

QUEERS ON CAMPUS:  
LGBTQ STUDENT VISIBILITY AT  
THREE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN FLORIDA, 1970-1985

By

JESSICA CLAWSON

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2014

© 2014 Jessica Clawson

To all of the heroes who have liberated spaces for LGBTQ people

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have written this dissertation without the help of a large number of people. First, I thank my adviser, Sevan Terzian, without whose superb mentorship I would not know how to write, let alone how to navigate academia thoughtfully. My wonderful committee members Dorene Ross, Elizabeth Bondy, William Link, and Paul Ortiz were all instrumental in this process and in my graduate school career. I have learned so much from all of them about how to live in academia and the world. I will also be forever grateful to the fabulous education department at Denison University, who gave me the energy and inspiration to do good work in the final phases of this writing. Emily Nemeth, Jerrell Beckham, Suzanne Baker, and Karen Graves know how to make working in academia an absolute delight. I will remember my time at Denison with fondness.

My queer academic family has been so helpful in their advice and support. First, were it not for Roland Sintos Coloma, I would not have known where to begin or even been sure I had anything to say. Roland knew when I needed to be pushed and when I needed space to figure myself out. Karen Graves has been beyond generous with her willingness to talk through sticky identity issues, in and out of academic contexts. For her friendship, and for the opportunity to teach at Denison, I will always be grateful. There is no better mentor. Jackie Blount has made it clear through word and deed that there is indeed a queer community of scholars and that we all look out for each other—this knowledge of solidarity has helped me be brave. Her kind sensitivity is unmatched. Catherine Lugg has been unfailingly supportive personally and professionally, and always knows how to see the humor through the rage. With a well-timed phone call, she

can transform despair into delight. I am so lucky to count all of these brilliant scholars as beloved friends.

The encouragement of my family has been invaluable in this process. My parents, Tom and Teresa Clawson, have never stopped believing in me even when I gave them cause. They are smart, loving, delightful people who also happen to be unfailingly generous. My brother Jordan and his wife Becky are a source of eternal uplift for me. Their son, Logan, is the light of my life. My sister Jennifer and her husband Tim are always there for me with thoughtful ideas and wit. No one can make me laugh like Jennifer, and she has found her equal in Tim. I love them all beyond all measure and am so lucky they put up with me.

Life is also about chosen family. My two favorite straight guys, Bill Fischer and Peter Zimmerman, have been endless sources of amusement and intellectual challenge. Bill read multiple versions of many of these chapters. Aimee Towell's help in close reading this entire work and late-night chats about horses kept me sane. And then there is my queer family, especially Erin Powell, Todd Allen, Paul McDonough, Cody Miller, and Nate Bloemke, who make sure I eat well and laugh until I cry; and Cori O'Connor and Casey LaMarche, who ensure that life always has plenty of rainbow unicorn realness. There was no getting through this without them.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | <u>page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....   | 4           |
| ABSTRACT.....  | 8           |
| CHAPTER  |             |
| 1 INTRODUCTION .....   | 9           |
| Twentieth Century University History and Diversity .....   | 14          |
| Queer History and Education History.....   | 30          |
| Central Questions .....  | 34          |
| Sources, Methodology, and Theory .....   | 36          |
| Subjectivity Statement .....   | 46          |
| Description of Each Chapter .....  | 47          |
| 2 GAY LIBERATION IS HERE.....  | 53          |
| Florida State and Hiram Ruiz.....  | 56          |
| The University of Florida and Julius Johnson .....   | 69          |
| The University of South Florida: A Story of the Underground .....                                | 82          |
| Student Affairs and Evolving Campus Climates.....  | 87          |
| Gay Student Groups Nationwide: The Legal Strategy .....  | 93          |
| The APA and the Changing Queer Movements.....  | 97          |
| 3 DRAG AND THE PEDAGOGY OF SILENCE: PERFORMANCE AND GENDER<br>IN THE QUEER STUDENT MOVEMENT..... | 103         |
| Queering Space in the South.....   | 107         |
| Silencing Heteronormativity: The Power of Drag .....   | 110         |
| When to Know is Not Enough: Silence as Echo Chambers of Oppression.....                          | 115         |
| Gay Bars as Contested Sites.....   | 120         |
| 4 THOROUGHLY MODERN HOMOPHOBIA: HOW ANITA BRYANT<br>BOLSTERED QUEER STUDENT ACTIVISM.....        | 130         |
| Conservatism.....  | 132         |
| Religion.....  | 140         |
| Queer Community Responses.....   | 149         |
| 5 HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY: CONSERVATIVES, FRATERNITIES, AND<br>PRINCESSES.....                     | 169         |
| Conservatism, The Moral Majority, and Lethal Homophobia .....                                    | 170         |
| Bill Wade, Homecoming Princess.....  | 187         |

|   |   |     |
|---|---|-----|
| 6 | “A PERVERSION OF THE LOWEST ORDER”: THE TRASK-BUSH AMENDMENT AND LEGISLATING MORALITY .....                   | 201 |
|   | How Two Legislators Made A Whole State Think About Sodomy.....  | 201 |
|   | UFLAGS Loses an Office and a Fraternity Loses its Pants .....   | 225 |
| 7 | DEATH AND DISEASE, RESILIENCE AND COMMUNITY: THE COMPLEXITIES OF QUEER LIFE IN FLORIDA IN THE MID-1980S ..... | 242 |
|   | Howard Appledorf and the Price of Silence .....   | 243 |
|   | The Perpetual Fight for Space .....   | 247 |
|   | Gay Awareness and Gay Republicans .....   | 257 |
|   | AIDS .....  | 270 |
|   | Councille Blye .....  | 289 |
| 8 | CONCLUSION.....   | 293 |
|   | Theoretical Implications .....  | 303 |
|   | Practical Implications .....  | 309 |
|   | Recommendations for Future Research .....   | 312 |
|   | LIST OF REFERENCES .....  | 317 |
|   | BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....  | 329 |

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

QUEERS ON CAMPUS:  
LGBTQ STUDENT VISIBILITY AT  
THREE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN FLORIDA, 1970-1985

By Jessica Clawson

August 2014

Chair: Sevan Terzian  
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

This study examines three sets of questions about the emergence of queer visibility in the context of three of Florida's largest universities: The University of Florida, Florida State University, and the University of South Florida. First, what characteristics of the climate of each university discussed here helped and hindered the struggle for campus queer visibility? Second, how were the larger political and social contexts in which each university was situated significant to queer emergence? Third, how did queer students interact with social movements and position themselves as activists in their struggles for liberation? This study also makes a methodological contribution to the historical study of queer people. Difficulties in locating sources can perpetuate the invisibility or silence of queer people in historical studies, and this work confronts this problem by including, but also looking beyond, institutional and state records, via oral history and student newspapers. It also uses queer theory to guide our understanding of the students' identities and the oppression they faced. This study argues that queer students on these three campuses in the 1970s and 1980s engaged in activism when they made themselves visible.



## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

It was gay pride week, 1981, at the University of Florida in Gainesville. A group of Kappa Alpha fraternity brothers set up a table in a highly trafficked quad known as the Plaza of the Americas and asked passersby to sign a petition “calling for the execution of homosexuals.” In addition, they held signs reading “Homosexuals need bullets—not acceptance,” “Students for the public execution of queers,” and “Eat shit and die faggots.” The group also passed out fliers reading “No More Homos—Students for the draft and public executions” and “Clean Up America—Shoot a Queer. Everyone Should Do His Part—Take Aim Today.” The sign-holders encouraged other students to “sign up, if you are an American.”<sup>1</sup> These students underscored the bigotry many students felt on the North Florida campus, and tapped into the sentiment that queer rights were not consistent with American values. This argument would be made countless times over the following decades by queer rights opponents nationwide, and is still being made today by groups such as American Values and the National Organization for Marriage.<sup>2</sup>

But the fact that these students were acting out so violently and publicly against queer students would have been unnecessary little more than ten years before. Prior to 1971, queer students on the University of Florida campus had no public presence. That

---

<sup>1</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “Student Petitioners Accused of Harassing Gays,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, May 18, 1981, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Right Wing Watch and other online news aggregators have done a tremendous job documenting the ways anti-gay people continue to separate being gay with being un-American. In fact, in March of 2013, Brian Brown, the president of the National Organization for Marriage, the nation’s leading anti-gay organization, said that anti-gay protests must have been “what the civil rights movement felt like.” Gary Bauer of the right wing group American Values said that pro-gay people have had their minds poisoned. That his group is called American Values is significant to his ideas about where gay people stand in relationship to the national interests. Brian Tashman, “Brian Brown: Anti-Gay March was what the Civil Rights Movement ‘Must Have Felt Like,’” *Right Wing Watch*, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/brian-brown-anti-gay-march-was-what-civil-rights-movement-must-have-felt>.

they were able to provoke such backlash was a sign of their success. These fraternity brothers represented the last-ditch efforts to keep a queer student organization from cementing itself on campus. They also forced the hand of the vice president of Student Affairs, Art Sandeen, who said he felt the actions taken by these students was harassment. He, along with other student affairs officials on campuses everywhere, had to serve increasingly diverse populations, and by the early 1980s, queer students were clearly part of this diversity. The students themselves had openly pushed for visibility and rights for ten years up until this point. Signs and petitions were not going to slow them down.

