



3-5-2014

What If

Megan Shreve

South Central Community Actions Programs

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge>

 Part of the [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), [Demography, Population, and Ecology Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), and the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Shreve, Megan, "What If" (2014). *SURGE*. 12.
<https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/12>

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/12>

This open access blog post is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

What If

Abstract

I love music. All genres of music. I love the stories that come through in music. I love the songs that create that personal experience and drive me to think or feel more deeply. Five for Fighting just came out with that type of song. It's called "*What If*".

There is a line in the song that goes *What if I had your heart, what if you wore my scars. What if you were me? What if I were you? What if your life was my life? What if I was you?* It resonates with me personally and with our mission here at SCCAP – we believe that everyone has a story, a profound story and a path that led them to the place where they are. But what really struck me in this song was the concept of seeing ourselves in someone else's life.

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, ethnicity, individualism

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement | Demography, Population, and Ecology | Inequality and Stratification | Race and Ethnicity | Sociology

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

WHAT IF

March 5, 2014

I love music. All genres of music. I love the stories that come through in music. I love the songs that create that personal experience and drive me to think or feel more deeply. Five for Fighting just came out with that type of song. It's called "*What If*".



There is a line in the song that goes *What if I had your heart, what if you wore my scars. What if you were me? What if I were you? What if your life was my life? What if I was you?* It resonates with me personally and with our mission here at SCCAP – we believe that everyone has a story, a profound story and a path that led them to the place where they are. But what really struck me in this song was the concept of seeing ourselves in someone else's life.

I did nothing to be born to a middle class stable family of Irish and Scottish decent. I did nothing to be born with brown curly hair and blue eyes. I didn't do anything that allowed me to have the genetic disposition of a high metabolism. I didn't do anything to have a calm, fairly steady emotional demeanor or the brain to understand systems, be artistic, but not get chemistry. Those were the genetic products of my parents and their parents. In fact, it was fascinating when I developed Grave's Disease and took a pill to reduce the thyroid hormone in my system, purposely slowing my metabolism, suddenly I had to work really hard to keep my weight the same. Something I was proud of was suddenly, very clearly, shown to be the interactions of a chemical in my body, much more genetic than due to my efforts.

Don't get me wrong, I am not saying we don't impact our outcomes – of course we do. And taking charge of our own life, in whatever capacity we can, in every moment, is critical to our future success. But I don't want to kid myself. Who I am and that I was born middle class in America is no credit to me. I could have been born poor, or rich, with mental illness or disabilities or with the genetics that would have made me so much smarter or beautiful – all again with no work or slacking on my part – a product of genetics.

I was facilitating a class with low income, really hard working families. We were talking about economics and the tax base and the discussion turned to jobs. A woman who worked nights at a factory stacking boxes for 40 – 60 hours per weeks said. "If I could only work harder, like you do, I could get to where you are." It haunted me – I

work hard and I'm salaried so I work a lot of hours – but so does she, for far less wages than I receive. And the work she is doing will kill her body over time. Conversely I was doing a training for Medical Residents who would be working with low income families and one young woman was sharing her story and strongly wanted me to understand that her family, though affluent, had worked hard to get where they were. Of course they had! I think working hard is the norm for most of us. I work hard in my very middle class position, the woman stacking boxes works hard, and the woman training to be a doctor works hard. Our outcomes, however, are different. Our starting places, however, were different. *What if I had your heart, what if you wore my scars?* Would we see things differently? Would those differences be valid? How much of who we are is a gift of birth and how much due to our hard work? If we realize that perhaps a part of our success was due to things we didn't earn but were gifted, our outlooks about others who might not have had the same gifts or opportunities might shift a little. *What if I was you and you were me?*

Megan Shreve

Executive Director of [South Central Community Actions Programs](#)

Read more at [SCCAPennings](#)

<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2014/03/05/what-if/>