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Human Rights Essay Contest

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### Suppression of A Different Love

Human Rights are morals regularly protected as natural and legal rights in all forms of law. Throughout history laws have been made to accommodate for a minority's personal life and lifestyle. The Civil Rights Movement of 1964 started the new revelation of creating rights for minorities suppressed by the majority in the United States. The movement outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin in public places, employment and education. Yet, the one aspect of a person not covered is one's sexuality. Anyone who is a part of the LGBTQIA+ community receives no protection by any national law everywhere in the United States. Whether that be in public places, employment and education, these laws should exist for every and anyone.

This community has suffered through so much strife throughout history. In 1969, the Stonewall riots in New York City mark the beginning of the modern gay civil rights era. The Stonewall riots included a series of spontaneous demonstrations by members of the LGBT community against a police raid. These raids by the police were to find any possible reason to shut down places that were safe havens for the poorest and most marginalized people in the gay community and arrest them. At that time any sexual interactions between the same sex were illegal (Pruitt). All this occurred because the suppression that this community face was pent up inside.

The AIDS epidemic in the 1980s significantly impacted this community and still does. This disease is a spectrum of conditions caused by infection with the human immunodeficiency

virus, meaning that one is facing progressive failure of their immune system allowing life-threatening infections and cancers to take over (“HIV/AIDS”). Once known, borders became stricter to keep the disease in and prevent an outspread. Sadly, some people believed that those affected deserved to suffer from it. With technology improving throughout the years, new medicine exists to help those with HIV/AIDS continue the life that they are living (“HIV/AIDS”). It may not be a cure, but it is helping the community live and stay strong.

Homosexuality used to be considered a mental disorder. Around the 1950s-1960s therapists had purportedly found a “cure” to male homosexuality. The process of this cure is downright morally wrong to inflict upon another human being. This consisted of showing photographs of nude men while send electrical currents directly to the body in small pulses or sending drugs into the body to make one vomit and feel sick about this attraction. These methods did not work in any means to “convert” the feelings that homosexuals/ gay people possess to be true to themselves. In 1968, the DSM-II, the American classification of mental disorders of the time, listed homosexuality as a mental disorder. This was until in the 19th century that homosexuality was appropriated from the Church, and then in some strange reverse way to regard it in a better way, transformed it from sin to a mental disorder. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) asked all members attending its convention to vote on whether they believed homosexuality to be a mental disorder. 5,854 psychiatrists voted to remove homosexuality from the DSM and 3,810 to retain it. The APA then compromised, removing homosexuality from the DSM but replacing it, in effect, with "sexual orientation disturbance" for people "in conflict with" their sexual orientation (Burton).

Not until 1987 did homosexuality completely fall out of the DSM. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) only removed homosexuality from its ICD classification with the

publication of ICD-10 in 1992, although ICD-10 still carries the construct of "ego-dystonic sexual orientation" (Burton). In this condition, the person is not in doubt about his or her sexual preference, but "wishes it were different because of associated psychological and behavioral disorders"(Burton).

As seen more recently, people who identify as transgender or non-binary are being killed. At least 22 transgender and gender non-conforming people have been murdered in the U.S. in 2019 (Vagianos). I say at least because sadly too often many of these stories go unreported, or misreported. Yet no major media outlets have reported any of these incidents to notify the world (King). The HRC (Human Rights Campaign) has been tracking reports such as these for the past several years. The majority of victims were people of color as well. Given the more recent awareness of intersectionality, this issue is not just about gender but also race.

LGBTQIA+ rights in the U.S. have evolved over time and vary on a state-by-state basis. Family, marriage, and anti-discrimination laws vary by state. It was not until 2003 that in the U.S. sexual acts between people of the same sex became legal nationwide, following the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas* ("Non-Discrimination Laws"). In Nebraska, currently there is no law that explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in state law. No employment non-discrimination law covering sexual orientation or gender identity, through federal law offers some protection ("Non-Discrimination Laws"). Personally, living here and identifying as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, it is very displeasing to say that the place where I live does not offer any law to protect myself from discrimination.

I myself identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. Growing up I was constantly the odd one out. I was always different from the other kids. My interests strayed from

the stereotype that my gender was “supposed” to follow. The way that I acted and behaved was different as well. Even my vocal intonation contrasted the stereotypical gender expectation. As a young child, no one really cared since one is young and does not know any better. Yet as the older one gets, the more they should follow society’s stereotypical gender roles that “men are masculine” and “girls are feminine”. I did not fit that and faced bullying and self-hatred. Going to school made me face the truth of how others acted with what they believe to be wrong. Others confronted me, asking who I was. Being young and terrified of what the possibilities could be if I was honest, I conformed as best I could. I did not specifically know what they were asking and what it meant, but any wrong answer resulted in social exclusion and bullying.

All that I ask for is a better world for everyone and anyone. As big of a dream that is, I know that we cannot accomplish it by wishing and hoping alone. People must take action to make this shared LBGTQIA+ community dream become a reality. Slowly growing with each day, the fight to advocate for more LBGTQIA+ people strengthens. Obstacles will always exist, but obstacles help those facing adversity become stronger and better than who they were.

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