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Fearless: Jessie Pierce

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Fearless: Jessie Pierce

Abstract

A vocal advocate for socio-environmental justice issues and a believer in the potential for social change in the developing world, Jessie Pierce '14 fearlessly travels, volunteers, and researches to promote awareness and change. Studying abroad last year for both semesters, spending one semester in Denmark and one in India, gave Jessie the interest, skills, and drive to continue pursuing a deeper understanding of these issues while at Gettysburg. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, socio-environmental change, NGO, Project Gaia, cookstoves, developing nations

Disciplines

African Studies | Civic and Community Engagement | Community-Based Research | Inequality and Stratification | International and Area Studies | Place and Environment | Politics and Social Change | Race and Ethnicity | Regional Sociology | Sociology

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

FEARLESS: JESSIE PIERCE

September 20, 2013

A vocal advocate for **socio-environmental justice** issues and a believer in the potential for **social change** in the developing world, **Jessie Pierce '14** fearlessly travels, volunteers, and researches to **promote awareness** and change. Studying abroad last year for both semesters, spending one semester in **Denmark** and one in **India**, gave Jessie the interest, skills, and drive to continue pursuing a **deeper understanding** of these issues while at Gettysburg.

Jessie has seemingly devoted her senior year to socio-environmental justice issues in serving with the [Painted Turtle Farm](#) and the [Gleaning Project of South Central PA](#), all the while using the research she conducted in India on the effectiveness of implementing ethanol stovetops in rural villages for her thesis.

Last winter, Jessie left for India a month before her program started in order to **conduct research** with two Gettysburg professors, [Dr. Monica Ogra](#) and [Dr. Rutherford Platt](#), for an NGO called Project Gaia Incorporated. [Project Gaia](#) is an **international organization** that works with **communities in developing nations** to provide **cookstoves and tools**.

“Energy-poor developing countries,” Jessie explains, “and especially **refugee camps and poor villages**, often have no other energy source than using **open fires in unventilated huts**. The smoke from that causes **respiratory issues**, and even collecting firewood for the fires can be dangerous—even deadly if the village is in a place with **tigers or elephants**. It also leads to **gender violence**, especially in refugee camps, since women are usually the ones collecting the wood and standing over the stoves.”

One of the innovative ways that Project Gaia has found to combat these issues is to introduce an **ethanol-fueled Clean Cook stove**. The device is small—about one square foot in size—is solely run by ethanol, and concentrates all the heat on one area of the stove top, making it easier for people to stay safe and not get burned. “I mean, really, I want one for my dorm,” says Jessie.





The stove also serves as a **pathway for socio-economic equality** in needing to install, find, or create local ethanol sources or distillery systems in the community. Jessie's research for her **Independent Study Project** abroad came from introducing a rural community to the Clean Cook stove and asking the villagers, after they'd cooked with it, whether they thought they'd like to replace fire-building with the ethanol stove. Jessie is using this research back on campus to **write her senior thesis** which she will be **presenting to Project Gaia** at the end of the year as a way for the organization to decide whether or not it will **expand its mission into India** starting with the same community Jessie visited.

While back on campus this year, Jessie has found ways to affect socio-environmental change by serving with the Painted Turtle Farm and the Gleaning Project. "The Gleaning Project," says Jessie, "involves harvesting **completely edible but skipped-over produce** on farms and orchards. When it's time to harvest, a farmer will only go through the orchard once, picking all of the ripened fruit, and leaving all the unripe fruit. The problem is that nobody ever goes back for the newly ripened, perfectly fine fruit a few weeks later."

The fruits and vegetables harvested with the Gleaning Project are then donated to organizations like the [Food Pantry](#) and [Campus Kitchens](#) as a way to provide **inexpensive (or free) healthy food** to people for whom it's normally too expensive to buy. "It's basically what I want to do with the rest of my life," says Jessie.

Whether abroad or at home, conducting research or gleaning, Jessie Pierce continues to fearlessly serve the community by **advocating for social change**, working with organizations that **tackle systemic problems in innovative ways**, and using her passion to **inspire those around her**.

<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/09/20/fearless-jessie-pierce/>