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Fearless Friday: Chelsea Paige Johnson

Abstract

In this week's edition of Fearless Friday, SURGE is honoring Chelsea Paige Johnson for her sociological research on race and socioeconomic status among first year students. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

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Disciplines

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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 untruths.

SURGE

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

FEARLESS FRIDAY: CHELSEA PAIGE JOHNSON

March 10, 2017



In this week's edition of Fearless Friday, SURGE is honoring Chelsea Paige Johnson for her sociological research on race and socioeconomic status among first year students.

Chelsea, originally from Washington D.C., is a current senior Sociology major and Africana Studies Minor. She is a member of the Black Student Union, a former Gettysburg College cheerleader, an Admissions Tour Guide

Ambassador, as well as a Senior Multicultural Recruitment Intern at the Admissions Office. Additionally, she works as an Office Assistant for the Africana Studies Department.

Chelsea is committed to helping affect change on campus by working to increase diversity among the student body. Chelsea says, "I sought out Admissions and became involved with hosting prospective students of color from college preparatory programs." She decided to become a tour guide and over night host so that students of color would have the opportunity to see people that looked like them when they visited the college and to assure them that they would not be alone if they were to attend Gettysburg College.

Chelsea describes her own college transition as being one of great difficulty. Coming from a major city, she struggled to adapt to life in a rural area largely due to race and her socioeconomic status. Chelsea became interested in researching the transition process when she came to realize that she was not the only student of color experiencing a struggle. After beginning work on her own, Chelsea was encouraged by Professor Brent Harger to further pursue her interest, and she set forth on a journey to research race, socioeconomic status, and how it impacts one's transition into the Gettysburg community.

Chelsea says, "For the most part, students of color are happy at the school and value the academic rigor, study abroad opportunities, and relationships with caring and helpful faculty." She does, however, notice the endless challenges posed by microaggressions that make the transition difficult outside of the classroom, and wonders at what point will the challenges "become enough to make them leave the school?"

In March of 2016, Chelsea began her research. Over that summer, she began researching on campus and, throughout the 2016-17 academic year, she conducted 17 interviews (30 minutes to 1 hour per interview). In February of 2017, Chelsea presented her research at the Eastern Sociological Society Conference in Philadelphia. She is now working on her Honors Thesis and preparing to present her findings at "Celebration" and to the Sociology Department.

Chelsea is continuously motivated by her friends who have managed to make the most of their experiences here at Gettysburg College. She is also motivated by her desire to help make the Gettysburg College experience easier and more enjoyable for future students of color. Additionally, she values her faith, which has helped to uplift her even when she is not feeling her best.

After graduation, Chelsea dreams of exploring her passion for law and law enforcement by creating a "restorative justice program for African Americans in Washington DC."

We wish you the best of luck, Chelsea!