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The Weight of Sarcasm

Meghan E. O'Donnell
Gettysburg College

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The Weight of Sarcasm

Abstract

I push the door open slowly, hoping that I've gotten to class early enough that there aren't a lot of people in the room yet to look at me when I enter. As I walk to my seat, I put my bag down and grab a notebook out of it quickly. Then I spend the next ten minutes before class readjusting my shirt, whichever one I'd decided was most "slimming" that day, and pulling it away from my body so that it hides my stomach as best as possible. If I can, I'll put books right in front of me. I cross my legs tightly and fold my arms in an attempt to shrink myself into a smaller body. I don't want to take up any space. [excerpt]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, shame, insecurity, body image, stereotyping, societal discrimination

Disciplines

Communication | Social Psychology and Interaction

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

THE WEIGHT OF SARCASM

September 14, 2015



I push the door open slowly, hoping that I've gotten to class early enough that there aren't a lot of people in the room yet to look at me when I enter. As I walk to my seat, I put my bag down and grab a notebook out of it quickly. Then I spend the next ten minutes before class readjusting my shirt, whichever one I'd decided was most "slimming" that day, and pulling it away from my body so that it hides my stomach as best as possible. If I can, I'll put books right in front of me. I cross my legs tightly and fold my arms in an attempt to shrink myself into a smaller body. I don't want to take up any space.

Every day, in each of my classes, I perform this little routine. I've done it for as long as I can remember. Sometimes I'm even so distracted by making sure that I'm as inconspicuous as possible that I miss the first bits of what my professor is saying. I struggle to focus until the lecture begins, because until then my mind stays preoccupied with the task of hiding everything about my body that I can't stand (which, to give you a hint, is quite a lot). So I sit, fidgeting, and I wait anxiously for class discussion to become so engaging that I am temporarily given an hour-long refuge from the worry that's constantly bouncing around in my head. But once that hour's gone, it all comes back.

I spend so much of my day consumed by thoughts of weight, space, and size. When I go to dinner, I walk around grabbing food and thinking people are staring at my tray trying to see if I fit their stereotypical opinion of a fat person who eats chicken fingers, fries, and a soda for every meal. I check the weather every morning with the express purpose of determining whether it's cool enough yet for me to wear pants so that nobody has to see my legs. I run from any picture that's being taken because I don't want this

body, this thing I detest, to be preserved in a photo for the rest of time and jeered at. I practically run out of Servo after dropping off my tray so that no one at the tables can see me long enough to notice what I look like. I can't wait to be able to go back to my room after a long day and shut the door, knowing that I don't have to be seen by anyone until the next day and that I have a few hours to devote to something purposeful rather than to making mental lists of all the things I hate about my body.

That's not the sad part, though.

The sad part of this all is that I thought I'd become a much more confident person over the years. I'd assumed that because I was able to give a speech in front of a class without much of a problem, or because I could speak assertively to someone in an interview or during a meeting, that I had grown to be okay with myself. I thought I'd gotten past the period in my life when I thought my physical appearance dictated everything about me. But when I saw [Nicole Arbour's](#) video last week, "Dear Fat People," I realized that I hadn't become a confident person at all. When I'd been assertive in the past, it had been because my mind had been the focus instead of my body.

I watched Arbour as she spent six minutes promoting ignorance and negativity and every time she said "fat people" I heard my own name. She's not a famous comedian who's speaking the truth that nobody wants to hear and she didn't accidentally let her bias slip. Nicole Arbour made a purposeful video for which she refuses to apologize and which she fails to realize was incredibly hurtful. With statements like "[fat shaming isn't a thing, fat people made that up](#)" and "that's a race card, with no race," Arbour became the poster-child for people who don't understand a thing about what it means to be alienated from society because of some part of your identity. And she spread her ignorance all over the Internet, strengthening the roots of discrimination in our society.

So, Nicole Arbour, I hope you're not naïve enough to think that what you said wasn't problematic. Because you just single-handedly ensured that I'll spend the next ten years asking myself the same question every day, in a voice laced with hatred and anger: "God, why are you so fucking fat?"

Meghan O'Donnell '18
Blog Manager