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Judgy Eyes

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Judgy Eyes

Abstract

I can feel them watching me, examining me. I try not to look directly at them for fear that they might see right through me.

For so long I've walked amongst them and have tried to somewhat assimilate into their culture. But even then, I'm certain they feel something off about me, something that just doesn't fit. And they'd be right to assume that, because I *am* different from so many of them. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, sexuality

Disciplines

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies

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

JUDGY EYES

October 27, 2014



I can feel them watching me, examining me. I try not to look directly at them for fear that they might see right through me.

For so long I've walked amongst them and have tried to somewhat assimilate into their culture. But even then, I'm certain they feel something off about me, something that just doesn't fit. And they'd be right to assume that, because I *am* different from so many of them.

I'm a gay student at Gettysburg; I am afraid of what the ramifications are for outing myself in an extremely public setting. Of course my friends know about me as well as another extended web of people, including some that I don't even know. For a while now I've been concerned about what might happen if everyone knew. Although I feel comfortable in the community I surround myself with, I do not feel safe in the widespread Gettysburg community.

I've known I was gay since I was about twelve or thirteen years old, but I didn't have a healthy coming out process. Instead, I was thrown out. I entrusted my secret to a few people at school, but I shouldn't have. Within only a couple of days, my entire grade knew. I could see it in their eyes. I could hear it in their silences when I walked past them. Soon they only talked about me, rather than to me. Their judgment hollowed me, and I walked around the school with a horrid emptiness. The hurt throbbed in places I did not even know it could.

It was a long healing process filled with many relapses, but after a few months I started to feel better. It took years for me to cope with what happened and the dark place that I went to. Because I have had these experiences, I have become an expert at self-preservation. I avoid any situations that might make me vulnerable, because I know exactly what can happen if it doesn't go my way.

When I arrived at Gettysburg, I had the opportunity to have a fresh start. A lot of times, that can be a positive, but for me, it was also very hard. I had to learn how to come out to new people and hope that they would accept me in spite of it. It is always hit or miss, and to avoid the possibility that they might ostracize me because of my sexuality, I sometimes stay quiet. I don't let them know that I'm a little bit different.

I won't hold my girlfriend's hand in public because I'm still afraid of their stares and the things they might say. And when we do, most times it is at night so the darkness can conceal us a bit and I don't feel as nervous. That security was recently shaken when we were lying on Memorial Field, stargazing. Three male students approached us and started giving us a hard time. Standing over us, they started making jokes about us having sex on the field, which was not the case at all. I was furious, but more than that, I was scared. Any words I might say could bring on retaliation. And I was too afraid to find out. After my girlfriend told them to go away a number of times, they finally left, joking about us as they did.

In that moment, I had no idea what might happen and it was the first time since being here that I've felt genuinely concerned for my safety. I have always been so hesitant about openly expressing my sexuality here because I often feel that I am on a very homogeneous campus that sometimes limits diversity. I also understand that being in south-central Pennsylvania is more conservative than my home; people here are more likely to react negatively to seeing same-sex relationships.

Although I've grown so much over the years and have combated many of my insecurities, I am still not immune. I made peace with myself a long time ago, but I still bear this burden of discerning if I can be fully accepted as a lesbian at Gettysburg. I am stronger than I was many years ago, but in the back of my mind I wonder that if I put it all out there and came completely out of the closet, that any judgment and negative reactions might once again unravel me.

Having these fears is exhausting. I don't want to carry this weight anymore. I don't want to care what other people think about me and have it impact how I live my life. I've spent enough time worrying about what people might say. I don't want to be afraid anymore.

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Editor