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Frats and Faggots

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Frats and Faggots

Abstract

I'm a flamboyant gay man. I was at FIJI on Springfest Friday and some brother over the microphone called his friend (presumably a fellow brother) a faggot. This moment changed a lot for me in terms of my relationship to my own identity as an other, my relationship to the word "faggot," and my relationship to the identities I surround myself with in frat basements. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Gettysburg College, FIJI, Fraternities, Greek Life, Homophobia, Homosexuality

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://www.gettysburg.edu/) 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

FRATS AND FAGGOTS

May 2, 2018

I'm a flamboyant gay man. I was at FIJI on Springfest Friday and some brother over the microphone called his friend (presumably a fellow brother) a faggot. This moment changed a lot for me in terms of my relationship to my own identity as an other, my relationship to the word "faggot," and my relationship to the identities I surround myself with in frat basements.

I have, throughout my time at Gettysburg, situated myself in a community that seems to, for the most part, accept my identity and accompanying mannerisms. Sure, I feel othered in that community sometimes, but it is never due to explicit actions taken by others. Mostly, my community makes me feel like my sexual orientation is a small background part of my identity. So, I feel that way too. This moment at FIJI changed this for me. I felt the label "flamboyant gay man" be pulled from all corners of my body where it previously laid there dispersed and diluted to my chest and concentrated into a weight I had to carry. I felt othered.

I love the idea of reclaiming words that were once used to oppress. Even before the incident, I called myself a faggot. But I hadn't truly felt the implications of the word.

I haven't been bullied for being gay since accepting myself and coming out of the closet in high school. At college, I heard a then-first semester first-year call something faggy. I was disappointed but I didn't feel attacked or endangered. It happened in my house and everyone looked at him weird, judging him for his homophobia. This was the first time I heard someone call someone else a faggot in a space that wasn't safe for me. It wasn't the action itself that scared me. It was the implication that since he was willing and able to say that over a microphone without consequence, he could actually verbally or physically abuse me without anyone trying to stop him.

I will probably still continue to reclaim the word faggot. But I will do so with a better understanding of the significance of words as indicators for further action.

After the incident, I found myself reflecting more on my struggles with party culture as compared to the cisgender women that have made up my recent groups at some of the riskier frats. Both of us have to police our actions at the FIJIs of college campuses. Women have to watch their drinks and make sure

they aren't dancing in a way that attracts unwanted contact. As a precaution, I feel I have to watch every move I make to make sure that I am blending in, passing for straight in that moment. I tend to move my hips and shake my ass a lot when I dance. I have to consciously stop myself from doing this and observe the surrounding straight guys, taking bits and pieces of their postures and movements, creating a collage that decorates the temporary closet I build around myself. But the women I am with support one another from an unspoken understanding coming from shared fears. They watch one another's drinks and build one another up to not care about how they dance. I don't have that kind of understanding with anyone I am with. I'm alone in my specific brand of body policing and hearing the word faggot confirmed my worst fears that I already felt were true. This body policing is necessary.

In conclusion:

1. FIJI has homophobic brothers.
2. I'm still proud to be a faggot.
3. Slurs themselves can't harm me, but the people who say them can.
4. If you are trying to blend in with straight guys, know that they don't dance with their hips or asses.
5. As othered peoples, we should continue to become aware of the different struggles of each identity and use this knowledge to support them in their journeys towards love and safety.

XOXO,
Gossip Gay