Fearless: Adrienne Ellis

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Abstract
Taking the initiative to change college policies related to LGBTQ issues, restructuring a sustainable community garden in Gettysburg over the summer, and continually being motivated to change and challenge the powers that be through her love of people, Adrienne Ellis ’14 fearlessly fights for what she believes to help the people she loves— everybody. [excerpt]

Comments
Surge is a student blog at Gettysburg College where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

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Taking the initiative to change college policies related to LGBTQ issues, restructuring a sustainable community garden in Gettysburg over the summer, and continually being motivated to change and challenge the powers that be through her love of people, Adrienne Ellis ’14 fearlessly fights for what she believes to help the people she loves— everybody.

Involved in the ALLies club on campus since her first year here, Adrienne became the president of the club sophomore year, went abroad to Australia during her junior year, and then returned this year to serve as an ALLies co-president with Ann Sasala ’15. Adrienne started actively igniting her passion and acting on her desire to change LGBTQ policies and protocol on campus as early as her sophomore year when she and her roommate became the first set of gender-neutrally housed roommates in Gettysburg College history.
At the end of her first year, she and other members of the ALLies club contacted Dean Ramsey and Victor Arcelus, the previous head of Residence Life, about how the college could implement gender-neutral housing as a way to help those students who wouldn’t feel comfortable or compatible with a roommate of the same gender, who are transgender students, and those who simply don’t want to have to choose a roommate based on gender.

Adrienne and her club members were heard loud and clear. The very next semester, Adrienne and her roommate were living in gender-neutral housing to test it out, and by spring, “it was everywhere on campus—everyone was talking about it,” says Adrienne. “We were even able to get a few gender neutral bathrooms in the CUB, change the anti-discrimination policies of the college to include trans individuals, and get an LGBTQA Advisor for the college.”

“It’s my biggest passion campus,” says Adrienne. “It’s the thing I’m most motivated to make changes with here, in my life, and in general. I identify as bisexual, but I’ve always been accepting. I’m also a Unitarian Universalist, so my church is very open minded, focused on diversity, and having love for all people—and that has carried over in college for me.”

While ALLies might be the thing about which Adrienne is the most passionate, she certainly doesn’t limit herself to only serving the campus community and community at large in that way. Over the summer, Adrienne was hired to work alongside Jasmine Colahan ’15 at Painted Turtle Farm (PTF) here in Gettysburg as garden coordinators.

“The garden was in the process of becoming more of a community garden than just a student exhibit garden for classes to go to in order to see sustainable gardening,” says Adrienne. “Families from the Casa de la Cultura program had expressed interest in having their own plots up at PTF. Since the families involved are mostly Mexican immigrant families and primarily Spanish-speaking, Jasmine and I taught workshops on different sustainable gardening topics throughout the summer with the little Spanish we knew and the little English they knew. It was a blast, but it was challenging.”
PTF donated some of its produce to the Campus Kitchens project here at Gettysburg, helped Adrienne open her eyes to many of the social justice issues found at the crossroads of immigration and environmental sustainability, and also helped her get a new perspective on the town of Gettysburg itself since she was living off campus.

As Adrienne prepares to leave Gettysburg after graduation in the spring, she has a lot of ideals, passions, and ambitions guiding her next steps. “I actually just had an interview for Teach for America earlier,” she said. “They had heard about all the work I do here on campus and I talked with them for a while about all of the changes I helped make and how those things would make me a good teacher.”

Adrienne’s passion for justice doesn’t only apply to the LGBTQ community or to environmental sustainability, but also carries over into her ideas about education. “The goals and mission of Teach for America—that every child deserves an education despite any potentially disqualifying factor—I truly believe that. I think the most important thing you can do in life is to love people and be loved by people. If you make an effort to help somebody else, that’s internally going to make you happy. And that is really the root for why I do anything—I just really love people.”

http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/10/19/fearless-adrienne-ellis/