Similar outbursts of anti-queer hatred would also appear on the campuses of Florida State University in Tallahassee and the University of South Florida in Tampa over the decade and a half of queer emergence. This dissertation examines the emergence of queer student visibility at all three universities from 1970 to 1985. Over this time, university students, state governments, and the United States generally began to shift from concerns over anti-war protests and civil rights demonstrations to the rise of modern conservatism and its attendant values placed on social conformity. Tracing the plights and actions of queer students provides insights into these social movements and political shifts. At times, they were taking charge and pushing their communities to be more progressive about issues of queer rights. Other times, such as the Plaza of the Americas demonstration discussed above, they were victimized by it. Queer students became political actors in the struggle for visibility, through their partnership with New Left groups, their opposition to conservatives, making space for themselves (as other political movements, such as the black freedom movement, had done), and in their work

in AIDS visibility. This study interprets the emergence of queer students in a state that was not only discouraging, but often openly hostile to them, as an act of political agency.

Queer rights are still a hotly contested issue in American society, and the acceptable level of visibility of queer people is still up for debate. As education historian Karen Graves said in her vice presidential address to the history division of the American Educational Research Association in 2011, “If you don’t have a history, your very existence is questioned.” She also noted that schools, widely considered central to society, are not significantly represented in queer history.<sup>3</sup> One step towards remedying the issues of queer invisibility is to widen the historical narrative to make it more inclusive of its existing queer elements. In addition, studying queer college students provides a more complete picture of the development of higher education in the twentieth century. The postwar era was important to university development. Queer students worked to make space for themselves in a changing context, and they helped shape the universities they were part of. Including queer students in the historical record also gives new dimension to the study of college student activism and queer liberation struggles.

Florida is an important site of investigation in both national and queer history. As James Schnur, Stacey Braukman, Karen Graves, and William N. Eskridge have shown, Florida is significant to queer history because of its unique experiences with state-

---

<sup>3</sup> Karen L. Graves, “So, You Think You Have a History?”: Taking a Q from Lesbian and Gay Studies in Writing Education History,” *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (November 2012): 466-487.

sanctioned persecution of queer people.<sup>4</sup> Florida's queer history is distinct from other states in that it was the site of the Florida Legislative Investigative Committee—otherwise known as the Johns Committee—from 1956-1964. Charley Johns, a conservative Democrat and a state senator from North Florida, began investigating civil rights groups throughout the state in what was meant to be an effort to flush out communists. Civil rights groups were growing in the South in the wake of *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), and heated discussions all over the state were taking place on desegregation of state universities.<sup>5</sup> The Johns Committee harassment served as a warning to the faculty and students of Florida universities of the potential consequences of further desegregation.<sup>6</sup> However, the focus did not long remain on civil rights groups. It was the ruthless hunting of queer teachers, as well as queer university students and faculty, which earned the group its infamy. The Johns Committee began an investigation of homosexual activity throughout the state, including the University of Florida, in 1958. The committee relied on sensationalism, interviewed hundreds of witnesses, collected thousands of pages of testimony, and did not hesitate to release information publicly based on unsubstantiated accusations. The Board of Control—the statewide body governing all of Florida's public universities—absorbed the

---

<sup>4</sup> Stacey Braukman, "Nothing Else Matters But Sex': Cold War Narratives of Deviance and the Search for Lesbian Teachers in Florida, 1959-1963." *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 553-575; William N. Eskridge, *"Dishonorable Passions": Sodomy Laws in America, 1861-2003* (New York: Viking Press, 2008); Karen Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); James Schnur, *Cold Warriors in the Hot Sunshine: The Johns Committee's Assault on Civil Liberties in Florida, 1956-1965* (MA Thesis, University of South Florida, 1995); James A. Schnur, "Closet Crusaders: The Johns Committee and Homophobia, 1956-1965," in *Carryin' On In the Lesbian and Gay South*, edited by John Howard (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 132-163.

<sup>5</sup> Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 48.

Johns Committee agenda in 1958 and extended its attack on academic freedom, trying to control pedagogy and fire professors they thought were too liberal.<sup>7</sup> The Florida queer liberation movement of the 1970s-1980s cannot be entirely separated from the context of the firings of professors and expulsion of students of slightly over a decade before. Karen Graves's scholarship shows that the effects of the government's persecution of queer people in the state of Florida influenced the ability of queer people to exist safely within the state.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the national political trends of the 1970s and 1980s were evident in Florida, but the participation of Florida citizens in events like civil rights protests, and the role of the state government in squashing such protests and other left-leaning operations, is understudied in historical literature and in education history in particular. The time period under scrutiny in this dissertation saw the rise of people like Anita Bryant, who in 1977 rallied people all over the country in preventing Dade County, Florida, from passing an ordinance providing protections for its gay residents. State senator Alan Trask (D-Winter Haven) and Rep. Tom Bush (R-Ft. Lauderdale) passed a law banning gay student groups from university campuses in 1981. Both of these incidents drew national attention and, like the Johns Committee, were unprecedented elsewhere in the United States. The Florida government's assault on academic freedom was severe. Events and attitudes such as the ones on display in Florida in the 1970s and 1980s fit into the generally homophobic character of the United States at this time

---

<sup>7</sup> Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

and illustrate well how the queer students had to face not only their straight counterparts, but state-level machinery invested in keeping them quiet.

### **Twentieth Century University History and Diversity**

Queer college students were largely invisible until the 1970s. The context of their emergence on American campuses flows from several sources: the structural, functional, and political changes in universities themselves; the student protest culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s; and the national queer liberation struggle.

Universities evolved a great deal over the course of the twentieth century. One way they changed was through an increased attention to diversity—with various degrees of sincerity and action—among the student body. Most universities, particularly public institutions, went from being only for elite white men to facing the expectation that anyone with the proper academic credentials could attend.<sup>9</sup> Increased diversity in terms of gender and race took place over the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, though this did not tend to include openly queer people. Student activism on college campuses has a long history, typically associated with civil rights for black people, anti-war protests, radical

---

<sup>9</sup> Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2005). This expanded access was not without its own tendencies to exclusivity and problems with the meritocracy, and sometimes those credentials were not so academic, as issues of legacy admissions still matter in college admissions processes. See also Linda Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945-1965* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Emma Humphries, "Accommodating Jane: The GI Bill and Coeducation at the University of Florida" (Paper delivered at American Education Research Association conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 2011); D.O. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986); William A. Link, *William Friday: Power, Purpose, and American Higher Education* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Julie Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Frederick Rudolph, *The American College & University: A History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962); Barbara Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); John Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Laurence Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965).

feminism, and environmentalism.<sup>10</sup> Queer activism rose in the 1970s, both on campuses and off, as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people spoke and acted out for their right to be visible and “out of the closet.”<sup>11</sup>

This dissertation addresses two specific strains of scholarship: queer history of education and the history of student activism. First, queer history of U.S. education is a tiny—and new—branch of history of education generally. The most well known writers of queer history of education are Jackie M. Blount, Karen Graves, Catherine Lugg, and Roland Sintos Coloma. Blount’s *Fit to Teach: Same-Sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the Twentieth Century* examines the history of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer) and gender-nonconforming teachers and schools as the site of vulnerability for LGBTQ people. Her focus is in K-12 education.<sup>12</sup> Blount studies the ways school workers, parents, and community members reacted to gender non-

---

<sup>10</sup> Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Link, *William Friday*; Robert A. Pratt, *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Triumphant Story of Horace Ward, Charlayne Hunter, and Hamilton Holmes* (Athens: University of Georgia Press 2002); Peter Wallenstein, “*Brown v. Board of Education* and Segregated Universities: From Kluger to Karman—Toward Creating a Literature on King Color, Federal Courts, and Undergraduate Admission” (Organization of American Historians, Boston, MA, March 2004); Peter Wallenstein, “Segregation, Desegregation, and Higher Education in Virginia” (Policy History Conference, Charlottesville, VA, June 3, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Brett Beemyn, “The Silence is Broken: A History of the First Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Student Groups,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (April 2003): 205-223; Jackie M. Blount, *Fit to Teach: Same-Sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the Twentieth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 108-158; D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 231-238; Justin David Suran, “Coming Out Against the War: Antimilitarism and the Politicization of Homosexuality in the Era of Vietnam,” *American Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (September 2001): 452-488.

