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## Late Night at LDs

Mary E. Maloney  
*Gettysburg College*

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# Late Night at LDs

## **Abstract**

As I am giving my full attention to the Western omelet, home fries, and rye toast on my plate, I do not notice what is going on around me. I'm not drunk, but I'm not sober either. I'm with some friends I know well and some people I barely know, but they all seem nice enough to share a late night meal. I'm starving.

I start to realize that more and more non-college students enter LDs, presumably local Gettysburg residents. Some are being loud and boisterous, not unlike many of the people sitting at my very own table, and someone offhand says, "fucking locals." [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, sociology

## **Disciplines**

Demography, Population, and Ecology | Educational Sociology | Inequality and Stratification | Regional Sociology | Sociology

## **Comments**

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://cupola.gettysburg.edu) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](https://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**

## LATE NIGHT AT LDS

March 19, 2014

2:30am. Thursday. Lincoln Diner.

As I am giving my full attention to the Western omelet, home fries, and rye toast on my plate, I do not notice what is going on around me. I'm not drunk, but I'm not sober either. I'm with some friends I know well and some people I barely know, but they all seem nice enough to share a late night meal. I'm starving.

I start to realize that more and more non-college students enter LDS, presumably local Gettysburg residents. Some are being loud and boisterous, not unlike many of the people sitting at my very own table, and someone offhand says, "fucking locals."

The comment really bothers me, but I remain silent. As I said, the omelet was my first priority, I didn't really know the person who made the comment, and I didn't want to make a scene. But it continued to anger me, even after I went home and woke up the next day. I was angry that I didn't say something, that this person used such a derogatory comment, and that too many Gettysburg students feel the same way towards local Gettysburg residents.

The town and gown relationship—that is, the relationship between a college and the town where it is located—has been contentious since its beginning. Dating back to the Battle of St. Scholastica Day in 1355, a fight between townspeople and students in Oxford left several students dead. And although such levels of violence are not commonplace in the United States, student/resident animosity is the norm at many colleges across the country.

Noise complaints and public drunkenness can strain already precarious relationships, especially in a place like Gettysburg where the town and the college are one. No wall exists and no fence has been built to keep the "townies" out, but I wouldn't be surprised if some students supported that idea.

I have heard students label locals as "hick," "country," "camo" or even more hurtful labels like "violent," "coke-head," "rapist," etc. It is usually said as a joke, a big ha-ha everyone can agree upon, laugh about, and move on.



But it's not; it is both offensive and damaging. They sometimes bring up residents as a threat to our public safety, that we should avoid them like the plague because they are dangerous.

As students, we should be concerned about our safety. Walking alone at night isn't a great idea, no matter who or where you are. I am not saying Gettysburg locals are incapable of violence, theft, rape—no one is. But by referring to them as such, we are continuing the negative stereotype. Violent and sexual crimes happen on our campus amongst students, yet we continue to label the townspeople as monsters and “fucking locals,” disregarding the fact that Gettysburg College students could just as easily be the perpetrators of such crimes. It is common to hear a student talk about the dangers of walking home from LDs alone at night, yet walking around campus alone at night is considered safe. Is it really safer on campus or do students' stereotypes of “townies” create this impression?

We seem to put all the focus on “them” with little thought about our behavior or the images we project about our college and ourselves. Driving around in our beamers at 50mph while not stopping at stoplights, puking and peeing on other people's lawns, and not taking the time to make polite conversation with residents furthers those barriers between the town and gown. Very rarely do we stop to think about how Gettysburg locals feel about the college community. Once in a while, I'll hear a peer enraged that a “townie” called college students disrespectful and spoiled. Instead of getting angered by this, we should use it as an opportunity to reflect on our actions, how our privilege is perceived, and how our attitudes affect those in the community around us.

We are guests of Gettysburg, lucky enough to be part of such a historic, quaint and safe town. After all, this is only our home for four years, but the residents do not leave. Instead of acting like we run this town—or that we are better than people who live here—maybe we should start with a hard look at the ways our actions are a disruption to the community. When we assert our privilege and our place, we reinforce the stereotypes that have been the historic strain on town/gown relations. Instead, we can choose to be gracious guests, embracing the truth that we share this town.

*Mary Maloney '14*  
*Contributing Writer*

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