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Fearless Friday: Ja'nai Harris

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Fearless Friday: Ja'nai Harris

Abstract

Ja'Nai Harris '16 is a fearless advocate for equity, diversity, and justice here at Gettysburg. Her efforts have been instrumental in planning several important events on campus including the #BlackLivesMatter vigil held on Tuesday, December 9th and the Ferguson discussion held on December 2nd. Through her work as a Diversity Peer Educator (DPE) and Co-president of the Black Student Union (BSU), she has used her leadership to spread positivity, activism and social change. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, equity, diversity, justice, Black Lives Matter, Diversity Peer Educator (DPE), Black Student Union (BSU)

Disciplines

African American Studies | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies

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 FRIDAY: JA'NAI HARRIS

December 12, 2014



Ja'Nai Harris '16 is a fearless advocate for equity, diversity, and justice here at Gettysburg. Her efforts have been instrumental in planning several important events on campus including the #BlackLivesMatter vigil held on Tuesday, December 9th and the Ferguson discussion held on December 2nd. Through her work as a Diversity Peer Educator (DPE) and Co-president of the Black Student Union (BSU), she has used her leadership to spread positivity, activism and social change.

As a Diversity Peer Educator, a position she has held since her first year, her goal is to spread diversity and equity on campus. As a member of the DPEs, she is instrumental in planning programming that brings conversations about diversity and social justice to the forefront on campus. "We have training every semester," she explains, "we learn about bystander intervention, and how to deal with various issues. I feel like I've grown as a person and have learned how to be an activist on campus." These trainings have helped and encouraged Ja'Nai in her role as a DPE and as an advocate by providing her the necessary tools to engage and facilitate activities and discussions about these issues. This semester, Ja'Nai and her fellow DPEs focused their attention on working with Greek life. Through a series of sessions she helped facilitate, Greek life members participated in activities and engaged in open and honest dialogue about race, sexuality, and gender here on our campus.

Ja'Nai has also been an active member of the BSU throughout her years at Gettysburg. She is now the co-president and has been the driving force behind much of their planning. She, in conjunction with other BSU members and officers, reached out to the campus community to join the recent Ferguson discussion and vigil. This forum provided an outlet for many individuals to talk about systemic issues of racism and police brutality and voice their personal opinions. The December 9th vigil was a show of solidarity and unity to recognize the lives lost. Both events were very well attended and President Janet Morgan Riggs and Pastor Donnell were on hand to address the attendees at the vigil. "It got very emotional- we raised

awareness, showed that we care, and demonstrated that it impacts us as a whole and as a community,” said Ja’Nai.

As Co-president of the BSU, she would like to encourage more people to get involved and check out their meetings and events. The BSU holds biweekly meetings in Breidenbaugh. At these meetings, they talk about a variety of topics, some light-hearted while others more serious. Recently, they discussed the criminalization of black males and the judicial system. She is looking forward to the next BSU events which will be held throughout the course of Black History Month in February. They have plans for many activities and events during the month, such as a Harlem Renaissance night and movie screenings, among other things. “These are 28 days that matter,” she says, and she hopes these events will help spread more cultural awareness on campus.

Ja’Nai continues to be a powerful force for spreading awareness, advocating for change, and challenging stereotypes and norms on our campus. Surge recognizes her fearless efforts as an important factor in creating and moving towards a more inclusive and culturally aware campus community. She hopes to carry her passion for activism with her far beyond Gettysburg as she prepares to study abroad next semester.