<sup>12</sup> Blount, *Fit To Teach*. Blount has also published several articles on gay and lesbian issues in education, including “From Exemplar to Deviant: Same-sex Relationships among Women Superintendents, 1909-1976,” *Educational Studies* 35, no. 2 (2004): 103-122; “The History of Teaching and Talking about Sex in Schools,” *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2003): 610-615; “Spinsters, Bachelors, and Other Gender Transgressors in School Employment, 1850-1990,” *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 1 (2000): 83-101; “Manliness and the Gendered Construction of School Administration in the USA,” *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice* 2, no. 2 (1999): 55-68; and “Manly Men and Womanly Women: Deviance, Gender Role Polarization and the Shift in Women’s School Employment, 1900-1976,” *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no. 2 (1996): 318-339.

conforming teachers and those with same-sex attraction. Schools, she argues, were meant to teach gender as much as anything else, so a teacher who was doing gender wrong—who was gender non-conforming—was not upholding the standards of the community. This point is critical to understanding why schools continue to police gender so rigorously.

Graves's *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* covers the Johns Committee purge of gay and lesbian teachers, mostly at the K-12 level.<sup>13</sup> Graves's work looks at the specific ways gay and lesbian people were targeted during the Cold War, contributing mightily to our understandings of gay and lesbian history and to the Cold War context. Catherine Lugg has also addressed the history of queer issues in K-12 education.<sup>14</sup> Her important work is focused on education policy, rather than, for instance, the lived experiences of students. She also writes about the value of queer theory in education studies, thus further legitimizing its inclusion in the field. Coloma also explicitly recruits queer theory to study educational contexts in his work on nationalism, empire, and the global south. He does not focus specifically on US schools.<sup>15</sup> Blount, Graves, Lugg, and Coloma are the most

---

<sup>13</sup> Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers*. In addition to work done by Graves, Eskridge, Braukman, and Schnur, two movies have been made about the Johns Committee, including *Behind Closed Doors: The Dark Legacy of the Johns Committee* (DVD. Produced by Allyson A. Beutke and Scott Litvack. Gainesville: Documentary Institute in the College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida, 2000) and *The Committee* (DVD. Produced by students and faculty at University of Central Florida. Orlando: University of Central Florida, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Catherine A. Lugg, "Thinking about Sodomy: Public Schools, Legal Panopticons, and Queers." *Educational Policy* 20, no. 1 (2006): 35-58; "Our Straight-laced Administrators: LGBT School Administrators, the Law, and the Assimilationist Imperative." *Journal of School Leadership* 13, no. 1 (2003): 51-85; "Sissies, Faggots, Lezzies, and Dykes: Gender, Sexual Orientation, and a New Politics of Education?" *Educational Administration Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2003): 95-134; "The Religious Right and Public Education: The Paranoid Politics of Homophobia." *Educational Policy* 12, no. 3 (1998): 267-283.

<sup>15</sup> Roland Sintos Coloma, "Ladlad and Parrhesiastic Pedagogy: Unfurling LGBT Politics and Education in the Global South," *Curriculum Inquiry* 43, no. 4 (2013): 579-598; "Putting Queer to Work: Examining Empire and Education," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19, no. 5 (2006): 639-



prolific scholars of LGBTQ history in the field, and their work inspired my own. I expand on their scholarship by focusing on higher education instead of K-12, explicitly employing queer theory in order to show how the students changed the university, and studying activism—particularly, students as political agents—rather than teachers or administrators.

A few scholars have addressed queer higher education history. John D’Emilio and James T. Sears, who are historians but do not study history of education specifically, have written works that include queer history. Sears’s work covers the South and uses oral history, but education is a peripheral issue in much of his writing. *Lonely Hunters: An Oral History of Lesbian and Gay Southern Life: 1948-1968* covers some of the University of Florida experience with the Johns Committee through the eyes of someone who lived through it.<sup>16</sup> Sears’s *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South* includes oral histories of southern college students, though they were not necessarily activists.<sup>17</sup> D’Emilio focuses more on activism and community building, and has written about his own work in forming the Gay Academic Union in the North.<sup>18</sup> D’Emilio was among the first historians to write about gay history, and his efforts have paved the way for others to do this work. His

---

657. “Que(e)r(y)ing Nationalism: History, Nation, and Imperialism,” *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 19, no. 3 (2003): 51-70; “Can I Speak and Do You Hear Me?: Quest(ion)s for r/evolution,” *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 7, no. 1 (2002): 61-68; “What’s Queer Got to Do With It?: Interrogating Nationalism and Imperialism,” in *Sexualities and Education: A Reader*, edited by Erica R. Meiners and Therese Quinn (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 229-241.

<sup>16</sup> James T. Sears, *Lonely Hunters: An Oral History of Lesbian and Gay Southern Life, 1948-1968* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queer Space in the Stonewall South* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> John D’Emilio, *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

contributions to the scholarship and to the academic lives of other scholars are unparalleled in their contributions to queer visibility in historical scholarship.

Others have examined higher education more directly, although their focus has been explicitly on campuses in the North. In “The Silence is Broken: A History of the First Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Student Groups,” Brett Beemyn studied the formation of student groups in New York State. His work does not include trans\* people, and again, he is not working through a queer theoretical framework.<sup>19</sup> Patrick Dilley does employ some queer theory in his *Queer Man on Campus: A History of Non-Heterosexual College Men, 1945-2000*. His work deliberately excludes women, bisexuals, and trans\* people.<sup>20</sup> However, he includes in his study a number of universities that are not prestigious coastal schools, which is where most work on LGBTQ higher education history focuses.<sup>21</sup> Two authors have focused on Harvard specifically: Douglass Shand-Tucci in *The Crimson Letter: Harvard, Homosexuality, and the Shaping of American Culture* and William Wright in *Harvard’s Secret Court: The Savage 1920 Purge of Campus Homosexuals*. Neither focuses on the 1970s and

---

<sup>19</sup> Beemyn, “The Silence is Broken.”

<sup>20</sup> The use of an asterisk in the word “trans\*” is meant to be inclusive as possible of all trans identities. It is an umbrella term to include people who identify as transgender, transsexual, and other identities people may claim when they do not identify with their gender assigned at birth. Some of these identities use the “trans” prefix (like transmasculine), but the term is also meant to be inclusive of identities that do not use that prefix and are under the trans\* umbrella, including genderqueer, bigender, agender, gender fluid, and so on. These are distinct from each other but can be considered trans\* identities because people who claim them do not identify the gender they were assigned at birth and/or because they are “queering” gender expectations and assumptions by deviating from the norm or blurring the line between binary identities. However, simply because someone identifies with a term that can be understood as part of the trans\* umbrella, one should not assume that they identify with trans\*. All identities are claimed, not imposed. For more information, see Addie Jones, “Bridging the Gap—Trans\*: What does the Asterisk Mean and Why is it Used?” *Q Center* (blog), August 8, 2013, <http://www.pdxqcenter.org/bridging-the-gap-trans-what-does-the-asterisk-mean-and-why-is-it-used/>.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Dilley, *Queer Man on Campus: A History of Non-Heterosexual College Men, 1945-2000* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2002).

1980s, and, as with most other work on LGBTQ history of education, neither uses queer theory to inform their studies.<sup>22</sup>

This dissertation approaches a gap in the history of queer people in universities. First, it studies Florida, which has only been discussed in the context of the Johns Committee. The South in general is understudied in queer history. Second, it studies a more recent time period than many of the authors discussed above, bringing history of queer organizing on university campuses from the 1970s into the 1980s. In doing so, it will be able to address issues such as AIDS, which have not been discussed in previous works on queer education history. Third, I also use queer and gender theory to examine the heterosexist oppression present in the three universities under study and to write about a group of people who were often closeted.

The second body of work addressed here relates to the history of student activism. This is an enormous field: historians and historians of education have examined student movements in higher education in nearly every decade since the 1930s. Black student movements in particular are thoroughly explored, and anti-war and feminist movements represent a great deal of historical scholarship. However, the history of queer student activism in higher education contexts in the 1970s is limited. John D'Emilio wrote about the formation of the Gay Activists Alliance in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University*.<sup>23</sup> His book is a collection of twenty essays and focuses on northeastern universities. Brett Beemyn explored the founding of

---

<sup>22</sup> Douglass Shand-Tucci, *The Crimson Letter: Harvard, Homosexuality, and the Shaping of American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003); William Wright, *Harvard's Secret Court: The Savage 1920 Purge of Campus Homosexuals* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> D'Emilio, *Making Trouble*.

gay student groups in New York universities in the late 1960s.<sup>24</sup> No work on queer student activism has addressed higher education students in the 1970s south.<sup>25</sup> With this gap in mind, an understanding of the historiography of college student activism in the 1960s-1970s is critical.

