

## “I Wanna Help Because...”<sup>1</sup>

**James Rocha**

I find myself equal parts honored, excited, challenged, and honestly a bit overwhelmed by becoming the new vice president for the Association for the Study of *Buffy*+ (ASB+). When the question arose whether this organization should dissolve or evolve, I found myself respecting the former position, but landing on the side of the latter. I hope that together we can establish that the organizational evolution of the ASB+ is both possible and can also allow for the continuation of fruitful research and scholarship in the study of *Buffy* and the related works that have provided so many of us with intellectual inspiration for all these years.

As a philosopher, one of my research questions is whether institutional bigotry can exist without bigoted individuals at the helm, who are dragging the institution along with them. One of the central challenges for the ASB+ derives from a particular person who was neither a leader nor a member of the ASB+, but whose works in film and television provided the impetus for so many of us to research, analyze, and enjoy this very scholarship. The problematic nature of this one person, whose works we study, along with many other issues that have been raised in the past, can indeed infect the ASB+.

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despite our best efforts, which requires us to be ever vigilant and creatively constructive to prevent and respond to problems for the organization.

While many of our upstanding colleagues preferred to dissolve the organization, those of us scholars who remain feel that there are viable responses to this problem (such as to recognize that the shows and films were collaborative in nature and not simply the work of one person, to acknowledge that sometimes bad persons can create meaningful works worthy of analysis, to realize that our scholarship is responsible for critiquing wrongs within the works while also finding insight, etc.). My position as vice president, as we move forward, is not to prioritize my own responses, but to help guide the *ASB+* membership in providing a collective response through our evolution as an organization. In this regard, I see the *ASB+* functioning not only as a platform for showcasing scholarship on *Buffy+* themes, but also as increasing diversity, inclusion, and equity in scholarship and academia in general.

More specifically, I have volunteered to create a diversity committee, whose initial charge will be to create an official *ASB+* diversity statement. This diversity statement will help elucidate the path towards a more inclusive future for the *ASB+* which in turn can assist the organization in avoiding the pitfalls, especially the ones that derive from the aforementioned person whose collaborations we study.

Ultimately, there are positive messages within the *Buffy+* literary works: messages of hope, messages of moral improvement, messages of social justice, and messages demanding further research. As academics and independent

scholars, we are committed to the discovery and delivery of these messages in a fashion that can enlighten and hopefully inspire our readers, our students, and the fanbase. In this manner, our academic fields can become revitalized and approachable to incoming scholars (significantly including first-generation students), who will bring their inquisitive and forward-thinking ideas to these academic areas of study, while also enriching our field and strengthening the positive future of the Association for the Study of *Buffy+*.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup>Angel to Kate, “Epiphany,” 2.16, 39:16-18.

#### Work Cited

“Epiphany.” *Angel: Season Two on DVD*, Episode 16, Mutant Enemy, 2001, written by Tim Minear, directed by Thomas J. Wright, Twentieth Century Fox, 2003 (DVD).