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Student Voices: Becoming "Us" in a Polarzed Age

Miranda Richard

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First, we decided to host a screening of HUSH, a new documentary with a pro-choice director who wanted to seek the truth about the health risks of abortion, because facts matter. This documentary intends to start a conversation on college campuses about abortion and how it affects women.

Second, we attempted to host a pro-choice/pro-life dialogue on campus between pro-life activist Stephanie Gray and a pro-choice activist. H*yas for Choice declined to participate in our event because they felt it was not appropriate for them to "facilitate anti-choice speakers and dialogue." However, GU College Democrats (GUCD) agreed to cosponsor and search for a pro-choice speaker. Disappointingly, GUCD was unable to find a speaker for the event.

I began my year as GURTL president optimistic about the possibility for true dialogue on campus about abortion, but I



have learned that reconciliation takes time and a lot of energy. We cannot hope to change the campus community in only a few months. Rather, pro-life leaders must build on the work of their predecessors and persist amid failures. In truth, life is too important an issue to abandon. The pur-

suit of truth and justice at Georgetown is not easy, but it is always worthwhile.

Amelia Irvine, the president of Right to Life at Georgetown University, is a sophomore studying government and economics; she is from Phoenix, Arizona

Becoming "Us" in a Polarized Age

By Miranda Richard

The brochures, the info sessions, TV spots, and bookstore memorabilia all tout some variation of the same refrain: *men and women for others*. Prospective students write essays about their dedication to serving diverse communities, tell tales of transformative service trips, and outline their plans to join campus social justice clubs.

The Jesuit tradition is one of service above self, so logic follows that the students at Jesuit schools ought to be dedicated servants.

All this talk about service to others prompts the questions: What does it mean to serve? And who are these abstract "others?" And how, now, in this polarized political era?

When we speak of serving others, the word takes on a slightly more specific meaning. "Other" here means "that which is distinct from, different from, or opposite to oneself." Through this lens, serving others not only means providing help to people beyond our own communities or social networks. It means extend-

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ing a helping hand to people who are different in terms of wealth, worldview, race, class, or creed.

Today, the Jesuit tradition of serving people who are different from us takes on a new importance.

Being “men and women for others” means being “men and women for people of non-Christian faiths” who face persecution for their beliefs. It means being “men and women for women” who may face new obstacles in their daily lives. It means being “men and women for people of all genders and sexualities,” who may face new challenges to their identities, health, and civil liberties.

Against the backdrop of marginalization, there can be no “others.” There is no “them;” there is only “us.” Animosity toward others who voted differently than we did will serve no purpose other than to further drive the wedge of division between these once- united states.

As we move through graduation and leave college life behind, I hope that my classmates who will enter diverse professions – from medicine to finance to sales to education – will remember the tradition of service in their daily lives. Recall that we can serve even in careers not traditionally considered service-oriented.

I worry, though, that during a period of great transition, I and many others risk losing track of the things that used to fulfill us, and we run the risk of falling into the trap of being too busy to serve. But I am optimistic that, with conscious recognition of the renewed need for us to commit to service amidst self-centered ideologies, our Jesuit education will equip us well to meet the call in new and perhaps unexpected ways.

That Jesuit tradition cultivates leaders who should be capable of meeting, head on, the social problems represented by President

Trump’s election. Our commitment to serving others prompts us to listen to our fellow Americans and find common ground. By serving others, we can engage in conversations with people who have diverse life experiences. We can begin to heal the wounds of division by refusing to fear people who live, look, or think differently than we do.

In the aftermath of the election, the Jesuit tradition of compassion, empathy, and service is more important than ever. When we recognize that we are truly all in this together, we can begin to heal the wounds of division that have plagued us openly since the last election cycle but that have really remained insidiously present in society for all of modern history.

We can begin to become an “us.”

Miranda Richard is a 2017 graduate of Boston College.



Becoming an “us.” Celebrating mass at Boston College.