The scholarship on 1960s and 1970s student activism is only beginning to address the South. It also has entirely omitted queer students. Christopher Huff outlines the historiography of student activism scholarship and the New Left, noting that in the 1980s, this field created a national-level narrative that overlooked most regional and local activity. In the 1990s, more researchers began to look at grassroots work on colleges and universities and found that there was no dominant narrative to explain the entire liberal and left-leaning organizing happening on these campuses. Huff argues that an important part of southern New Left activism is that campus radicals were operating in an environment “deeply hostile to left-based activism of any kind.”<sup>26</sup> This was certainly the case for the Florida students struggling to make themselves visible and form groups.

Some recent scholarship has discussed white southern student movements. Robert Cohen, David J. Snyder, and Dan T. Carter edited *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s*. This edited volume looks at counterculture movements in the 1960s South. It re-centers the era of student activism on the South and shows that the South took longer to become involved in the student movement

---

<sup>24</sup> Brett Beemyn, “The Silence is Broken.”

<sup>25</sup> James T. Sears’s excellent *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones* does address queer southern lives in the 1970s, but does not focus on student activism specifically.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher A. Huff, “Radicals Between the Hedges: The Origins of the New Left at the University of Georgia and the 1968 Sit-In,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 94, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 179.

because of segregation, religion, and its military tradition. The tactics of southern students were just as effective as those in the north.<sup>27</sup> Gregg L. Michel shows that anti-racist white southern activists were not as rare as historians have believed. The activists he portrays in *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969* tended to come to activism through religious faith and after having witnessed a racist act or a civil rights movement event.<sup>28</sup> Finally, Jeffrey A. Turner argues that too many studies of activism focus on the North and on national groups like the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Turner shows that the southern student activists had an activist trajectory rooted in race. The antiwar protest showed that even though the South tended to be pro-military, students still rooted their activism in national and international issues.<sup>29</sup> These examinations of southern activism are important to understanding the queer student movement in Florida. While it may appear that activism in the region was scarce, there was a tradition of college students acting up.

Three other important works discuss crucial aspects of student activism in places not typically considered by historians. Robbie Lieberman writes in *Prairie Power: Voices of the 1960s Midwestern Student movement* that Midwestern New Left activists have been ignored in other studies. He argues that these activists made significant

---

<sup>27</sup> Robert Cohen, David J. Snyder, Dan T. Carter, eds. *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> Gregg L. Michel, *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South, 1960-1970* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010).

contributions to the New Left in the late 1960s.<sup>30</sup> In *Dissent in the Heartland: The Sixties at Indiana University*, Mary Ann Wynkoop characterizes the culture of dissent at Indiana University and nationwide as more than a protest against the Vietnam War—it was a time when silenced people began to be heard. She argues that the students she studies had national effects and that their activism was all the more impressive for taking place in the face of an apolitical student body.<sup>31</sup> Beth Bailey’s *Sex in the Heartland* shows that a sexual revolution in a small university town in Kansas was the work of ordinary people testing boundaries, rather than the revolutionaries and radicals who often get historical attention.<sup>32</sup> These examinations of ordinary people participating in political movements despite being located in places that were not urban centers of activism inform this study of queer student groups in the South. Many of them did not explicitly position themselves as activists and were not simply involved in an activist movement happening outside the universities. They were creating it for themselves.

Numerous scholars have addressed campus activism on the part of black students. Joy Williamson’s *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois 1965-75* rejects a top-down history and uses local sources. She identifies the way black student groups changed over time, particularly in relation to their goals, and how they distanced themselves from white activist groups, whose focus tended to be on the Vietnam War. The students she studies used the philosophies, strategies, and tactics of national groups—a possibility less available to queer students, who had few role models. They

---

<sup>30</sup> Robbie Lieberman, *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Mary Ann Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland: The Sixties at Indiana University* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

changed the campus climate through creating black studies programs and increasing solidarity and community of black students on campus. Williamson also comments on the historiography of black student organizing. She argues that studies of student activism in the 1960s focus on the civil rights movement and anti-war activity, and that studies of black power neglect college students.<sup>33</sup> Many people have written about the context of black activism at white universities. These studies have shown how black students effectively changed their campus climates through working to increase recruitment of black students and faculty, challenging segregated spaces on campuses, and instituting black studies programs.<sup>34</sup> These goals are similar to those of the queer students discussed in this study in that both groups were attempting to make a place for themselves. However, most of these studies lack a specifically gendered analysis and none explicitly include queer students.

---

<sup>33</sup> Joy Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois 1965-75* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Stefan M. Bradley, *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Stefan Bradley, "'Gym Crow Must Go!' Black Student Activism at Columbia University, 1967-1968," *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 163-181; Claybourne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Harvard University Press, 1995); William H. Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest: Black Student Activism in a White University* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985); VP Franklin, "African American Student Activism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century," *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 105-109; Peniel E. Joseph, "Dashikis and Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement," *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 182-203; Harry G. Lefever, *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005); James P. Marshall, *Student Activism and Civil Rights in Mississippi: Protest, Politics, and the Struggle for Racial Justice, 1960-1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013); Richard P. McCormick, *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students at the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Peter Wallenstein, ed. *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008).

Anti-war student activism is another large body of important scholarship. Thomas W. Gallant wrote a historiography of the movement that outlined four views.<sup>35</sup> Two schools of thought argue that the student anti-war movement was revolutionary and two argue that it was not. The liberal-progressive view—with by far the most historical consensus—argues that the movement was reformist, not revolutionary, in that its goals were to change the establishment in the name of social justice and equality. Ending the Vietnam War was but one part of this. These scholars emphasize the New Left as the movement's dominant ideological framework.<sup>36</sup> Moderate conservatives also argue that the movement was not revolutionary, that it was motivated by self-interest about the draft. They often trivialize the movement by claiming it was comprised of baby boomers who had too much time, freedom, and money.<sup>37</sup>

Some have approached the movement from a radical leftist stance, especially Max Elbaum in the *Radical History Review*. Elbaum argues that many of the student activists had close ties to explicitly revolutionary organizations who had an agenda

---

<sup>35</sup> Thomas W. Gallant, "'Got a Revolution, Go To Revolution': Student Activism and the Antiwar Movement. An Historical Assessment," *Historiein* 9 (2009): 57-66.

<sup>36</sup> Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*; Larry Isaac, Steve McDonald, and Greg Lukasik, "Takin' It from the Streets: How the Sixties Mass Movement Revitalized Unionization," *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 1 (2006): 46-96; Andrew L. Johns, "Doves Among Hawks: Republican Opposition to the Vietnam War, 1964-1968," *Peace and Change* 31, no. 1 (2006): 585-628; George N. Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1987); Joel Lefkowitz, "Movement Outcomes and Movement Decline: The Vietnam War and the Antiwar Movement," *New Political Science* 27, no. 1 (2005): 1-22; Melvin Small, "The Doves Ascendant: The American Antiwar Movement in 1968," *South Central Review* 16 (Winter 1999): 43-52; Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002); Melvin Small, *At the Water's Edge: American Politics and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005).

<sup>37</sup> Gerard J. DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); James Max Fendrich, "The Forgotten Movement: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement," *Sociological Inquiry* 73, no. 3 (2003): 338-358; Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); Heineman, *Put Your Bodies Upon the Wheels: Student Revolt in the 1960s* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2001).



much bigger than just opposition to the war. These students were heavily influenced by Third World Marxism.<sup>38</sup> Those writing from a right-wing, neoconservative perspective also claim that the movement was revolutionary because they took the activists at their word that they aimed for violent overthrow of the government. They agree that the revolutionary movement was tied to Third World Marxism, but saw this as a sign that America's enemies abroad were manipulating the student movement.<sup>39</sup> At times, queer student activists did seem to be informed by Third World Marxism and aligned themselves with other explicitly revolutionary groups. In other contexts, their work was in a New Left context and was more reformist than revolutionary.

The history of student activism at the college and university level has never included queer students. It often employs the useful frameworks of critical race theory and social movement theory, but has not used queer theory to meet its objectives. Finally, it has only begun to address the South, but has not addressed Florida at all. This dissertation makes contributions in these areas.

