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# *Writer's Statement about "A Historical Approach to the Progression of LGBTQ Treatment and Acceptance at the University of Central Florida"*

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When I first started to explore topics for my research paper, I had trouble deciding what would not only make me enjoy researching but also what kind of topic would allow me to write a ten-page paper about it. After some time and consideration, I decided to choose Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) rights because as a homosexual man who grew up attending a religious school, I wanted to learn more about my community's history. Since my professor, Dr. Rounsaville, had emphasized looking at a University of Central Florida community, and since UCF was celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I decided to take a look into UCF's history. Specifically, I was going to see if LGBTQ rights have changed or progressed since the founding of the university.

Although I chose my topic mostly for personal reasons, I was still conflicted as to whether or not anyone would actually want to read a research paper about LGBTQ rights. Even in today's ever increasing progressive society, you can never truly know what people's moral viewpoints are on a taboo topic such as homosexuality. I figured that if I passed over this topic in favor of another, I would be reinforcing the idea that homosexuality is still taboo. Therefore, if I was going to choose the topic of LGBTQ rights, I was going to make sure that I gave it my all to ensure that I gave the topic the treatment it deserved.

To research LGBTQ history at UCF, I worked with the university archivist to find primary historical evidence through UCF's University Archives and Special Collections. But my biggest research struggle was finding data to base my research upon. Since the LGBTQ community has only recently begun to enter the spotlight of national media, there wasn't much history recorded for any on-campus groups and organizations. My initial findings from the archives were only expenditure reports and rough estimations of membership numbers, which wasn't nearly enough to base an entire paper on. Luckily, Dr. Rounsaville recalled that a film passed through the Burnett Honors College several years prior about LGBTQ events during the 1950s and 60s. While this film did not exactly pertain to UCF's history, it still provided an immense amount of information about the atmosphere upon which UCF was founded. Just watching the film was heart-wrenching because it had accounts of previous college students being expelled from their universities for *possibly* being homosexual. This film was what gave me up the spark I needed to search for more information

about the LGBTQ community so that those students' story could be told. In fact, the spark led me to return to the archives, where I found yet another film. This film was actually relevant to UCF because it was produced by the faculty advisor to the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Union (GLBSU), who provided a historical timeline of a majority of events from 1976 to 2009.

As I started to piece all of this information together to try and fill in the gaps, I ran into a roadblock. There was roughly a seventeen-year gap where no records of any LGBTQ-oriented student group existed. Through the assistance and guidance of Dr. Rounsaville, I was able to conclude that some event must have occurred that resulted in the group's seclusion into becoming a private, yet almost secretive club that existed solely in the apartments of its members. While this huge gap did initially serve as a roadblock, I found that it actually reinforced my notion that things were not always easy for the LGBTQ community.

As I mentioned previously, this research topic was initially chosen because I wanted to learn about the LGBTQ community's history since I was sheltered from that topic through my primary education; however, at the end of my research, that changed. My research was now being conducted because I wanted others to know what the LGBTQ community had to endure in order for it to be what it is today. The LGBTQ community is still evolving and striving towards its goals and this directed me towards leaving my research open-ended. I wanted my research to serve as a stepping-stone for future researchers to take my evidence and run with it, just as I did with the two films my research was based upon.