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This May Mean Doing Things a Bit Differently from Here on Out

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Abstract

OccupyPennHall failed.

Embittered by a failed election and its hateful aftermath, students parked themselves in protest. The act precluded and followed an irruption of a faculty meeting. Therein, sitting professors tuned into pleas for student-teacher solidarity. Protesters then took to the campus fulcrum and braced themselves for a sneak-peak of winter. The supposed movement was spur-of-the-moment: a visceral stillness in the wake of an absurd, precarious life. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Diversity, Gender, Race, Sexuality, student activism, Uncategorized

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement

Comments

Surge is a student blog at Gettysburg College where systematic 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 truths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

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February 2, 2017



OccupyPennHall failed.

Embittered by a failed election and its hateful aftermath, students parked themselves in protest. The act precluded and followed an irruption of a faculty meeting. Therein, sitting professors tuned into pleas for student-teacher solidarity. Protesters then took to the campus fulcrum and braced themselves for a sneak-peak of winter. The supposed movement was spur-of-the-moment: a visceral stillness in the wake of an absurd, precarious life.

Time often tempers reaction into melancholia, grudges, and misunderstandings. Some lambast the monochromatic occupation; they see the stillness as a break from the history of diverse student movement. Few suck their teeth at the administration's convivial response to stationary dissent. Many fail to perceive how sitting paves the way for future protest. OccupyPennHall thus appears as an aberration, a kind of anachronistic event. Yet it too holds its spot in college history.

As a result, OccupyPennHall teaches...

Present action must acknowledge its link to past struggle. Students of Color strengthened the platform for all future student protests in '15-'16. Sleepless, deliberative nights yielded a unifying, political momentum, and Gettysburg's POC earned many of the administrative affordances they demanded. The Town Hall event and the various demonstrations of '15-'16 carved the space for students to sit in protest. Attending to that history is necessary as it enables the crucial principle of all future protests: solidarity.

LGBTQIA+ and Women predominated the Penn Hall steps. Queerphobia and Misogyny are key issues afflicting the Gettysburg community. Fall's climate assessment confirmed what everyone knew already: sexual violence and exclusion pervade the college community. Their ubiquity gnaws. Majority of the campus population endures

these problems day-by-day. Testament to these issues, an event at the Women's and LGBTQA Resource Center largely provoked the Penn Hall protest.

These marginal communities must intersect in the form of politics. Not Standing for Hate™ is a political maneuver. It is an embodied acknowledgement of the everyday plight of many Gettysburgians, a suffering that echoes (in varying degrees) the racialized, sexualized, gendered, and financialized tyrannies that emerged long before Gettysburg even existed. Student organizing must focus on these various vulnerabilities. If you exist in the Gettysburg community, others' suffering is never "not your problem." In fact, in all likelihood, you contributed to the problem; silence in the face of suffering is complicity.

how Roses grow from Concrete.

We need each other. Gettysburg fucking sucks. It fucking blows to get out of bed and walk strange lands where slurs may fly from cars; where misgendering is a daily experience; where sexual violence lurks in your own circles. We pay to play in this place where debt debilitates and organizes all life. Everything compounds: your sport, your club position, your service, your mental health, your goddamn grades. Add a helping of everyday violence, and you find yourself motionless / lying on your bed / wondering what the fuck is the point (and) how the fuck can you care for yourself in a world where your parent(s) may lose a job or wake up in an ICE detention facility.

We need each other. Student organizing, in the foreseeable future, may not imply a list of demands to the administration. However, it will definitely entail coalition building. Students of all affinity groups have to show up for each other and have each other's backs. We need to collaborate and build with one another. We need to use our resources and acknowledge our exposures. These may seem like abstract charges; in truth, they merely orient our work. Why do we have events, demonstrations, and clubs? To maintain relevance? If that priority overwhelms the goals of intra-community building, bridge building, and coalition building; we may need to re-assess our work. Do our efforts still sustain us? And how can work that does not have community in mind even come close to sustaining us in a world that will likely worsen?

We need each other. This isn't some headass hope for harmony that abjures difference. We need to echo one another – forming a chain reaction – a cacophony that denies ignorance. We need to help each other survive this shit– academically, financially, psychologically, emotionally. And, we need to acknowledge our past to make moves in the present that calls forth brighter futures. In doing so, we unlearn our corrosive individualisms, sectarianisms, and self-conceits. Through solidarity, we multiply our shout + our silence; our movement + our stillness.

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