The University of Florida, Florida State University, and the University of South Florida were each located in very different contexts from what is typically considered the nexus of queer activism, New York City. It is important to understand the interrelated history and context of each university, including their experiences with desegregation and the Johns Committee. Gainesville was the site of the first state university, the University of Florida. The university underwent significant changes in the course of the

---

<sup>38</sup> Max Elbaum, "What Legacy from the Radical Internationalism of 1968?" *Radical History Review* 82 (Winter 2002): 37-64.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts about the Sixties*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2006); Preston Shires, *Hippies of the Religious Right* (Waco.: Baylor University Press, 2007).

twentieth century. It opened in 1906 to serve white male students, and grew to be one of the largest public universities in the nation. World War II slowed the growth of the university, until the Federal Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 provided unprecedented funds for campus construction to keep pace with quickly expanding enrolment.<sup>40</sup> The campus continued to grow over the next decade, partly due to the admission of women in 1947. When J. Wayne Reitz became president of the university in 1954, he saw the importance of the university to world events. He adopted the Cold War ideologies of the national conservative movement, hoping to inspire the university's foreign graduates to become ambassadors for the United States and cultivate new allies overseas.<sup>41</sup> Racial integration was not among his priorities, although the university quietly admitted seven black students to the undergraduate division in 1962.<sup>42</sup> The Johns Committee chose UF as its first academic target, beginning its investigation of the university in 1958. Johns had the total cooperation of Reitz and the campus police department. One police officer participated in sting operations to catch students and participated in the secret questioning. Reitz defended his decisions to protect his campus from the menace of homosexuality. At least 15 professors and 50 students left—either voluntarily or by force—after being interrogated. Johns's perceived successes at UF empowered him to investigate FSU and USF.<sup>43</sup> Even after the

---

<sup>40</sup> Humphries, "Accommodating Jane."

<sup>41</sup> Sevan G. Terzian and Leigh Ann Osborne, "Postwar Era Precedents and the Ambivalent Quest for International Students at the University of Florida," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 297

<sup>42</sup> Jessica Clawson, "Administrative Recalcitrance and Government Intervention: Desegregation and the University of Florida, 1962-1972," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 89 (Winter 2011): 347-374.

<sup>43</sup> Stacy Braukman, *Communists and Perverts under the Palms: The Johns Committee in Florida, 1956-1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012).

devastation of the Johns Committee, the university community would become familiar student activism in the 1960s, which prepared it for the rise of queer student activism in the early 1970s.<sup>44</sup>

Florida State University's history was closely tied to UF's. Florida State College opened in 1901. In 1905, it was renamed the Florida State College for Women (FSCW).<sup>45</sup> Students at FSCW received an education to prepare them for marriage and families. The university continued to grow and expand, and like UF, was dramatically affected by World War II. The women participated in the war effort. They sold savings bonds and worked in victory gardens, but after the war, women were expected to return to their subservient roles. The G.I. Bill also changed FSCW. The University of Florida was not equipped to handle all the men wanting to pursue higher education on the G.I. Bill, so the Board of Control established the Tallahassee Branch of the University of Florida (TBUF) in Tallahassee to alleviate overflow at UF. The TBUF and FSCW shared a common campus, although they were separate entities. The male students were not accustomed to the controlling structure of FSCW and eventually the code of conduct changed for men, so that the same standards still applied to women's behavior when it came to things like smoking and off-campus activities, but those rules did not always apply to the men.<sup>46</sup>

In 1947, Governor Millard Caldwell signed legislation making the two organizations one, called Florida State University. Florida A&M University (FAMU), the

---

<sup>44</sup> Clawson, "Administrative Recalcitrance and Government Intervention."

<sup>45</sup> Allison Hawkins Crume, "The Historical Development of the Student Government Association as a Student Sub-Culture at The Florida State University: 1946-1976" (Dissertation, Florida State University, 2004), 31-32.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39.

black university, was also located in Tallahassee. The FSU administration did not permit exchange programs between the two universities.<sup>47</sup> The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s came to campus hard. When a professor suggested that students should be able to engage in civil disobedience, local citizens and community leaders called for FSU President Robert Strozier to dismiss him. Local residents were much more conservative, on average, than the students of FSU or FAMU. FSU was desegregated in 1962, which was a difficult experience for the black students, who faced harassment and intimidation.<sup>48</sup> The Johns Committee witch-hunt found its way to FSU in 1959. As at UF, the FSU police force assisted in entrapping students, faculty, and staff. University authorities encouraged the removal of homosexuals from FSU and the investigators performed several raids on campus. James Schnur writes that “the Tallahassee campaign resembled earlier purges in both its ferocity and its disregard for the constitutional protections of the accused.”<sup>49</sup> The committee hired student informants in addition to using their own investigators. The committee also investigated FAMU with a particularly racist zeal.<sup>50</sup>

The University of South Florida, located in Tampa, was the most recently founded of the universities. It was chartered in 1956 and opened to classes in 1960. Tampa was a more urban setting than either Tallahassee or Gainesville, and the Pork Choppers, a group of conservative state legislators from North Florida and the panhandle, opposed its founding. They worried that an urban university might threaten

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-51.

<sup>49</sup> Schnur, *Cold Warriors in the Hot Sunshine*, 116.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 119.

the primacy of UF and FSU. Much of their opposition seemed to stem from concerns that the new university would be racially integrated. Neither UF nor FSU had desegregated. Sumpter Lowry, an influential Tampa businessman who would ultimately lead the Johns Committee to investigate USF, told USF President John Allen that he needed to “clarify his educational philosophy and goals for the institution” and order his faculty not to foster un-American ideas.<sup>51</sup> When the university was founded, the students and faculty were for some time excited about their freedom from traditional academic constraints. Unlike the other two universities, its president supported desegregation and said that the university would admit qualified students regardless of race. Allen and his staff worked to create an academic climate and a scholarly community committed to intellectualism. However, the university did not necessarily realize these goals. Student protests of the 1960s fostered discontent and the faculty was mired in fierce competition for tenure and promotion.<sup>52</sup>

The Johns Committee investigation at USF began in April 1962. This was Allen’s second experience with the group, as he had been vice president of UF during the investigation there. Allen and his administration were unaware of it for the first month. The committee said that Allen had leftist tendencies and the “characteristics of a homo” and made similar statements and assumptions about other faculty members.<sup>53</sup> USF’s president defended his faculty and promoted a belief in academic responsibility.<sup>54</sup> Allen insisted that the committee perform its investigation in the light of day. Nonetheless,

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 197-202.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 225.

some faculty members were suspended and others resigned. Allen's refusal to allow the committee to interrogate his students in secret was effective in bringing the substance of the investigation to light. Many people in the city and the state were outraged when they learned of the true nature of the committee and the way it had progressed to interrogating professors about what books and films they taught. These battles over academic freedom were controversial, as many Floridians did believe that USF was soft on communism and integration and conducive to ideas like atheism.<sup>55</sup>

### **Queer History and Education History**

The study of queer history is relatively new because queer people have only become more visible in the last few decades. The homophobic oppression at the government and grassroots levels in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century has kept queer people, and therefore queer studies, repressed. Anti-sodomy laws rendered homosexuality illegal in most states until the US Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* of 2003 declared such legislation unconstitutional. Times of intense persecution, especially in the Cold War, prompted queer people to stay closeted and invisible.<sup>56</sup> Invisibility of queer people in the historical record, then, mirrors the problems of queer invisibility in mainstream society in general.

While many people conceive of the gay rights movement emerging in the 1970s, it had actually been around since the 1950s in many places. The Mattachine Society, a group run by gay men, was founded Los Angeles in 1951. The Mattachine Society and

---

<sup>55</sup> Braukman, *Communists and Perverts*.

