

CDC and USAID seek help to combat Zika

Biniam Zemedkun
Young D.C

Scientists are researching new ways to limit *Aedes aegypti*, those pesky mosquitoes that transmit viruses that cause dengue fever, Chikungunya, yellow fever, and Zika. Zika has been in the news because Brazilian health officials linked it to a specific birth defect last November. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced April 13 that its scientists have concluded that it is more than a link to microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects. It is a cause.

The same day, the U.S. Agency for International Development announced a huge financial incentive to encourage researchers and innovators. USAID will give out up to \$30 million, planned as multiple awards in the \$100,000 to \$1 million range. It's called "Combating Zika and Future Threats: A Grand Challenge for Development."

The *Aedes aegypti* female draws blood meals from humans, usually in the daytime. The techniques that limit the diseases she can transmit involve both males and females. Some known techniques also involve the egg, larval and pupal stages of mosquito life.

STAT, a publication that brings news from the frontiers of health and science to a general audience, reported Feb. 11 that scientists have already discovered six ways to combat the *Aedes aegypti* related to taking away their water, infecting them with a bacteria, disrupting reproduction, poisoning them, feeding them to fish, or adding a genetic "kill switch" to them.

"To get ahead of infectious diseases like Zika, we need to move quickly to find and scale new tools and transformative solutions," said Gayle Smith, the USAID Administrator. "This Grand Challenge will help unlock the scientific and technological advancements needed to accelerate our impact in the fight against Zika virus, and ensure we are better prepared for future public health threats."

USAID set two different deadlines for scientists to submit proposals on new ways to combating threats caused by Zika (May 20) and other diseases (June 17). Wondering who is welcome to submit proposals? Visit www.usaid.gov/grand-challenges/zika

Biniam Zemedkun, 16, is a junior at the Parkmont School in the District of Columbia.



Cartoon by Biniam Zemedkun
February, March and April see the expanding range of the Zika virus spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.

Check out more cartoons from BZ's Scketchbook by vising the Archives tab in the navigation bar, clicking on March 2016 and scrolling to page 16.



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What's your topic for YDC to tackle in Viewpoints? The editors would love to hear about things that inform, concern, inspire, disappoint or drive you crazy. Email your Viewpoints idea to newsroom@youngdc.org

ENTERTAINMENT

Max Landis on understanding Superman

Liam Connolly
Young D.C.

Max Landis, 30, is an American screenwriter well known for his work on movies like *Chronicle* (2012), *Victor Frankenstein* (2015), and *American Ultra* (2015). What casual audiences may not know is that Landis is also a well-known fan of Superman. Back in 2011, Landis wrote and directed a short film on YouTube, *The Death and Return of Superman*. It attracted the attention of DC Comics. Landis was then offered the chance to write Superman in two issues of DC's anthology comic "The Adventures of Superman." Now Landis is getting the chance to write more Superman stories in his own seven issue miniseries, "Superman: American Alien."

"American Alien" tells seven separate stories from different points in Clark Kent's life, each issue illustrated by some of the best artists in comics like Jae Lee and Jock. This series lets the audience see moments in Superman's life such as learning to fly, crashing a yacht party while pretending to be Bruce Wayne, and patrolling the skies as the anonymous "flying man." This series is not just another retelling of Superman's origin story. This is not how Clark Kent became Superman, but how Clark Kent became Clark Kent.

"American Alien" has had a phenomenal response. Landis shows the audience that he is

someone who understands what makes Superman who he is and just how much Clark Kent means to him.

YDC recently took to social media, with DC fans saying that even though it is not yet finished, "American Alien" will go down in history as one of the greatest Superman comics. Which is why YDC believes Landis is the best suited to screen write a new Superman film if Warner Bros were to give him the opportunity.



Max Landis, discussing American Alien in his promotional Youtube video.

Unlike Zack Snyder, the director of *Batman v Superman*, Landis shows a clear understanding of Superman's personality and code of conduct. In an interview with CBR TV, Landis says, "In my eyes he is the most vulnerable superhero because his superhero persona is the closest to who he actually is and that is something to me that is incredibly compelling about the character." With words like this, it is no wonder that "American Alien" has been one of the most talked about Superman comics since "All Star Superman" and "Superman: Birthright."

So in a few years when Warner Bros decides to reboot Superman once again, nobody seems better qualified to write the screenplay than Max Landis.

Liam Connolly, 17, is a junior at the Lab School of Washington in the District of Columbia.



Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Batman confronting Superman

Zack Snyder disrespects and damages Batman and Superman

Zack Snyder's vision of The Dark Knight versus The Man of Steel offers amazing visuals but a total mess of an overall movie. In today's cinema, comic book movies are a dominant genre. Studios get some of their best talent onboard to bring beloved characters from the pages onto the big screen. These films will typically try to add new ideas or aspects to characters and stories while remaining faithful to their source material. This is not the case with *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*.

