

Experimental Podcast- Vampiric Cults

Podcast Actors: Michael Nyairo, Jared Wilson, Jack Albert, Koy Moser

Antagonist 1: Michael Nyairo

Antagonist 2: Jack Albert

Optimist 1: Koy Moser

Host(Optimist 2): Jared Wilson

Jared: Hello and welcome to our podcast. This is an experimental podcast in which we will discuss a subject that many people would never really question, vampire cults in real life. Vampires have made their way into every medium and have grown in popularity over the years. I am Jared Wilson, the host of this podcast as well as someone defending the vampires right to assemble, and my co-hosts and I will discuss a few of the issues that have come along with this growing subculture.

Michael, Koy, Jack introduce themselves

Jack: Hello, my name is Jack and I will be speaking on how vampire cults are harmful to our society.

Koy: Hello everybody, my name is Koy and I will be discussing the topic of vampire cults and why I believe that they cause no harm and why they have a place in our society.

Michael: Hello, I'm Michael. I will also be talking about how vampires cults are harmful to society. Didn't like them anyways with their blood rites and stuff so I am pretty happy to be on this side.

Jared: Before we begin, I'd like to give a quick introduction to our subject of real life vampires. Most people don't believe that vampires exist and that they are entirely fictional, however there are some groups of people that not only believe vampires exist but also that they themselves are among the creatures. Some of these individuals feel as if they require some form of energy from humans, such as blood, to survive. This traditional feeding on blood or life force is why they believe they are vampires. These "vampires" generally come together and form groups or cults that occasionally make the news. These individuals are what we discussing the topic consider real life vampires.

Our first topic of the day is what specific characteristics or ways of life of the vampire subculture do you see as detrimental to society? Koy, what are your thoughts on this matter?

Koy: I do not believe they have a detrimental impact to society. An article from the *National Post*(2015)¹ details what life is like for these "real life" vampires. There are interviews with actual vampires where they discuss their day to day lives. They do no harm and are just like regular everyday people. The only difference is their desire to drink blood. The blood they "feed" on is from individuals who willingly donate their own for consumption.² They are not bloodthirsty fiends that go prowling through the night and attack their victims. They live their lives like regular people and you most likely wouldn't even notice them if you passed them on the street.

Jack: I disagree, vampire cults are definitely hurtful to society and there are many examples. According to a case study about vampire cults in rural America, The people

¹ National Post

² See "Real Vampires Exist and There are Over 5,000 of them in the United States"

who join these groups are “lacking in close friends, demonstrate excessive dependency, low self esteem, and social anxiety.”³ Thus these groups have tendencies to do harmful things or turn violent. An example would be a group of Kentucky teenagers who labeled themselves as the Vampire Clan.⁴ They were a group of around 30 members who regularly participated in vampire activities like drinking each others blood. Four of them actually got together and murdered the parents of one of their cult members because the parents had neglected their friend as a child. The leader of the clan wanted to open the gates to hell which meant killing a large number of people and “consuming their souls.” The leader, Rod Ferrell, would become the youngest person ever to be placed on death row in the United States. If these groups or cults were just exploring a unique lifestyle with some out of the norm behaviors that would be one thing. But this is just one instance where they got out of control and ended the lives of two innocent people. People in the United States have the right to assemble as they feel free and partake in any activities not against the law. But this clearly shows that they can and often will act out of normal behavior which impacts the lives of many.

Koy: I would say that this example could be an outlier. Most cult members who get together do so in a peaceful way and mean no harm to anybody. I think that since these cults are associated with vampires, they are perceived as scary or crazy, due to the view of vampires in our society. However, they do not view themselves as the ghouls we read about or see on T.V. They are people who believe they need blood in order to live or keep themselves happy, and they do so in non-violent or innocent ways. They

³ See “An Adolescent Vampire Cult in Rural America: Clinical Issues and Case Study”

⁴ See “The Mind of a Murderer: Rod Ferrell the vampire obsessed teen death row’s youngest”

gather just like any other group with similar interests would. There are outliers in pretty much every group and I think this is one of those instances.