<sup>56</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers*; David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (University of Chicago Press, 2004); Kristen A. Renn, "LGBT and Queer Research in Higher Education: The State and Status of the Field," *Educational Researcher* 39, no. 2 (March 2010): 132-141.

its publication, *ONE*, stressed equality for gay people. It was a male- and white-dominated movement and, unlike the Gay Liberation Front after it, did not focus on liberation, changing the heterosexist assumptions of society, or alliances with other marginalized groups.<sup>57</sup> This is not to underplay the group's significance or to claim that it had a monolithic outlook on the goals of gay rights. Chuck Rowland, one of its founders, scandalized an audience at a Mattachine conference when he asked them to imagine a near future "when we will march arm in arm, ten abreast down Hollywood Boulevard proclaiming our pride in our homosexuality."<sup>58</sup> The missionary fervor of the Mattachine Society waned when a group of conservatives within it "rejected the concept of a sexual minority culture in favor of individual psychological adjustment within a heterosexual culture."<sup>59</sup> It became less radical and faded away by the late 1960s, but not before it had done the important work of creating community and solidarity. In the 1960s, Richard Inmann ran a short-lived, one-man chapter of the Mattachine Society in Miami. The Miami chapter disbanded in March of 1967, two years before Stonewall, the demonstration in New York City that opened the floodgates for gay liberation.<sup>60</sup>

The Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) were the other major homophile group of the era. They were a group of women who created an alternative for socializing because the police were frequently raiding gay bars. Within a few years, it had grown to be a national level organization with chapters in major cities all over the country. The group was open to straight women as well, and eventually took up feminism as its major concern. Like

---

<sup>57</sup> Sears, *Lonely Hunters*, 191-193.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>60</sup> Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, ix.

the Mattachine Society, the DOB had a magazine, *The Ladder*, which lasted until the early 1970s. The groups also shared early goals of assimilation and adjustment into mainstream society. Over time, the DOB worked to have homosexuality removed from the American Psychiatric Association's lists of mental illnesses. This is perhaps its most well known effort. The DOB and the Mattachine Society worked together at times, but there was tension between the groups. In particular, in this era before the second-wave feminist movement, the Mattachine Society was not always friendly to women. Controversy about goals and ideals and about the purpose of *The Ladder* led to the group's dissolution in 1972. The DOB and the Mattachine Society may not have lasted and their ideas are now considered out-moded by some, but they were both critical to pre-Stonewall queer organizing.<sup>61</sup>

The Stonewall riots of 1969 were an important flashpoint for queer rights activism. They were a series of violent demonstrations in New York City in response to frequent police raids of gay bars. Stonewall is important because it is collectively considered the first time in the US that queer people fought back against state-sponsored persecution. The beat poet Allen Ginsberg, who had been open about his homosexuality since 1943, went to the riot and captured its significance in one sentence: "You know, the guys there were so beautiful—they've lost that wounded look."<sup>62</sup> Drag queens, often vilified in gay and lesbian communities for being flagrantly gender bending, were central to the protest. They proved their importance to queer liberation in their courageous public demonstration of their rage. In the post-Stonewall

---

<sup>61</sup> Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York: Seal Press, 2007).

<sup>62</sup> Lucian Truscott IV, "View From Outside: Gay Power Comes to Sheridan Square." *Village Voice*, June 24, 1969.



era, coming out was redefined by many people to be political. It came to mean shedding internalized homophobia and improving one's life. Another phenomenon of the post-Stonewall era was the emergence of a strong lesbian liberation movement, which would be crucial to keeping the queer rights movement from becoming entirely male-dominated.<sup>63</sup> For instance, in Gainesville, Florida, some feminist groups aligned with queer liberation because they recognized that they had lesbian members.<sup>64</sup>

Within a month of the Stonewall rebellion, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was formed in New York City. A more radical group than the Mattachine Society, the GLF wanted to focus on direct action to liberate all oppressed people—including those oppressed because of class and race—rather than focus on assimilation. Their goals included changing social institutions and norms by embracing non-monogamy and eliminating heteronormativity in gay relationships. The GLF was not an organization with leadership structure or dues, but it held consciousness-raising groups to help themselves overcome their own sexism and racism.<sup>65</sup> Over time, the GLF splintered off as New Left groups, including the Black Panthers, rejected the GLF presence at their events, and as members within the GLF pushed for a more single-issue focus on gay issues. About two years after its founding, the GLF gave way to the Gay Activists Alliance, a single-issue organization focused on legal reform and assimilation that embraced a hierarchical structure. John D'Emilio argues that The New Left had created

---

<sup>63</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*.

<sup>64</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 235; See also *The Eye*, an underground feminist newsletter run by women at the University of Florida who began expressing their support for gay and lesbian students in 1971.

<sup>65</sup> "Gay Liberation Front," OutHistory, last modified September 28, 2011, [http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Gay\\_Liberation\\_Front](http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Gay_Liberation_Front)

networks through which gay activism could spread and reach closeted gay people. Gay liberation groups considered themselves part of 1960s radicalism and addressed issues that were mobilizing American youth, such as the Vietnam War.<sup>66</sup> As will be discussed further, because the act of coming out in the 1970s was, in many cases, political, the queer students saw their visibility as a political act. Queer students also participated in other activist groups and learned tactics in their participation in those spaces. The ties to student movements and to queer history are among the issues explored in this dissertation.

### **Central Questions**

This dissertation examines three sets of questions about the emergence of queer student visibility in the context of three of Florida's largest universities: The University of Florida, the University of South Florida, and Florida State University. Each of the three universities discussed here faced investigation by the Johns Committee, the Trask-Bush Amendment of 1981, had a queer liberation movement of some kind in the 1970s, and are large state schools supervised by the same Board of Control. The questions I pose are as follows, in three groups:

First, what characteristics of the climate of each university discussed here helped and hindered the struggle for queer visibility on university campuses? The history of higher education examines various efforts to further diversity, taking into account the context of the universities in question, but have yet to address queer issues. Studies of racial desegregation and access to higher education for women have been important to higher education history, but these studies have rarely included anything beyond a brief

---

<sup>66</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 233-240.

mention of queer students. But queer students are as much a part of the fabric of a university as these other groups—indeed, queer people are often also people of color and/or women. Their inclusion signals possibilities for conversations about what gender and sexuality mean in a university context.<sup>67</sup> One methodical and methodological issue that bears on this dissertation is that sexual minorities are difficult to locate historically, but students' decisions to be out and visible alters the negotiation of spaces within their academic institutions. Thus, the political agency of the queer students who insisted on their own visibility changed the universities to make way for a previously-silenced group of students. If not all of their goals were met, this speaks more to the struggle they faced than the inefficacy of their actions. This struggle has implications for education in expanding ideas about who universities serve and how marginalized students push their way into the fabric of the university.

Second, how were the larger political and social contexts in which each university was situated significant to queer emergence? During the 1970s and 1980s, the United States saw a rise in what historians consider modern conservatism. In addition to statewide events like the Anita Bryant campaign and the Trask-Bush Amendment, issues of conservatism on these campuses contributed to the context for emergence. For instance, what role did religion play in the reaction to queer emergence? How did fraternities and sororities factor in to creating an atmosphere that was inclusive, hostile, or neutral toward queer students? Religious, social, and political conservatives from the

---

<sup>67</sup> Karabel, *The Chosen*; Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America*; Nancy J. Evans, "Guiding Principles: A Review and Analysis of Student Affairs Philosophical Statements," *Journal of College Student Development* 42, no. 4 (Jul-Aug 2001): 359-77; Horowitz, *Campus Life*; Jana Nidiffer, *The First Professional Deans of Women: More than a Wise and Pious Matron* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); Jana Nidiffer, *Women Administrators in Higher Education: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000); Audrey L. Rentz, *Student Affairs Practice in Higher Education* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1996); Suran, "Coming Out Against the War."

campus to the national level enlisted rhetoric of fear about blurred gender roles that have been powerful in opposing queer visibility. This gender baiting affected the reliance of campus queer liberation movements on “visible queers” and gender non-conformists. Examining the rise of conservatism in the university context can inform work on the impact of political movements on universities and marginalized students within them.

Third, how did queer students interact other social movements? What role did the alliances with other students—individuals and groups—play in the emergence of queer visibility? Sometimes other groups, including campus newspapers, came to the aid of the queer students. How did queer students’ tactics change over time? How did they educate their peers, create spaces for themselves, and in other ways participate in the student-fueled changes to campus climates in the 1970s and 1980s? In the post-Stonewall era, the definition and expression of sexual identity became a political matter. The dissertation characterizes the emergence of queer students on the three campuses as a political development. This aspect of queer history is part of a larger story of student activism. Casting queer emergence as a political development widens the conception of what campus political engagement looks like and increases queer visibility in historical and education scholarship.

### **Sources, Methodology, and Theory**

This dissertation seeks to make a methodological contribution to the historical study of queer people. Difficulties in locating sources can perpetuate the invisibility or silence of queer people in historical studies. This work confronts that problem by including oral histories and student newspapers alongside institutional and state records. Without the voices of the students, it would be impossible to overcome the

institutional and cultural silence and invisibility of queer people. Oral history is not an unfamiliar method to education researchers, but I demonstrate that studies of “invisible” people, about whom many assume there are no sources, are possible.

In addition to marshaling the scholarship of those who have examined these issues from different angles, I have relied on three categories of primary source material. First, I conducted archival research at all three universities. The availability of this kind of source varied by university. Florida State University had nothing pertaining to queer history in its archives. The University of Florida had slightly more, mostly in the form of underground newspapers. The University of South Florida is the only one of the three with a collection of queer-oriented material, although most of it is not relevant to this dissertation, because it pertains to the late 1980s and 1990s. However, that the archivists there had given thought to queer history meant they were the most familiar with the sources I might find useful. While archivists at all three universities were helpful and supportive, those at USF seemed to be the most invested in my dissertation project. That all three university archives held little in relation to queer students is itself a point of interest. It shows the institutional-level silence on queer issues. It was easier in the UF archives, for instance, to find information and heated debates on wine consumption on campus than it was to find anything related to the presence of queer people. This silence is part of the story.

