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Stop Ducking

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Stop Ducking

Abstract

When I joined the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity, a small voice in my head kept saying that it was a bad idea. “Don’t become part of the system, Stephen.” But I defended my decision and believed in the idea of Phi Kappa Psi returning to campus with a clean slate. The possibilities far outweighed the cons. I dreamt of the potential of what Phi Psi could become and how we would stand above the traditional expectations of Greek organizations. I wanted to tell everyone about this dream and I couldn’t wait to find like-minded people. I felt inspired by how we might define ourselves. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, silence, Greek Organizations, sexual assault, It’s On Us campaign, Phi Kappa Psi

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement | Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence | Family, Life Course, and Society | Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Other Sociology | Women’s Studies

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://www.gettysburg.edu/) 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.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

STOP DUCKING

December 10, 2014

My initial reaction was to just keep my head down and say nothing— a reflex that I have developed after years of experience with my dad doing embarrassing things in public (love you dad). Relax. Don't make eye contact. You are just a passerby.



Silence is the easiest out. It's a great way to disassociate from the problem. Just pretend you have nothing to do with it.

When I joined the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity, a small voice in my head kept saying that it was a bad idea. "Don't become part of the system, Stephen." But I defended my decision and believed in the idea of Phi

Kappa Psi returning to campus with a clean slate. The possibilities far outweighed the cons. I dreamt of the potential of what Phi Psi could become and how we would stand above the traditional expectations of Greek organizations. I wanted to tell everyone about this dream and I couldn't wait to find like-minded people. I felt inspired by how we might define ourselves.

And then the [UVA story broke](#).

Join Phi Kappa Psi! We're the fraternity facing rape allegations!

It wasn't exactly the best foundation to build upon. My natural defenses kicked in and I disavowed any associations with the UVA chapter. I would wait until the whole thing blew over. I searched the Internet for any news that might vindicate Phi Psi. It was easy, but it solved nothing.

I admit that I was impressed with the response by the administration at UVA and by the Inter-Fraternity Council at UVA. The swift decision by the administration to suspend Greek activities until new policy could be developed, and the cooperation by the Greek community at UVA presented a unified message that the status quo was not acceptable. It also had me wondering whether it was merely the severity of the charge, and therefore the bigger blow to the reputation of the school, that united the message. After

all, there were 38 reports of sexual assault at UVA last year – why does it take an expose in *Rolling Stone* to motivate to action?

But to their credit, they were not waiting for the story to blow over, which is what I was doing. While I waited, news did come out that cast doubt on the accusations and which perhaps does clear Phi Kappa Psi. But just because *this* story has changed doesn't mean the whole story has. Sexual assault is a problem on our campuses and in our fraternities whether Jackie's story is true or not. The scary thing is that this poorly reported story could [distract us](#) from the much needed national conversation that was intensifying in the wake of the article.

Silence will do nothing to stop sexual assault. In ducking our heads we act as though sexual assault is normal. I challenge not only my brothers in Phi Kappa Psi but the entire Greek community at Gettysburg to ignore our defensive instincts and do something now. We received at least ten campus safety alerts this semester regarding sexual assaults on our campus. Let's not respond to that fact defensively ("hasn't happened in my house"), but let us be outraged that it is happening on our campus and be resolute in a discussion of what we can change.

Can we agree that Inter-Fraternity Council should take up this discussion when we return to campus this spring? In September the White House launched the [It's On Us campaign](#) with the goal of ending sexual assault on college campuses. Ambitious, yes, but that is the right goal. So can IFC look at that initiative, and possibly ask pledges of all Greek organizations to take the It's On Us pledge?

I have roughly one week left in my term as the president of the Phi Kappa Psi colony and I've spent a lot of time thinking about the future of the brotherhood. I thought of how we would initiate men into our brotherhood in a positive and constructive way. We have written this new pledge as a blueprint of how we will define ourselves:

The Phi Kappa Psi Pledge

I believe that Phi Kappa Psi is a brotherhood of honorable men.

I believe as men, we have the responsibility and privilege of sharing the world with women.

I acknowledge the oppression of women in which we as men have and continue to participate in.

I pledge to put an end to this oppression.

I accept the responsibility in creating a safe environment suitable for all people.

I will in doing so, respect the needs of others.

I promise to engage in constructive conversation with equal weight in all voices, especially the voices of the oppressed.

I will remain flexible and open to necessary change.

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