



9-23-2015

We'll See You Tomorrow

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Garnick, Devin N., "We'll See You Tomorrow" (2015). *SURGE*. 215.
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We'll See You Tomorrow

Abstract

On July 14th, 2015, Hannah climbed to the top of Half Dome, a stunning rock formation that rises thousands of feet above the valley floor at Yosemite National Park. She had talked about wanting to climb to the top of this breathtaking cliff for years and frequently mentioned that she had to tackle this feat “before she died.” I was amazed and proud to see photos of her impressive accomplishment, and wondered what she might achieve next. On July 21st, 2015, Hannah committed suicide. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, Yosemite National Park, suicide, depression, mental health, social stigma

Disciplines

Mental and Social Health | 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

WE'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW

September 23, 2015

On July 14th, 2015, Hannah climbed to the top of Half Dome, a stunning rock formation that rises thousands of feet above the valley floor at Yosemite National Park. She had talked about wanting to climb to the top of this breathtaking cliff for years and frequently mentioned that she had to tackle this feat "before she died." I was amazed and proud to see photos of her impressive accomplishment, and wondered what she might achieve next. On July 21st, 2015, Hannah committed suicide.



There is no greater pain than losing a loved one. But there is a different, harrowing pain when you feel that something could have been done to prevent this loss. Every day, I think about Hannah's smile and how it masked her sadness. I wonder how often her breakdowns were interpreted as school stress. I think of all the times I told her she was crazy when she worried about her weight, intelligence, or other insecurities.

Hannah's depression was no secret to me. Having experienced some depression myself throughout high school and college, I believe that I provided her with an empathetic and supportive audience. I was one of few that she called in the middle of the night in tears when she couldn't escape the suffocating pressure of school and the paralyzing feeling of worthlessness. She made me promise that I wouldn't tell her family or friends for fear that her mental status would be interpreted as weakness. After many months of my begging and her refusal to see a counselor, Hannah began meeting with a mental health professional through her university.

Over time, the 3,000 miles that separated Gettysburg and Los Angeles seemed to grow larger each day and our school responsibilities became more intense. My own mental health was questionable during this time, and I was so consumed with my own issues that I wasn't tuned in to hers. I was unaware that she had discontinued her sessions with her counselor. By the time any of us had begun to understand the gravity of her situation, she was already gone.

Even two months after her death, Hannah's mental health is rarely mentioned. When it is discussed, it is whispered and censored. We as a society are afraid to acknowledge mental illness. We ignore it, hide it, and pretend it doesn't exist. We forget that mental illness is an illness and should be treated as such. You aren't crazy. You aren't weak. You are sick and you can, and deserve, to be helped.

The stigma surrounding mental illness is unacceptable. People are suffering. People are dying. Why do we continue to shame them when we should be supporting them? Seeing a doctor when you have cancer is not shameful. Why should depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder be any different?

I don't blame myself. There is no one person that is at fault for what happened to Hannah. However, we as a society can do better than this. We owe it to our peers, our loved ones, and ourselves to make some serious and important changes. We owe it to Hannah and all of those who suffer in silence.

If you are one of millions of Americans dealing with mental illness, you are not alone. We are listening.

Counseling sessions are free and confidential at Gettysburg College. You can find more information by visiting the Counseling Services website or by stopping by the campus Health Center.

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing suicidal thoughts, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1 (800) 273-8255.

*Names have been changed.

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