Jack: In my opinion, these outliers are enough to sway my stance on the subject. If there are even just a handful of groups that partake in any violent outbursts such as the one I mentioned above then I believe that shows the harmful threat they pose to the public as a whole. As the saying goes, a few bad apples spoil the bunch and I think that applies to the situation here.

Jared: So Michael, speaking of a few bad apples spoiling the bunch, would you say that there are any negative impacts that vampire culture presents?

Michael: Of course! Everything that they do from blood letting to idealizing one that many, including myself, find unholy is negative enough to cause me nightmares. These guys believe that what they are doing would have not effect on society as a whole as long as they keep it under wraps but it is obvious that they are only a bunch of criminals that like blood too much. They even have a classification for their little disease: Renfield Syndrome. I don't know about you guys but personally I think that they should be treated as what they are: psychiatric patients. I would not be able to sleep at night knowing that that groups similar to the Vampire Clan are still roaming the streets.

Jared: But Michael, how does this really negatively impact anybody? According to a *New York Daily News* article, which was written using first hand accounts from people who believe that they actually are vampires, most vampires get their blood from donations from friends or in return for favors. In fact, a large amount of vampires don't

even drink blood.⁵ They get their energy from physical touch. No blood at all. There is no harm in these cases and it's all consensual. This culture offers a place for many people who would normally be seen as outcasts and a case study by Megan White and Hatim Omar found that this subculture gave people a sense of belonging.⁶

Michael: Then they can find other hobbies besides this one. Look, I can understand that these people feel outcasted by society as a whole due to their nature, however there are better coping mechanisms out there that can do just as good a job as vampirism. This hobby of theirs runs the risk of inviting unsavory types to take advantage of their action to commit some real crimes. In addition, they also run the risk of spreading horrible diseases like Hepatitis B like wildfire, making them a liability that not only affects them but to their friends and loved ones. This sort of behaviour is why the cults in places like Europe had many of the common bloodborne diseases we know of today and plenty more we haven't seen once they were stopped. If they want to de-stress then they can exercise or something.

Jared: It's more than just about de-stressing, it's about how people cope with issues and make it through their days. I will admit that I believe that there are better ways to cope and to deal with mental and emotional issues, but they still don't generally affect people who are not directly involved. According to T.W. Miller, adolescents are attracted to these cults and groups because they are offered a cool community that accepts them and allows them to be themselves.⁷ These people could probably do something else,

⁵ See "5,000 vampires live in the U.S., drink donors' blood for energy: report."

⁶ See Vampirism, Vampire Cults and the Teenager of Today

⁷ See An Adolescent Vampire Cult in Rural America: Clinical Issues and Case Study

but to them those other options were closes. They were invited into these cults and many avoided things such as suicide and self harm.

Michael: Jared, I can see your point but honestly I would not be able to agree with them. We could go all day arguing about the negative aspects but I feel like it might turn into mudslinging. I'll just end it here by saying this: If they crossed the line once then they can certainly do it again.

Jared: Alright, then I'll move on. Now Koy, I have to ask about how in vampire media, there has been a rising trend where vampires are seen as the good guys or as misunderstood. Could you say that this is the same for the cults that they inspired?

Koy: I believe that this could certainly be the case. If they look up to the vampires that are portrayed as good in pop culture, then they would probably be inspired to do good things. One example could be used from the *National Post*(2015) article I mentioned above.⁸ It described a charity event where one vampire community came together and fed the homeless in the area. Many big organizations start out as small groups or cults so they could evolve into something bigger one day, which could lead to them hosting more charity events and helping more people. Acts like this could very well be inspired by the positive portrayal of vampires in the media today.

Michael: Or it could be that they are good people. Just because some guys one day decided to give back does not mean that they are good or misunderstood as a whole. An example of this can be seen in *Twilight*. Within the books and the film, the vampire Edward is portrayed as, for the most part, the good guy. However, he treated his love

⁸ See "Real Vampires Exist and There are Over 5,000 of them in the United States"

interest and protagonist of the story Bella pretty roughly. Although he is quite clearly a good guy, he checks off everything found in an abusive partner. Sure a so called “good cult” can do some good deeds to show off that they are not the danger that they are but it also allows them to normalize their more heinous crimes as something a good person is allowed to do. Unless you can reassure me that every single vampire cultist out there has no skeletons in the closet that they wanna get rid of, they are still evil.

