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Fearless Friday: Ashley Fernandez

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Fearless Friday: Ashley Fernandez

Abstract

This week, SURGE is delighted to honor Ashley Fernandez '16 for Fearless Friday!

Ashley is a senior at Gettysburg and is majoring in Political Science and Public Policy. When asked where she's from, Ashley usually responds "Manhattan." When most people think of Manhattan, they think of Times Square or the Empire State Building. Ashley, however, clarifies she's from an area of Manhattan called Washington Heights, or "Little Dominican Republic," which is named as such for its large Latino community. A Latina herself, Ashley definitely felt the change between Little DR and Gettysburg College. At predominantly white college like Gettysburg, she knew she wanted to form connections with students of color, but also did not hesitate to form connections with students from all over campus. Anyone that has the pleasure of interacting with Ashley immediately feels comfortable, happy, and listened-to. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, Fearless Friday, social justice, Latino-American, inclusion, Multicultural Student Coordinator, diversity

Disciplines

Chicana/o Studies | Latina/o 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: ASHLEY FERNANDEZ

October 2, 2015



This week, SURGE is delighted to honor Ashley Fernandez '16 for Fearless Friday!

Ashley is a senior at Gettysburg and is majoring in Political Science and Public Policy. When asked where she's from, Ashley usually responds "Manhattan." When most people think of Manhattan, they think of Times Square or the Empire State Building. Ashley, however, clarifies she's from an area of Manhattan called Washington Heights, or "Little Dominican Republic," which is named as such for its large Latino community. A Latina herself, Ashley definitely felt the change between Little DR and Gettysburg College. At predominantly white college like Gettysburg, she knew she wanted to form connections with students of color, but also did not hesitate to form connections with students from all over campus. Anyone that has the pleasure of interacting with Ashley immediately feels comfortable, happy, and listened-to.

Her incredible ability to listen and make others feel important is invaluable. It shines through in her role as the Multicultural Student Coordinator for the Admissions Office. Ashley and her coworker, Jasmine, are responsible for coordinating campus visits for prospective students of color that come to Gettysburg through various programs. Ashley helps coordinate day visits for students, sets up information sessions and class visits for them, schedules interviews, and more in order to make the students' visit the best it could be.

With this job, Ashley is able to not only talk about Gettysburg in a good light, but she's also able to have honest conversations about the campus with prospective students. Her innate skill of connecting with

people makes it much easier to help prospective students of color that come to a predominantly white college feel like they can ask real questions that they wouldn't ask an admissions counselor. Questions that have been asked of Ashley are things such as "Have you experienced racism here?" or "Have you been the only non-white person in a class?" and most importantly, "How do you cope with being at such a white college?"

While these questions are certainly loaded, Ashley assures these prospective students that while Gettysburg is definitely not as multicultural as Little DR, Harlem, or downtown Philly, there is much to gain from this school. Not only is the diversity of Gettysburg's community continually growing, but it's also an environment where discussions about this divide can be had; it's simply up to the students to start these conversations. Furthermore, Ashley reminds the students that if they attend Gettysburg or any college, that it's vital that they forge their own path. If the prospective student goes to a large state-school, a different predominantly white college, or a historically black college, the focus should be on leaving a positive and impactful legacy, not simply getting a degree.

Her motivation to leave a positive legacy actually comes from a place of feeling fearful. Ashley says, "I wouldn't say I'm particularly fearless; on the contrary, I'm actually full of fears. It's the fear of being forgotten, routine, and mediocre that keeps me motivated. It's the fear that I would come to a place like Gettysburg or anywhere and not make it better than how I found it. There is a saying that I keep near my bed that says 'Live Life With Intention and Be Bold' and these are two practices that I'm scared of not doing." In so many ways, this fear is what makes Ashley such an extraordinary leader. And in working to surmount these fears, she has made a wonderful impact on the Gettysburg community.

Ashley is an amazing leader because she's wholly dedicated to inspiring others. Yes, she's able to articulate the great potential of Gettysburg in terms of building a diverse and inclusive community, but more importantly, she's able to let students of color know that no matter where they go to further their education, they should always keep in mind to participate in clubs, make connections with all kinds of people, and become a leader as well. While she is unsure where she will land after graduation, she knows it will be working with students of color to serve as a living example of what it is to be a student of color that forged her own experience in the mostly white realm of higher education. No matter what, her phenomenal people skills will help her wherever she goes.

Thanks for all your hard work, Ashley!