The most helpful source at all three universities was the student newspapers. *The Independent Florida Alligator* at UF, *The Oracle* at USF, and *The Florida Flambeau* at FSU were excellent sources for showing queer and non-queer students’ perspectives on increased queer visibility. This is where the best information for a grassroots story

comes from: How did queer students author their own history? How did homophobic or supportive straight students contribute to the campus environment in which queer emergence happened? University administrators, faculty, and community members also found a voice in the student newspapers. The insights available through this source are critical to understanding the students' context.

Each newspaper has its own context and history with activism. The UF student-run newspaper, *The Independent Florida Alligator*, was a major tool of the queer students in their emergence. Long considered the voice of the students, especially when it shed administrative oversight in 1973, it provided a venue for queer students to begin the conversation about what it meant to be queer, and what it meant for straight students to have queer classmates. The *Alligator* had a history of being contentious and of challenging the university administration. Jean Chance, one-time *Alligator* writer and eventual UF journalism professor, claimed that during the time of the Johns Committee investigation, the newspaper's writers and editors tried to make life uncomfortable for the committee members through publishing pictures of the investigators and generally agitating the student body. This irritated President Reitz, but Chance said of the time, "We tried to be as feisty and muckraking as we knew how to be."<sup>68</sup> None of the university presidents appreciated the "fierce independence of the *Florida Alligator*," because it always opposed governors and UF administrations.<sup>69</sup> Tom Julin, who wrote for the paper in the mid-1970s, noted a sense of distrust of authority among the staff: "There was always a feeling as though you wanted to topple the president of the

---

<sup>68</sup> Jean Chance, interview by Mark Ward; January 22, 2003, FAL 1, transcript, Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

<sup>69</sup> Hugh Cunningham, interview by Mark Ward; November 17, 2003; FAL 14, transcript, Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

university.”<sup>70</sup> This general attitude probably helped guide the *Alligator* to a place of queer advocacy.

The *Florida Flambeau* at FSU was one of five media services for which the Board of Student Publications was responsible by the mid-1950s. In 1956, the *Flambeau* was under investigation by the Student Government Association (SGA) because it often conflicted with the SGA and opposed the administration.<sup>71</sup> As early as the mid-1920s, students who rebelled against the FCSW honor code found an ally in the *Flambeau*. The newspaper advocated open faculty senate meetings, a student bill of rights, and faculty accountability. It challenged the administration and the FSU traditions they found oppressive. One staff writer recalled that the newspaper “attracted people who were more interested in things like social justice.” The *Flambeau* became independent after a free-speech movement on campus in 1967.<sup>72</sup> It was not as vocally supportive of queer students as the *Alligator* was at UF.

The USF *Oracle* was founded with the high ideals of the new campus in mind. Its first issue came out in 1966, after six years of the students reading their campus news on one page of the now-defunct *Tampa Times*. The newspaper won awards for its photography and for excellence in college journalism. The biggest controversy it dealt with in the 1960s-1980s was a walkout of the staff in 1970 over the publication of an editorial cartoon. The *Oracle* always supported the queer students if it said anything at all, but its culture of silence prevailed for many years beyond when *The Alligator* began

---

<sup>70</sup> Tom Julin, interview by Julian Pleasants; March 13, 2003; FAL 3, transcript, Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

<sup>71</sup> Crume, *The Historical Development of the Student Government Association*, 47.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

discussing queer issues. This may be in part because the queer community itself was not visible or organized on campus until 1974.<sup>73</sup>

This story could not be written well without oral histories, because it is primarily about people's experiences, not about the institutional perspective. Meeting and interviewing the people who agreed to participate in this process is one of the most rewarding experiences of my academic career. I was able to interview people from all three universities, but all but two people who agreed to speak to me were male. I met and know women who were eligible to be interviewed, but they expressed sincere anxiety about the process and felt they could not subject themselves to the re-living of their times in college. I regret that I was not able to find more women who wanted to participate, but it was not for lack of trying. I'm a woman and I believe in the importance of women telling their stories. Fortunately, women did write letters to the editor and opinion pieces in the newspaper sources I have, and were involved in the organizations I studied. Women's voices do appear here, although not to the extent that I would like. I was also distressed that only one person of color came forward to be interviewed because people of color are underrepresented in queer studies literature. I think this might be because after the Gay Liberation Front era, the gay and queer rights movements were largely dominated by white people. The people I spoke to confirmed that leadership roles tended to be held by white people. Also, every person I spoke to identified as cis and either queer or gay. No trans\* or bisexual people came forward to be interviewed, although I actively pursued people who identified as trans\* and/or bi. So, the narrators for my study represent the people with the most social capital. The

---

<sup>73</sup> About the Oracle, <http://www.usforacle.com/about>.



stories of white men have often been considered the most important and valuable, and white men as a whole do not question the validity of their stories. The people I know who are not white men all insisted they had nothing important to say (even though I told them that anything they have to say is important to me), or faulted the accuracy of their memories (even though I told them what is important to me is not their recitation of facts, but their feelings about their experiences). I am exceedingly grateful to the people who did agree to be interviewed. Their stories are important, valid, and need to be told. I only regret that people who did not feel their stories merited my attention could not be convinced otherwise.

This is, fundamentally, a grassroots story. It is about ordinary people, and instead of having a top-down focus that would come from looking at the ways universities accommodated or did not accommodate queer students, it looks first at how students worked for, opposed, or avoided queer student visibility. The actions of the university are important, but the dissertation does not stem first from that perspective. This is crucial because queer students worked for their spaces on campus; it was not given to them by university administrations. The purpose of this work from its inception was to give queer people the chance to talk about their own experiences and lives and be represented in the literature. John D’Emilio calls for queer historians to “storm the citadels of history,”<sup>74</sup> and to bring queer history into the mainstream narrative. An important part of this is the inclusion of people who are not elected officials or university administrators. Queer people are too often rendered voiceless by institutional violence and exclusion. Instead of reinforcing the privilege of the people who have a public voice,

---

<sup>74</sup> John D’Emilio, “ShhOUT in Chicago: Reflections on the Making of Gay and Lesbian History” (paper presented at The History of Education Society Conference, Chicago, Illinois. November 5, 2011).

this dissertation tells a story from the perspective of marginalized people. If scholars only use state sources to tell history, we write a story from the perspective of the state. Use of oral history can help historians avoid this state perspective and understand the benefit of approaching sources critically and treating historical actors as three-dimensional people.

Oral history, of course, has its limitations. Memory can be faulty, and people's interpretations of events do not always result in objective truth, or correct recollection of things like dates. Where this kind of information is important, having another source, like a newspaper, is helpful. Objectivity is never really possible regardless of source, because all documents created by humans are subject to some interpretation, and oral history has other value besides objectivity. Furthermore, an oral history project is limited by who will volunteer to participate—a serious problem I faced in conducting this research.<sup>75</sup> Despite the limitations of oral history, it is important to this dissertation because without it, the silence of queer people in the archives would be difficult to overcome. The newspapers help with this as well, but actually speaking to people who were part of the emergence of visibility made an enormous difference in understanding how people felt and why they made the decisions they did in forming queer student groups and communities.

The paucity of sources is certainly a concern for people who wish to study queer history, and this study has proven to be no exception. However, queer theory can help

---

<sup>75</sup> Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 162; Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), xv; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Mary Murphy, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2005).

make the most of the sources that are available. This theory can help guide a study that focuses on resistance, not just oppression.<sup>76</sup> Queer theory can also help to fill some gaps in the historical record that come with the problems of identifying sexual minorities if they are not “out.” It can help us understand the nuances of identity within “queer,” and how these different identities have shaped the queer liberation movements. Perhaps most importantly, it can let us see the theories that develop from queer experiences.<sup>77</sup>

It is hard to identify sexual minorities if they are not or were not “out,” which makes it impossible to know the limits of our studies. Outness is not a binary proposition—in other words, it is not always true that a person is entirely out or entirely closeted, as a person’s identity expression can vary based on context. It is not an indication of safety or risk. It is, as Cris Mayo explains, a “complex set of negotiations, a complicated set of weighed consequences and benefits, as well as a way of creating spaces for possibilities with others.” Queer theory helps us deal with the “meaning and place of sexual identity, activity, and community.”<sup>78</sup> There are degrees of “outness,” and some people only feel fully understood, and thus fully out, in queer spaces. This can make any queer research difficult, especially historical research, when those queer spaces cannot be observed and perhaps left no record. This concept of space and of relationships to it is important, as students’ decision to be out changes their relationship

---

<sup>76</sup> Graves, “So, You Think You Have a History?”