Jared: I personally think that popular culture has given rise to the misunderstood hero or underdog vampire. This gives an impression of hope and allows people to connect with them in times of struggle. This could move into the cults that people form and join and inspire people to become the guardians and safe space for those who feel like they’ve been trampled on by society. This could be people from broken homes, people who are homeless, or even people who feel like they weren’t given a fair assessment as an individual.

Michael: Then they should just be like everyone else and create a self help group. One that is not dominated by vampires. Don’t get me wrong, I like the idea of more people becoming heroes but I do not think that they need to be vampires. Like I said before, if we allow them to believe that they are just then it will open a whole new can of worms we have not even dreamed of. We do not need vampires to gain that courage. We need them to be cured so that they can function like everyone else.

Koy: I disagree that they should just be like everyone else, as this is what makes them unique. Everybody has their own interests and this just happens to be theirs and you can’t really take that away from somebody. They aren’t doing any harm in their practices as I have learned, so I say we let them be and let them do what they enjoy doing. I

will agree, however, that they should be helped to find a cure, and I believe some may as well. There are some groups that believe they have a medical condition that requires them to drink blood to function properly. In the *National Post*(2015) article, one of the vampires interviewed talks about how they need blood in order to feel good and says “Many of us would rather not go through the cyclic symptoms and just be happy to live life like a normal person.”⁹ I think if people knew more about this and they were taken more seriously, they would have the chance to be treated for this illness.

Jared: And that goes into our final topic. How are the real life vampires perceived by the public? From what I have experienced in life, I would have to say that real life vampires are seen as a joke or people with mental health issues. Even in the media they are seen as this. In the article *The Mind of a Murderer: Rod Ferrell the Vampire Obsessed Teen Death Row's Youngest*, James Wray treats Rod Ferrell’s case as some nut job who is obsessed.¹⁰ Cases like this have created a very negative image of vampires and those who associate with them. The public loves pop culture that involves vampires, but the moment that it crosses over into reality the mood changes abruptly. People are unfairly judged because some individuals have other issues that aren’t properly addressed and give these groups bad reputations. What is your take Jack?

Jack: I agree because the public often knows little about the realities of what a real life vampire is actually like. They use the knowledge that they have gotten through movies, shows, books, and folk tales to shape their perception of them. This idea that the public has gotten through pop culture would not shape real life vampires in a very good light. They are often displayed as ugly, unrelatable monsters that stop at nothing to get the

⁹ See “Real Vampires Exist and There are Over 5,000 of them in the United States”

¹⁰ See *The Mind of a Murderer: Rod Ferrell the vampire obsessed teen death row's youngest*.

blood that they desperately are craving. This along with the fact that the general public has little to no interaction with the real life vampire culture would likely shape their opinion very negatively. Also, the only times the general public would hear about vampires is when they are in the headlines and news for criminal and violent acts. This paints a hostile image of vampires so when the public does finally interact the real life vampire subculture they likely already have a negative connotation associated with it. People are often quick to judge or determine things, groups, or ideas without actually looking into or researching it for themselves.

Jared: Definitely, even with the rise of the beautiful misunderstood good guy vampire, public opinion of real life vampires is still low. Until our research, I hadn't even known that there were large vampire groups out there. I had known that there were some small subcultures here and there that were associated with goth and satanism, but I didn't know about one being on the size level of the Atlanta Vampire Alliance, which has at least 15,000 members.¹¹

Jack: I definitely think that a lack of exposure is a main factor in the public's preconceived notion about vampires. Like you said even with the rise of the good guy vampire I still feel most people think about vampires as more of a traditional Dracula style vampire rather than the beautiful ones of modern time. When you see people dressing up as vampires on Halloween they are always the scary, monster types of vampires from the past which shows how they interpret the vampire.

Jared: Definitely. And on that note, I feel like this is the perfect place to wrap things up. We've made our claims and defended our arguments. Are these Vampires real? Is it

¹¹ See National Post.

just an excuse that crazy people use? Is there some merit to what these individuals are saying? We've said our parts and spoken our minds, but it's up to you to come to that judgement yourselves. Thank you for tuning to our first experimental podcast. I am your host Jared Wilson and I am signing out.

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