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Fearless: Eric Lee

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Fearless: Eric Lee

Abstract

Snapping pictures of his fellow Gettysburgians around campus as the visual communications intern, and fearlessly working with other students to create, organize, and lead the new Asian Student Alliance (ASA) group on campus, Eric Lee '15 finds himself at the crossroads of art and activism.

New to campus this year after two years in the making, the ASA is a student-led, -run, and -organized group focused on celebrating different Asian cultures and heritages, closing the gap between international and domestic students, and creating a social, cultural, and political forum for students to dialogue, specifically about issues facing Asian communities. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, ethnicity, Asian culture, Asian American, photography

Disciplines

Asian American Studies | Civic and Community Engagement | Race and Ethnicity | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | 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

FEARLESS: ERIC LEE

November 1, 2013

Snapping pictures of his fellow Gettysburgians around campus as the visual communications intern, and fearlessly working with other students to create, organize, and lead the new Asian Student Alliance (ASA) group on campus, **Eric Lee '15** finds himself at the crossroads of art and activism.

New to campus this year after two years in the making, the ASA is a student-led, -run, and -organized group focused on **celebrating different Asian cultures and heritages**, closing the gap between international and domestic students, and creating a social, cultural, and political forum for students to dialogue, specifically about issues facing Asian communities.

Eric, the current president, started thinking about starting a group like ASA as soon as he stepped on campus his first year. In choosing a college, Eric had originally sought a school that had a prominent Asian population, but ended up coming to Gettysburg where the population of Asian students on campus was a tiny 1%. Needless to say, he was a little disappointed.

Despite his disappointment, Eric nevertheless started making connections and developing friendships with the other Asian students on campus, attending workshops and conferences, and getting ideas about how to **reach out to the other students on campus**. "I went to a conference called the [East Coast Asian American Student Union \(ECAASU\)](#)," says Eric, "and saw how all of these organizations were huge and part of other umbrella organizations. But, I thought, my school has fewer than 100 Asian students, so how do we start to get our word out and start a community here? Well, we already had the [Black Student Union \(BSU\)](#) and the [Latin American Student Association \(LASA\)](#) on campus, **why not make an Asian American Alliance?**"



So the brainstorming process began. Along with fellow students [Raksmeymony \(Rex\) Yin '14](#), [Cynthia Lee '15](#), and [Silvia Chon '16](#), Eric started drafting initial mission statements and goals for the club, working closely with the [Office of Intercultural Advancement](#). “One of the things we’re really interested in addressing,” says Eric, “is [how to bridge the gap between international and domestic students](#). Since the population of Asian students on campus is so small, we’re trying to face the gap and say that, while we have cultural differences, we definitely still face the same sorts of oppression.”

But Eric and the other leaders of ASA aren’t just interested in making an organization that’s about culture—they’re focused on making the group a sort of social and political forum that says “we have a right to be here, and we have a voice. [The stereotype for Asians is that they’re passive, small, and not vocalized. And we want to change that](#),” says Eric. “Especially if you look at the last 2012 election, for the first time ever, Asian Americans were a significant, recognized portion of the voting population. That’s a big deal and we need to encourage more social and political discussion there.”

About thirty students attended the ASA’s first social of the year and many people have expressed interest in it. It’s gaining more attention and hopes to be recognized by [Student Senate](#) next year as an official club on campus.

But Eric’s passions don’t only lie in developing and leading groups like the ASA—they also lie in the art of photography. “Right now, I’m probably most famous, or at least most recognized, as the visual communications intern taking pictures around campus.”

“My passion for photography is actually a lot more linked to something like my passion for ASA than you might think,” says Eric. “I think it’s absolutely awesome to be able to capture moments in people’s lives and photography’s taught me a lot of things—like how to slow down.”

“It’s so easy to just press a camera button and take a picture,” says Eric. “[But being a photographer really makes you slow down how you get from Point A to Point B. You notice things around you](#). When you walk, you don’t look down. Photography has taught me to slow down in other areas of my life, too. It changes your perspective.”

Recently, with the advent and success of ASA and also his continued work as a photographer, Eric has been facing the question of finding exactly where his passion lies. “The truth is that I’m really passionate about both, and love thinking of these two seemingly very separate things as actually very related.”

In an age of social media where photography is so often used as a way to spread messages about social justice, movements, and organizations, Eric’s dual passions for photography and groups like ASA that bridge gaps and assert political, social, and cultural voice [surely both have a place in his future as a fearless member of society, working for justice and art](#).

<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/11/01/fearless-eric-lee/>