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Green Queens  
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Day 10 - Greenest

When I'm on my campus, I definitely notice social injustices, both subtle and obvious. The three that come to mind first for me are the presence of racism and white supremacy, ableism, and lack of proper space for gender non-conforming students and faculty members. Although none of these issues negatively affect me directly, all three impact the experience of those around me in a harmful way, therefore creating a less safe and comfortable environment for all- myself included.

The first social injustice I observe on my campus *and* in my community is one which indirectly affects all of us, but directly affects students, faculty, and staff of color on campus. Last fall, students of color on campus organized a walkout in response to white supremacist flyers posted around our school and lack of direct action against racial discrimination. Attending a primarily white institution (PWI) in Burlington, Vermont, there are constant reminders of the lack of preparedness and lack of commitment our administration has in dealing with these types of situations as well as dismantling the systems in place which promote them (even within our campus) and it shows. This issue matters because dismantling systems of hate and oppression are the only way we can coexist peacefully in a cohesive society together going forward. Students of color on my campus are not only outnumbered, but in some cases have expressed feelings of being tokenized or singled-out in classes based on the color of their skin, or where they're from. As a white woman, I am aware of, and am learning more about each day, my privilege and the responsibilities I have to listen to, lift, and fight for those whose voices are most often silenced or ignored. Our campus has an Office of Diversity and Inclusion, as well as Diversity Ambassadors who focus on peer education events, but I believe it would be beneficial to implement a campus-required class for each student to take as a first year in order to get everyone on at least a baseline of common knowledge when it comes to race, white supremacy, and racial injustices.

The second social injustice that is difficult to ignore on my campus is a lack of accessibility options for those with mobility issues or other disabilities, or the presence of ableist mentalities and practices. If you can't move around Champlain in the same way the majority of our faculty, students, and staff do, you're nearly out of luck on campus, and at the very least should expect to be late to your classes because of how difficult it is to move around from building to building. In addition to the lack of access, there is a lack of awareness on this issue on campus nearly completely, because most

people don't experience something like this directly. Not only that, but the language our society uses is so ableist without us realizing that it can be difficult to break out of that mold for some people. We have some elevators on campus, but there are currently more than one route folks may have to take that do not accommodate for those with mobility issues. This matters because of the impact it can have on the learning and personal experience of students on our campus, and I feel that it's important to lift someone up if they've been torn down.

As an orientation leader, I am asked a lot of questions about where things are, which professors to choose, and which classes are the best. This semester during a lecture in the gym, a first year student discreetly approached me to ask where the nearest gender neutral restroom was. I realized immediately that I had no idea, and that I wasn't even really sure who to ask. I knew there were a few in the building next-door to the student life center, where the gym is, but felt horrible sending them outside to the next building. Over the past few years, Champlain has converted nearly, if not all of our single-stall bathrooms to gender neutral ones. While this is an awesome step, it is frustrating that in buildings like our IDX student life center, some students may not feel as though they belong or have a space to be comfortable in themselves. I care about this issue because I have never been in a situation where I was unsure which bathroom to use, or unsure whether or not I would even have access to a bathroom. It is incredibly disappointing that the extra effort was not made in order to make all students feel included and welcome on campus by having multiple gender neutral restrooms in each building students and faculty access on the grounds. I have the privilege to use the bathroom comfortably and easily on campus, and others around me should as well. There are many resources for LGBTQ+ community members on campus, but not as much tangible initiative and change.

The issues I see on my campus and in the wider Burlington, VT community reflect a broader, global issue of a rampant system of oppression and hate dominating and spreading through every aspect of our societies. Those who are facing injustice directly and those experiencing it indirectly are connected not just by their shared injustice, but by living on this planet together and sharing the responsibility to be stewards of the land, waterways, and communities, both human and not.

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