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Student Voices: Apathy to Activism: "We Are the Change We Seek"

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Apathy to Activism



“We Are the Change We Seek”

By Bethan Saunders

Above my intern desk in a far corner of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, President Obama’s words greeted me every morning: “Change will not come if we wait for some other person, some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” Spoken by then Senator Obama, this quote never failed to remind me why it was so crucial to pour my full effort into my role as an intern for the Obama White House.

I spent six months interning with the White House, an experience that profoundly shaped my views of our country, government, and public service. I was a small cog in the engine that drove public service. I loved every minute of my internship; it was where I discovered the true power of public service in empowering my own voice and the voices of others. I found myself in awe of the administration’s passion to make a difference in so many

lives. By the end of my internship, I knew I had found my future career. I had my heart set on joining the next administration and finding my own place in what I saw to be the heart of public service.

Given my aspirations to work in this field of public service, I was devastated with the election results last November. Throughout the transition process, I found myself losing the direction I had fiercely held onto since my White House internship. I was torn between two directions: the desire to continue to serve my country through the most effective mode of public service, and the resistance to serving in an administration that opposes many of my most fundamental beliefs.

Being the product of a Georgetown education, I have always felt it is my duty to put my education to work in service of others. But can I serve an administration that is against so much of what I stand for? My Jesuit education has pushed me to reflect on this tension. Time and time again, Georgetown’s values have taught me to be a woman for others, but also to take care of my entire person, as reflected in *cura personalis*. While I do seek a career in public service after graduation, I have to

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balance that goal with the moral burden of giving my energy to an administration that pushes against my core beliefs.

This change in administration has pushed me to open my mind to other methods of serving my community, in areas that I had originally overlooked. Before this election, I always saw the White House as the pinnacle of public service, so this election felt like the door to an avenue of meaningful public service had been slammed in my face. But I now realize there are so many other doors I've overlooked to be the change-maker President Obama spoke about. I've been pushed to reframe how I understand public service and my role within it. Understanding the call to service in an intensely partisan and divided country has challenged my perspectives on how to engage. Since November, I have expanded my vision of how I can best serve this country.

During my time at the White House, I found my voice and discovered the opportunity I hold in affecting and changing the lives of others through public service. While the last six months have been a rollercoaster, my faith in the true genius of the American democratic experience remains strong. Regardless of who sits in the White House, the empowering strength and significance of public service as a tool for good will never fade from my mind.

Bethan Saunders is a 2017 graduate from the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

Seeking Truth and Justice Through Pro-Life Activism

By Amelia Irvine

"Is it hard to be pro-life at Georgetown?" the prospective student asked. Members of Georgetown Right to Life (GURL), Georgetown's pro-life student group, are often asked this type of question. Truthfully, it is not always easy to be pro-life at Georgetown, but much of the difficulty stems from long-standing tension between GURL and H*yas for Choice (HFC), Georgetown's (unrecognized) pro-choice student group. Animosity between the two groups is perpetuated by those on both sides of the issue. As president of Georgetown RTL, I wanted to mitigate this tension however I could. Over the past seven months of my term, I have attempted to seek reconciliation, find common ground, confront the facts, and engage in dialogue.

The opportunity to seek reconciliation came early in the fall. Georgetown RTL wrote chalk messages in Red Square at Georgetown, only to find them scribbled over and vandalized the following morning.

Of course, the natural target for RTL members' resentment was H*yas for Choice. Georgetown RTL Vice President, MyLan, and I decided to reach out to HFC's co-presidents to have a chat over coffee about the incident. MyLan and I started the conversation by offering apologies and seeking forgiveness for past grievances and problems between RTL and HFC. This act of seeking forgiveness formed the basis of our relationship with the HFC co-presidents.

After seeking reconciliation through forgiveness, we discussed possible areas for collaboration: pregnancy resources and increased access to feminine hygiene products for Georgetown undergraduates. Simply by discussing these issues, we found some common ground. Unfortunately, these discussions did not lead to any actual collaboration. However, RTL still sought to facilitate some sort of interaction between pro-choice and pro-life people around the issue of abortion through confronting the facts and engaging in dialogue.