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Fearless Friday: Laila Mufty

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Fearless Friday: Laila Mufty

Abstract

In today's Fearless Friday, Surge would like to honor the work of Laila Mufty '18. Laila is a sophomore from the Bay Area in California and is majoring in Environmental Studies. Currently, she is one of the CPS Program Coordinators with Big Brothers Big Sisters and is the Immersion Project Leader for the New Orleans trip in May focused on the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast. In addition to her work with CPS, Laila participates in multiple cultural organizations on campus and has volunteered with El Centro, Painted Turtle Farm and Casa de la Cultura. Laila has also written and edited for Surge in the past. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Center for Public Service, Bay Area, college, diversity, Education, environmental justice, environmental studies, Fearless Friday, first generation, food justice, Gettysburg College, health, leadership, Muslims, Race, religion, Social Justice, Town Hall Meeting

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement | Environmental Education | Environmental Health and Protection | Environmental Studies | Inequality and Stratification | Islamic Studies | Race and Ethnicity | Religion

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: LAILA MUFTY

April 22, 2016

In today's Fearless Friday, Surge would like to honor the work of Laila Mufty '18. Laila is a sophomore from the Bay Area in California and is majoring in Environmental Studies. Currently, she is one of the CPS Program Coordinators with Big Brothers Big Sisters and is the Immersion Project Leader for the New Orleans trip in May focused on the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast. In addition to her work with CPS, Laila participates in multiple cultural organizations on campus and has volunteered with El Centro, Painted Turtle Farm and Casa de la Cultura. Laila has also written and edited for Surge in the past.



Most notably, Laila has been involved with a group of student activists who joined together to take action on the issues of race on our campus. This group organized the Town Hall Meeting in January, a significant step towards putting race in the middle of campus discussions. The group's work has not ended with the Town Hall, however. They continue to advocate for visibility, awareness, and cultural respect of students of color, and meet with administrators often to talk through current problems on campus that impede these goals.

Although she stands in solidarity with the students of color on campus, she also acknowledges that holistically her identity is not largely represented within the group and on Gettysburg campus in general, which is why she continues to work on crafting programming that makes Gettysburg inclusive for all students. Next year, along with Nene Sy, she is working on bringing a new organization to campus centered on the experiences of Muslim Students. The group, the Muslim Educational and Cultural Association (MECA), is focused on making campus more inclusive for Muslim students. Among the plans that Laila is developing is the creation of a house designated for Muslim students, with sufficient space for prayer and an emphasis on a substance-free space that also respects the dietary needs of its residents. MECA also plans to meet with Servo to discuss the implementation of more vegetarian options for students, but specifically wants to get clearer labeling on food made with pork products.

Laila was inspired to be a leader on campus in part because of her hometown. Activism abounds in the Bay Area, so in a sense, Laila feels that the work she advances here is just a continuation of the community involvement of her home. In a larger sense, she is also inspired by the fact that she is a first-generation college student, first-generation American and a woman of color. Laila says that as a minority at a PWI, she often feels that she must work twice as hard as her white peers to achieve the same recognition. She is committed to ensuring that Gettysburg will be a safe and inclusive environment for all students with diverse backgrounds.

In the future, Laila plans to take her passion for environmental issues and focus on addressing food justice and environmental racism. It is important to her to show the intersectionality between social justice issues and environmental issues. Last summer, she even did research with the UC Benioff Children's Hospital to analyze the connections between cholesterol levels in children and their geographic location. She found that often, those with the highest levels lived in areas with few grocery stores and limited opportunities to buy fresh produce. From there, she was able to identify food deserts and work with local organizations to provide access to healthy, fresh food. This is the kind of research and the kind of work that Laila hopes to continue in the future.

Thank you, Laila, for all of the wonderful work you are doing!

<https://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2016/04/22/fearless-friday-laila-mufty/>