has never influenced much of my life, let alone religion. Why, then, would I choose Buddhism as my societally-required religious affiliation (there's an affiliation for lack of affiliation! *cough, cough* Atheism)? Why wouldn't I follow the suit of my parent's non-practice of Christianity? The answers to these questions lie in what Baby Boomers like to call the poison of America's youth, the thing that keeps us damn millennials from playing kickball in live-traffic streets until our stereotypical stay-at-home mothers ring the dinner-time bell: that damn interweb.

To explain, I feel that I have to explain the whole story. One piping hot day in the summer, struggling on the tennis court, I felt lost. I was searching for guidance. Naturally, I turned to the only thing that can assuage my sense of insecurity: the video of that lanky-ass white kid dabbing to “Black and Yellow,” which always gives me a hearty chuckle. Without the giggles for which I hoped, I put on my noise-cancelling Beats and played Coloring Book from start to finish—I find peace in Chano's “prophetic stories of freedom.” Now, my current state must have subconsciously turned on my confirmation bias because as, on “Blessings,” Chance proclaims that “when the praises go up, the blessings come down,” the solution to my problem became clear. To obtain the blessings I wanted, I needed to pray, but to pray, I needed faith.

Readers may wonder: why didn't I turn to Christianity? Don't Chance's praises refer to the Christian deity? Yes, but I watched too much Discovery channel as a little tyke and had too many bad experiences at Jesus Camp (another story for another day). Believing in Christianity was not for me. However, I needed faith, or at least some guiding principle to give my coddled life its much-needed direction. So, like any rational teen, I turned to the interweb to find the faith for me.

I sat down at my computer and typed in “What Religion am I Quiz” on Google. Filling out all the questions on the first quiz on the search return, I received results I wasn't quite expecting: Apparently, I should follow “LaVeyan Satanism.” Being the open-minded chap that I am, I did a little research—it's not a Satan Worship group, but a group with a focus on egotism and eye-for-eye ethical code. I thought that this might just be my calling. I carried on with this nervous excitement until the Wikipedia page on LaVeyan Satanism said that the movement may support forms of eugenics. I quickly command-Q'd that ish. Abhorred by the ethical code that this one quiz suggested I follow, I attempted to remove that doctrine from my list of possibles and clicked on the next quiz. When completed, it said I am a Buddhist. I again turned to Wikipedia, who now tells me what I WANT to hear: Buddhism observes moral precepts, the renunciation of cravings, and a praying-esque sort of meditation. To confirm my latest result in case of a fluke, I tried the next quiz Google spat out for me. Again, I got Buddhism.

At this point, I am unequivocally convinced. The interweb says I am a Buddhist, so why not adopt that role. I knew the basics from Wikipedia, which seemed to be morally upstanding and to be enough information for me (remember I wanted a loose affiliation for some

good guiding principles, nothing SERIOUS. It's 2016! I don't need to commit full-on to anything! I have no *real* responsibilities in life... Anyway, as teachers always say, "I've gone down the rabbit hole; let's get back to learning"). So, like I was saying, Buddhism and I had fused together, attached like Neytiri and Jake Sully in that grown-up-stuff scene in Avatar.

Now, I was confident. I had found my faith in life, my muse so to speak. I even looked on Amazon for a Buddhist necklace to wear as a proclamation of my loose support, just like all the "devout" Christians do with their silver-chained crosses. I felt... Buddhist.

At this point, people might ask "What's the point." Honestly, I can't tell you. Sometimes I still say I'm a Buddhist, sometimes not. But regardless of what I say, I'm obviously not really a Buddhist—just like most "Christians" aren't *really* Christian. What I have found, though, is that just the act of trying to find faith helps in life. Even just saying "I am a Buddhist" makes me feel that I have something to guide me like knowing you have a mother instills a sense of security inside of me. Folks, the moral of this story is simple: If you find your religion on Google, you might just get through a tough patch in your life, and if the search gives you LaVeyan Satanism, you should probably pick up Buddhism.

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