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White People Tears

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White People Tears

Abstract

Many students on the Gettysburg College campus were posed the question: what would your reaction be if the OU SAE scandal had occurred here?

By and far, people responded: Unsurprised.

Talk about high expectations. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, OU SAE scandal, Greek Organizations, racism, prejudice, xenophobia, Eurocentrism, colonialism, Africana Studies

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement | Higher Education | Race and Ethnicity | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Social Psychology and Interaction | Sociology of Culture

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

WHITE PEOPLE TEARS

April 6, 2015

Many students on the Gettysburg College campus were posed the question: what would your reaction be if the OU SAE scandal had occurred here?



By and far, people responded: Unsurprised.

Talk about high expectations.

I'm under the opinion that every white person added to a group ups the chances of "racist scandals" by a considerable percent. There's a tipping point. In longstanding institutions of predominantly white members, (i.e. Greek organizations, or, you know, colleges) if something racist *hasn't* happened, I'm surprised.

All white people commit racist acts, a fact that white people love to avoid.

Xenophobia, ethnocentrism, prejudice: these aren't inherently white ideas. But in a globalized world, the reach of Eurocentrism and colonialism and a legacy of such discriminatory actions and episteme have created the monster that is institutional racism. The processes and policies of government, education and religious institutions have been designed to benefit whites. Speaking as a white person to all the other white people out there, let me tell you that we are raised within racism. We have been brought up to believe in our superiority and we have the structural power of the institutions to carry out systematic discriminatory practices.

I have unintentionally committed racist acts, and I surely will again. I thoughtlessly referred to mixed-race people that "pass" as having been "diluted." That was a deeply racist comment. What I meant to say did not matter in the face of what I did say. I was rightly called out for it. I cannot afford to speak thoughtlessly because my whiteness puts me in a position where my words and actions maintain the unequal power system. I am conditioned by my environment to have snap-quick thoughts that disturb me as they form in my mind.

Thankfully, I have counter-conditioned myself to recognize these thoughts and internally disprove them, labeling them as racist, untrue, violent, dehumanizing. I'm simultaneously a disobedient dog and the exasperated owner with a water sprayer. More people should visualize themselves this way.

As an Africana Studies student and a member of several social justice dialogues on campus, I have a lot of counter-conditioning. It's what some of us call education. And as much as I learn from my teachers and mentors, listening to nervous white people is probably one of the most helpful parts of these discussions.

A predominant issue white people experience in these discussions is [fear of how we are perceived](#) (hilariously ironic, I know.) White people are more scared to be called racist, to have their behavior pointed out as problematic, than they are to confront themselves and their beliefs. As often seen (SAE's letter or the Interfraternity Council's in the *Gettysburgian*, as an example), we also like to categorize ourselves as different from "real racists," denouncing "their" actions as "intolerable" without ever analyzing our own. This only exacerbates and maintains injustice by distracting us from understanding how we *all* perpetuate racism in our society. There are not "good" white people and "bad" people, only those maintaining the status quo and those making active attempts at change.

White people have the privilege to ignore race, to stay insulated from the big scary [racism problem](#). That is until a bunch of drunk fratbros sing about lynching their black peers if they even dare to penetrate the white sanctity of wholesome brotherhood. *Then* every white person has to suddenly remind themselves and each other that they aren't like that until the topic dies out of the media and the ripple goes away and we maintain the status quo of inequality. Controversy only sells for so long.

I have no new genius solution to end racism. What I can tell you is saying that "we aren't like that" isn't good enough. Ad nauseam. [Take it from our peers](#), racism is all around us. Forgive me if I'm underwhelmed by the responses of SAE and the Interfraternity Council in the *Gettysburgian*. To me, it just sounded like a lot of [white distancing rhetoric](#).

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Editor