Directed by Zack Snyder, *Dawn of Justice* is the second entry in Warner Bros.' DC Comics Cinematic Universe and the sequel to the controversial Superman film *Man of Steel*, also directed by Snyder. It takes place 18 months after *Man of Steel*. Batman (Ben Affleck) comes out of retirement to take down Superman (Henry Cavill) after witnessing just how powerful and

dangerous Superman is. There is more to the story, but most of it gets lost in translation as Snyder relies heavily on visuals to substitute the overall lack of any real plot or character development.

This film is one of the most unfaithful and downright disrespectful interpretations of both Batman and Superman to ever hit the screen. Characters like Batman and Superman bare almost none of the heroic traits that make them who they are. Batman's use of guns and strong willingness to kill thugs is a prime example. This goes further with Superman as the writing and overall joyless tone of this film gives the audience a character that is only Superman in name. Whoever Henry Cavill is playing on screen, it is not Superman.

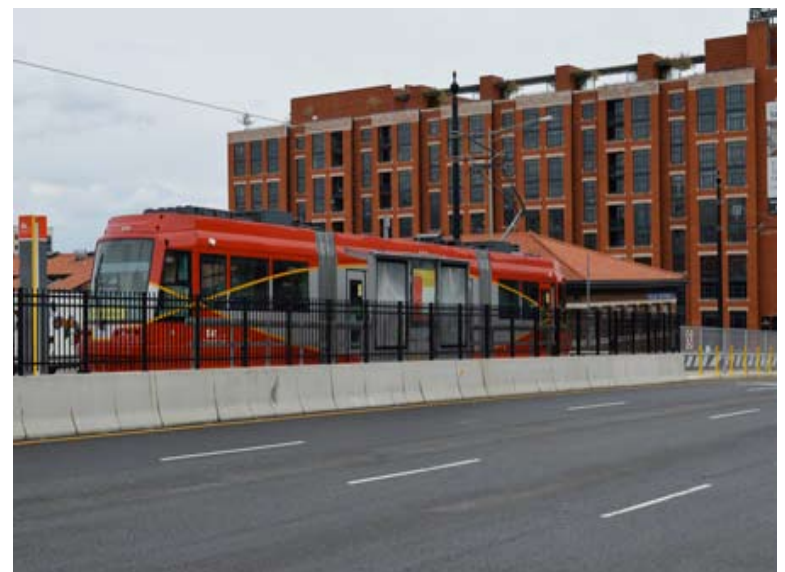
The biggest example of disrespect to the characters lies with the beloved comic book character Jimmy Olsen, aka Superman's Pal. Five minutes into the film Jimmy Olsen is shot in the head and killed by a warlord before Superman even arrives. In an interview with Entertainment Weekly, Zack Snyder said, "We just did it as this little aside because we had been tracking where we thought the movies were gonna go, and we don't have room for Jimmy Olsen in our big pantheon of characters, but we can have fun with him, right?" Apparently, to this director, killing off a beloved comic book character is "fun."

The villain of the story is Lex Luthor (Jesse Eisenberg). Eisenberg's take on the maniacal genius is mediocre at best, as he fails to capture any of the qualities that make Luthor a compelling villain. Instead Eisen-

berg and Snyder gives us a bratty rich boy who sounds like he's addicted to caffeine.

The tone of the film is gritty, overly dark and joyless as it has almost no humor or fun moments aside from a few of Lex Luthor's quips. DC Comics seems to think this clever, using it to contrast with Marvel's more vibrant tone. Instead it makes the film come across as rather boring at times. Having a dark and gritty Batman film is a must for the character, but this tone does not work for more brightly colored characters like Superman and The Flash.

Dawn of Justice also suffers from a problem that has become more and more common with comic book movies known as world building. *Dawn of Justice* tries to set up for the Justice League movie coming out next year, but goes too far. Characters like The Flash (Ezra Miller), Aquaman (Jason Momoa), and Cyborg (Ray Fisher) are introduced to the audience in cameo scenes that not only add nothing to the film but also hurt it as a whole. Marvel Studios set up *The Avengers* by giving each character a solo film beforehand, while Warner Bros. rejected this idea. *Dawn of Justice* crams what felt like five movies into a single two-hour-long film. Overall this film shows that for every amazing comic book movie there will always be a terrible one as well. This is why *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* gets a "three" out of 10. Fans of comic books and films in general should spend their money elsewhere.



Photos: Grayson Butler
 D.C. goes back to the future with a streetcar line that runs along H Street, NE, from Union Station to Benning Road and Oklahoma Ave., NE. Technically the cars are trolleys because the power comes from overhead lines. Recommended reading: "Taking the streetcar is, in fact, way faster than walking" by Ben Bowman in Greater Greater Washington, <http://greatergreaterwashington.org/post/30476/taking-the-streetcar-is-in-fact-way-faster-than-walking/>
 YDC welcomes comments from teens with first-hand experience of riding or living near this streetcar line.