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Fearless: Margaret Jennifer Johnson

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Fearless: Margaret Jennifer Johnson

Abstract

Fearless Margaret “Jennifer” Johnson arrived on campus in the fall of 2011, she wasted no time in looking for opportunities to get involved. During her first year, she joined the Gettysburg Gospel Choir as treasurer, rebuilt houses damaged by Hurricane Katrina during an Immersion trip with CPS, was a member of the BSU, and a Senate Rep for the NAACP. Her list of involvement in clubs and organizations continued to grow throughout her years on campus, however, she felt like a part of her was still absent on campus. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, African Heritage, GASA, Heston Summer Experience

Disciplines

African Languages and Societies | African Studies | Civic and Community Engagement

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](http://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: MARGARET JENNIFER JOHNSON

October 17, 2014



Fearless Margaret “Jennifer” Johnson arrived on campus in the fall of 2011, she wasted no time in looking for opportunities to get involved. During her first year, she joined the Gettysburg Gospel Choir as treasurer, rebuilt houses damaged by Hurricane Katrina during an Immersion trip with CPS, was a member of the BSU, and a Senate Rep for the NAACP. Her list of involvement in clubs and organizations continued to grow throughout her years on campus, however, she felt like a part of her was still absent on campus.

Jennifer loves talking about her home country of Nigeria, the cultures, foods, and its fashion, and she loves Africa in general. However, there was no club or space for her to share her culture on campus, a

sentiment she shared with a few other students from Africa and with African heritage. Together with these students, Jennifer spearheaded the efforts to reestablish the African Student Association back on campus. Their efforts paid off. In the fall of 2014, after a year of planning, meetings and endless email exchanges, the [Gettysburg African Student Association or GASA](#) was established, under her leadership. Jennifer shies away from taking credit for this accomplishment, commending the contributions of the other members of the exec board who worked tirelessly to bring this club to fruition. “It was very challenging, but so worth it,” she says “half of us were abroad in different places and so we had to rely on emails a lot as we worked towards getting this started.” Today, GASA’s biweekly meetings draw in a steady stream of students from diverse backgrounds.

One of GASA’s aims is to create a niche for students from Africa or African heritage on campus. However, Jennifer emphasizes that this does not mean in any way that it is only for these students. “I think that’s one of the challenges clubs like GASA, BSU, and ALLIES face. While we seek to create a community for our members, we have to constantly remind other students that this is not only for us. Its

open to all.” She reiterates that the primary mission of GASA is to raise awareness about the issues in Africa, good and bad, and educate the campus about Africa, its culture, and its people. “and especially challenging stereotypes and myths,” she jokes.

This theme of raising awareness and educating herself and others is one she notices runs through all her campus involvements. She has been actively involved in Center for Public Service since her first year, crediting them with providing her many opportunities: from participating in immersion trips every year, except her junior year when she was abroad, to serving as a Heston Intern in Kenya in 2013, to attending weekly dialogues, and now working as a Program Coordinator. As a member of the Diversity Peer Educators since its founding, Jennifer is constantly involved in facilitating discussions on campus with various student groups and clubs in order to educate the community about the various differences that exist on our campus and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Jennifer during her Heston Summer Experience at Kisumu Medical and Education Trust in Kenya.

Jennifer comments that she’s definitely happy about her involvements and how they have contributed to her personal growth. “I have grown a lot more confident over the years.” Her passion has also grown, adding that she strives everyday “to show why diversity on our campus is important and constantly tries to encourage others to do so as well.”

She sees GASA as one of her proudest accomplishments and is happy that it will serve as a lasting legacy for herself and all the other students who worked tirelessly to reestablish it on campus. She hopes

that their efforts will not go in vain and that the club continues long after she graduates. She is hopeful that this may not be the case as the weekly meeting and steady interest from students is slowly helping the club become more visible on campus. Jennifer and her GASA exec have many events planned, such as bead making classes, a movie night and potluck serving dishes from various African countries, and participating in the international fashion show where members will be showcasing outfits from different African countries.

Be fearless. Join Jennifer at a GASA. It meets biweekly on Thursdays in Glatfelter 103 at 7pm.