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You Can't Always Get What You Want

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You Can't Always Get What You Want

Abstract

My parents used to tell me that I wasn't entitled to anything—that I should be happy with what I have and not assume that I deserved something unless I had worked for it. Either way, entitlement is something that I've been thinking about a lot lately. So what do I think I'm entitled to? I'm not really sure. Maybe I'm entitled to making my own choices about what I'm going to do after graduation or having friends that treat me well. Maybe not. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, entitlement, discrimination, unfairness

Disciplines

Inequality and Stratification | Politics and Social Change | Social Psychology and Interaction | 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

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT

May 1, 2013

What are you entitled to?

A roof over your head?

The ability to drink underage?

A room at a resort for you and your friends?



My parents used to tell me that I wasn't entitled to anything—that I should be happy with what I have and not assume that I deserved something unless I had worked for it. Either way, entitlement is something that I've been thinking about a lot lately. So what do I think I'm entitled to? I'm not really sure. Maybe I'm entitled to making my own choices about what I'm going to do after graduation or having friends that treat me well. Maybe not.

In the past month, two things have happened that have made me think about entitlements.

Some of you may know about Senior Week. It's an age-old tradition that takes place during the week between finals and graduation. Most of the seniors go down to Myrtle Beach for the week to celebrate that they survived four years at Gettysburg College. Plans for most seniors have been underway since January. However, a wrench was thrown in these plans when one of the resorts decided that they weren't going to allow Gettysburg College students to stay there and cancelled a bunch of students' reservations. It seems that during Senior Week last year, a student drove a car through the wall of the hotel putting multiple customers and employees in danger. This was in addition to large numbers of evictions and noise complaints that had taken place that week and in years prior. Students were outraged by the so-called discrimination.

Almost everyone knows about the recent alcohol related incidents of the first year class. A few weekends ago, seven first years were transported to the hospital for overconsumption of alcohol. As a result, the Interfraternity Council decided that the fraternities were not going to allow first years into their parties for one weekend.

Cue: First-year freak out.

Apparently, this was completely unfair because the entire first year class shouldn't be punished for the actions of a few irresponsible people.

And I get it. I was actually one of the people whose Myrtle Beach reservations were cancelled because of the actions of the students who came before me. And I understand being frustrated by how easy it is for a few people to ruin a good thing.

However, the conversations surrounding both events all centered around unfairness, discrimination, and entitlement. That's an issue.

Let's talk about entitlement. What are we entitled to? Here's my take on it. Underage people are not entitled to drink themselves to near death every weekend on a college campus. Fraternities are not entitled to let first years into their parties, supplying them alcohol that they wouldn't otherwise have. Seniors in college are not entitled to rooms at a resort solely because they are offering to pay for them – resorts are private property, and their owners are entitled to refuse service to whomever they want.

I don't want people to think that I'm discounting their frustration at the situation because I'm really not trying to. You know what? I agree that it is completely unfair to have assumptions made about you because of a group that you belong to—and yes, it wasn't awesome that the resort waited two months before senior week to let us know our reservation had been canceled. It sucks to have the actions of someone in your group completely taint people's vision of everyone in that group.

Just ask the [girls of Delta Gamma](#) at University of Maryland. A lot of people have made assumptions about them because of that letter that one of their members wrote that went viral last week.

Or you could talk to the families of the large number of Sikhs who were killed after 9/11 solely because they were thought to be terrorists based on their clothing and the [color of their skin](#).

Discrimination of people because of the group in which they belong is not something that happens only to Gettysburg College students. And, if all that discrimination has done is keep you from underage drinking or staying at a specific resort for a week, then you're doing pretty well.

Don't get me wrong, it's great to see people at Gettysburg fired up about something, but do we realize how privileged we sound yelling about the unfairness of being kicked out of a hotel when the very real fight to end segregation is still alive in Selma, Alabama right now? Check out [RATCo's story](#) and see how they combat real discrimination in their town, where their schools are still segregated and there are still places that African Americans are not allowed to go.

So maybe it is unfair, and maybe people are entitled to a life free of discrimination...but let's be honest, that's not a reality. Instead of thinking solely about being discriminated against and what we're entitled to, maybe we should think about the fact that people make assumptions about people because of their groups everyday. And a lot of times the effect is much more severe and damaging than the things we're talking about here.

Looking for more epic shows of entitlement? Check out the [angry parents](#) of underage drinkers.

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<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/05/01/you-cant-always-get-what-you-want/>