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Because I Am

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Because I Am

Abstract
Why?

"Because I am a Republican!"

Why?

"Because I am a Democrat!"

Why?

"Because I am a Christian!"

Why?

In America, religion and politics are not merely taboo dinner topics; it is strongly advised that you don't discuss either one in nearly all situations. [*excerpt*]

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Disciplines
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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.

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

BECAUSE I AM

January 29, 2014

Why?

"Because I am a Republican!"

Why?

"Because I am a Democrat!"

Why?

"Because I am a Christian!"

Why?

In America, religion and politics are not merely taboo dinner topics; it is strongly advised that you don't discuss either one in nearly all situations.

So what was I to do when my uncle and aunt supported their claim that "homosexuality is a sin" by stating that they are Christians? I know that they are Christians, but do they really believe that homosexuality is wrong? Or, do they simply say this because modern-day western society tells them that all Christians are supposed to condemn Queers?

Of course, not every Christian tacitly nods along to queer-phobic sermons or promotes monogamous heteronormativity as the "correct" way of living, which implies that the label itself is adaptable. In today's world, exclamations such as "Because I am a(n) (Insert Definer Here)" should not be considered an adequate explanation if the individual cannot further expound upon their beliefs.

And this is why I recently broke that unspoken rule that you don't talk about religion or politics.

Job and college applicants often face this daunting statement: define yourself in one word. This only seems possible with a German-esque smashing of multiple words to create one newer, longer word (such as

Superqualifiedorganizedwellreadagendermuslimetcetera), and refuses to acknowledge the individual's multi-faceted identity. It is part of our culture to search for the correct box in which to place ourselves. Modern-day media have not helped; TV channels show a right-wing pundit discussing the contemporary persecution of Christians via the "War on Christmas," and one minute later a left-wing analyst presenting the case for the "War on Women." Rather than providing a platform for these "personalities" to really share themselves with their audience, television's talking heads are presented as mono-dimensional, reduced to a single label.

Boiling someone down to one word often occurs unconsciously, and it has taken me 21 years of falling into the "one label only" trap to be in a position to write this post.

After realizing that I was Queer at age 15–which my teachers and morality textbooks told me meant that I could not be Catholic–I struggled to reconcile my sexuality with my Christian upbringing. In doing so, I lost myself in trying to be only one defining word. I forgot that each of us is more than the labels we and others use to define ourselves, that there is never just one side to someone. My family members love me, but they still cannot accept a large part of who I am. And that is just it, my sexuality and gender identities are a large part of who I am, but are not all that I am. No one is just queer or straight, republican or democrat, religious or non-religious. Human lives do not come in "one size works for all;" no two people can grow up with exactly the same experiences, which helps create the chromatic multiplex of sexual, gender, political, cultural, and social identities available—at any moment, in any combination—to augment how an individual defines himself.

In the music video for his song, "Define Me," Ryan Amador and Jo Lampert cover their bodies in one-word labels used by others to define and degrade them. Singing, "If I'm defined by what I do/then what am I supposed to call you…We're starting this party tonight/where people can shake off their doubts/move through the crowd," they begin to wash off the words and become who they see themselves to be, incapable of being defined by the labels of others.

If politics, religion, and other issues are left undiscussed, we may never fully understand the labels we apply to ourselves.

Why?

"Because I believe these issues should be talked about."

Why?

"Because I am a complex individual incapable of ever being defined by your words."

Why?

"Because I am self-defined."

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http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2014/01/29/because-i-am/