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## The Rush to Fit In

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# The Rush to Fit In

## **Abstract**

A week ago, I had been dead set on not rushing. I had heard the rumors and beliefs of my peers, that Greek life encouraged excessive drinking and partying, that hazing was still incredibly prevalent and demeaning, that Greek life worked only to discriminate and exclude members of the campus who refused to take part, promoted unfair gender roles, and encouraged pageantry and forced conversations between strangers. Still, the call of philanthropy, having a group of sisters, and finding a home on campus appealed to me. In the end, it felt like I was choosing between rushing with my friends or facing long weekends alone in my dorm room. So, that first morning, I grit my teeth, and went with it. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Anxiety, Body Image, College, Diversity, Frat Parties, Gettysburg College, Girls, Greek Life, Greek Organizations, Inclusion, Insecurity, LGBTQA, Mental Health, Race, Rushing, Social Justice, Sororities

## **Disciplines**

Civic and Community Engagement

## **Comments**

Surge is a student blog at Gettysburg College where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](https://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

## THE RUSH TO FIT IN

September 18, 2018

"I like how I look in the mirror," I shout to my roommate for a third time this morning. I've been staring at myself for a good twenty minutes today. "Are you sure how we look in the mirror isn't the way we look in real life?"

"I'm sure," she tells me again. "The mirror flips your face."

*Ugh*, I think to myself, tugging at the end of the dress I was sure fit better than this when I tried it on in the store. "Do we really have to rush?"

"C'mon, Kate, you signed up for this," she says, taking me by the shoulders and physically turning me away from the mirror. "It's going to be fine. We're going to have fun. You'll meet new people. Worse comes to worse, we drop out."

I nod, but in my head, I know that this is not the worst case scenario. No, the worst would be if no one wants me in the sorority. No, the worst would be if no one wants me in a sorority, and then they all laugh at me after I leave and ask themselves how I could possibly think I was the right type to be in a sorority. No, no, the absolute worst would be if no one wants me in a sorority, and then they ask me to my face why I would ever think I was the right type of girl to be in a sorority.

A week ago, I had been dead set on not rushing. I had heard the rumors and beliefs of my peers, that Greek life encouraged excessive drinking and partying, that hazing was still incredibly prevalent and demeaning, that Greek life worked only to discriminate and exclude members of the campus who refused to take part, promoted unfair gender roles, and encouraged pageantry and forced conversations between strangers. Still, the call of philanthropy, having a group of sisters, and finding a home on campus appealed to me. In the end, it felt like I was choosing between rushing with my friends or facing long weekends alone in my dorm room. So, that first morning, I grit my teeth, and went with it.

I was led into a white-tiled hallway lined with pictures of smiling girls, and I stood in silence wondering if I would ever be that girl in the photos. Surrounded by a group of peers, not a care in the world. None of *them* seemed to have stood in front of a mirror for twenty minutes that morning wondering if they were

pretty enough or friendly enough or good enough. “Be confident,” I hear ringing through my ears, the advice of an older girl who had gone through the same process. “Confidence attracts people.”

*Easier said than done*, I think. How can I be confident when every second another doubt creeps into my mind? Even if I can think straight around these doubts, surely whoever talks to me will notice the quiver in my hands that I get when I’m nervous, or the way my eyes dart around the room to see how everyone else is acting.

And when or if I get in, what happens then? Will I be defined by the letters I wear on a shirt, or the “sisters” I keep, or how often I party? Will I be judged and looked down on, or immediately looked over?

I didn’t even want to rush a sorority. I didn’t care which sorority I ended up in. The truth was, I had only rushed because my friends had. But being in that environment, where it felt like every action I took was weighed and judged and would determine who could be my friends and company from that point on, my anxiety flipped on and took over. What did I care how I looked or how my dress fit? I didn’t, but it felt like whoever I spoke to would, and would determine my worth from it. The girls in the picture did not look uncomfortable or unsure. They did not seem anxious in the slightest.

For me, the problem with sororities is not the sororities themselves, but the recruitment process. Because if you don’t look like the girl in the picture, you feel unwelcome. When you see no one of your skin color, your body type, your sexual orientation, your mental health issues, you don’t feel comfortable. I don’t know if this is a problem with the sororities’ selection process or the recruitment pool itself. How do you get more diversity in Greek life when there is little diversity in the group of those who rush? We become trapped in a cycle of wanting to do better, but not being able.

And yet, here I am, two weeks later, in a sorority. And once the pressures of recruitment fell away, I was hugged and welcomed into a group of supportive girls. I felt immediately part of a family and that was something my college experience has been missing. I became excited to join philanthropy events, and do great work with a group of amazing women by my side. So yes, it feels great being on the inside, and being included and validated. But still, in the pit of my stomach, I feel a twinge of guilt and my anxieties return. What did I do that got me a place in this group? Where there unearned privileges that granted me inclusion? Was it because I’m white or straight or fit a certain body type? If I couldn’t afford to buy a new dress for rushing, would I have ever gotten in?

Being included is a great ego-boost, but my inclusion relies on the exclusion of countless others. Greek life in general has a long history of relying on its own exclusivity based on race and class, as the very nature of such groups necessitates the acceptance of a few, and the rejection of many. Part of the allure of Greek life is the prestige of being in a selective, elite group. However, this selection process leaves many on the outside, and even those who get in must first dress up and perform to ensure that the parts of our identities that fit the sorority mold are most salient.

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