

The Atwater Staircase: Performance Activism

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We all answered the question “what brought you here?” differently on our first day of Radical Humanity: Performance and Social Activism, our J-term class for the first month of 2016. After a month of embracing the connections between performance, activism, and confidence, a group of us found ourselves inspired to change the culture of sexual assault on Middlebury’s campus through performance activism. We could not have predicted we would end up here on the first day of class, but now it seems as though this entire month of study and practice as well as our life experiences have led us to this point.

What you have witnessed tonight is our first performance installation in a series that will take place at different locations on campus because sexual assault can happen anywhere on campus. Nevertheless, we felt it important to launch our performance installation series within the Atwater Suites, a location that is notorious for a culture of sexual assault. Viewed by many as the epicenter of parties where many party-goers may expect an uncomfortable, intoxicated, and unsafe scenario, the Atwater Suites is symbolic in our performance vision.

The goal of our performance tonight was multidimensional. We hoped to accomplish the following:

1. Prevent future sexual assaults through raised community awareness
2. Prevent future sexual assaults by drawing attention to the location where many of these incidents occur
3. Prevent future sexual assaults by igniting discussion among the community and motivating a change in actions
4. Prevent future sexual assaults by informing audience members of how they can become involved in sexual assault prevention efforts

For reflection and further discussion, we invite any and all community members to our dialogue/debrief session at Axinn 220 on Thursday, Feb 4 at 7 pm.