<sup>77</sup> Catherine A. Lugg, “Why’s a Nice Dyke Like You Embracing this Postmodern Crap?” *Journal of School Leadership* 18, no. 2 (March 2008): 164-199; Cris Mayo, “Queering Foundations: Queer and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Educational Research,” *Review of Research in Education* 31, no. 1 (March 2007): 78-94.

<sup>78</sup> Mayo, “Queering Foundations,” 83.

with themselves, their negotiation of spaces—including university campuses—and their feelings of belonging to their school community.<sup>79</sup>

Queer theory also helps us see how identity is often policed by the hetero-patriarchy, and can give us a better understanding of the kinds of oppression faced by queer people. As Jacques Derrida has shown, gender is a language of symbols, and language creates permanently unstable, and artificial, gender binaries.<sup>80</sup> Many queer people transcend gender norms—or present “different” gender symbols—in ways that lead others to believe they are gay. For instance, a woman who wears a necktie might be perceived to be a lesbian, whether she is or not. Gay couples do not have one man to carry around all the masculine signifiers and one woman to carry all the feminine signifiers. Conservative politicians and citizens who are concerned with policing gender note instances of gender insubordination and play on peoples’ fears of the breakdown of traditional roles to push an anti-gay agenda, and many queer activists have and continue to find themselves baited by this kind of rhetoric. As a result, those with a more assimilationist focus considered the visible queers who were responsible for much of the early success of the queer rights movement an embarrassment. Some queer people felt they had to be more gender-normative, and rather than defend the people who had borne the brunt of the early movement, many worked to become more mainstream.<sup>81</sup> This discomfort with upsetting the gendered status quo played out to a certain extent at the University of Florida, as the queer student group that eventually won campus space

---

<sup>79</sup> Mayo, “Queering Foundations.”

<sup>80</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer* (New York: Alyson Books, 2004).

<sup>81</sup> Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory*, 14-16.

was not the Gay Liberation Front, but the Gay Community Service Center, which was a significantly less politicized organization.<sup>82</sup>

Early scholarship on queer liberation put people into boxes—such as, *either* gay or straight—that did not work for them, and were painful to people who did not meet the assumptions embedded in those identities.<sup>83</sup> Queer theory helps us understand that all identity is social construction, but that how these identities are perceived in society has very real consequences. Furthermore, we all have multiple identities (white, female, cis,<sup>84</sup> queer) that interact with each other in different ways depending on the social context of the moment.<sup>85</sup> We have to constantly negotiate our self-perceptions in different environments, so identity, as Catherine Lugg argues, is “always up for grabs.”<sup>86</sup>

Jackie Blount has argued that gender and sexual orientation are fluid, but that society has found ways to perpetuate norms for both, including religious institutions and communities. With the development of compulsory public education, schools took on the job of teaching “correct” gendered behaviors and regulating sexual orientation. Teachers in particular were meant to model appropriate gender and sexual orientation presentations.<sup>87</sup> Understanding the ways identity is socially constructed helps us more fully understand historical queer experiences—that the people in a historical narrative had complicated, human identities that they constantly had to negotiate in an

---

<sup>82</sup> Jessica Clawson, “Coming Out of the Campus Closet: The Emerging Visibility of Queer Students at the University of Florida, 1970-1982,” *Educational Studies*, in press.

<sup>83</sup> Lugg, “Why’s a Nice Dyke Like You Embracing this Postmodern Crap?”, 164-165.

<sup>84</sup> To be cis, or cisgender, is to identify with the gender as assigned at birth.

<sup>85</sup> Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 6.

<sup>86</sup> Lugg, “Why’s a Nice Dyke Like You Embracing this Postmodern Crap?”, 182.

<sup>87</sup> Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 15.

aggressively hetero-normatizing society. Such an understanding can also help us see how the consequences of identity perception affect the lives of queer people in different places and in different times. Queer theory can help researchers reach these understandings.

### **Subjectivity Statement**

In history and in education studies, the question about who the researcher is matters. There are those who would argue that a queer person could not be “objective” in studying queer history, because a queer person might “side” with queer students. I reject this perspective, as I believe that opposing queer visibility is a position that comes from bigotry, not intellectual consideration. As one researcher says:

As an insider, the lesbian has an important sensitivity to offer, yet she is also more vulnerable than the nonlesbian researcher, both to pressure from the heterosexual world—that her studies conform to previous works and describe the lesbian reality in terms of its relationship with the outside—and to pressure from the inside, from the lesbian community itself—that her studies mirror not the reality of that community but its self-protective ideology.<sup>88</sup>

I am a queer person who does queer research. I do not claim objectivity. Queer rights are important to me, as is queer community. My dissertation is not arguing one way or the other about the validity of queer identities. I take the validity of all identities as truth. Before being a researcher, I am a person in a particular culture, as are all researchers. I am white, gay, and genderqueer and I live in Florida. This affects my outlook and my relationship to the participants, but as James T. Sears says, “The test is not one’s ability to remain objective but one’s capacity to be empathetic.”<sup>89</sup> I have done my best to treat

---

<sup>88</sup> Susan Krieger, “Lesbian Identity and Community: Recent Social Science Literature,” *Signs* 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1982): 91-96.

<sup>89</sup> James T. Sears, *Growing up Gay in the South: Race, Gender, and Journeys of the Spirit* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1991), 21.

my narrators and my sources with respect and understanding. Rather than a search for The Truth, I convey the variety of truths held by the people I write about and honor their lives, even the ones whose beliefs and ideas make me personally uncomfortable.

### **Description of Each Chapter**

This dissertation's structure starts and ends chronologically but has a thematic approach overall. This introduction serves as Chapter 1. Chapter 2 discusses the origin stories of the gay groups at each university, from about 1970-1974. Most of this story focuses on FSU and UF, because USF's history is more obscure and difficult to trace. It also touches on the national-level changes that took place in the early 1970s. Chapter 2 shows how the students began changing the university through insisting on their visibility and shows how the students at the beginning of the GLF founding saw themselves as political activists. Chapter 3 highlights how the intersections of queer spaces and straight people sometimes resulted in oppressive silences, but had the potential to silence heteronormativity and heterosexism. It looks at gay bars, drag, queer visibility in entertainment, and cultural artifacts like lifestyle columns on queer people. The importance of these cultural sites and artifacts to the queer visibility movement is the primary theme of Chapter 3, but it also discusses the importance of queer space to queer people. In other words, one way to look at these places, events, and narratives is in their value as educational tools for straight people. But it is also important to consider how they affected queer people themselves. Drag was one tool the queer people used to educate straight people about gender, queer people, and community. At the same time, they debated the merits of the presence of straight people (and their money) in gay bars. Chapter 3 will discuss the use of drag as an educational tool, particularly in the setting of a university, where students presumably go

to be educated. It will also discuss the failure of drag to educate straight people, as well as the contested nature of straight people in queer spaces. Lifestyle columns in the student newspapers were also opportunities for education and had positive and negative effects, as queer people sometimes objected to the language used or the way they were portrayed in the media.

Chapter 4 examines a critical turning point in the struggle for queer rights in America: the rise of Anita Bryant and her Florida-based Save Our Children campaign that introduced ideas and language that is still being used today to oppose LGBTQ equality. Chapter 4 will also examine the rise of modern conservatism in the United States and how it and Bryant helped foster each other's growth. In particular, it discusses the religious opposition to gay rights in the 1970s and 1980s. It shows how conservatism and religion dealt a powerful blow to the queer students and their presence on campus. Opposition to this form of oppression is part of expressing political agency.

Chapter 5 shows how personal these battles could be. The rise of the right-wing Republican Party created a hostile climate for queer people nationwide. While each university felt these effects in different ways, the struggles at FSU were centered on a student named Bill Wade. Wade was an openly gay man who ran for Homecoming Princess and won. His tormenters were magnified by another effect of conservatism: increased fraternity membership. Fraternity membership had declined in the early 1970s, when they averaged 34 per chapter, but by 1984 they averaged 48 per chapter, with about 250,000 fraternity members in the country. Robert Marchesani Jr., the executive director for the National Interfraternity Conference, attributed this booming



membership rate to a “return of conservative values.”<sup>90</sup> The fraternities at all three campuses were opposed to queer organizing. In the case of UF, as already shown, this opposition could be extraordinarily violent. The fraternities at FSU managed to so torture Wade that he withdrew from the university. Fraternities were and often remain bastions of gender essentialism and hegemonic masculinity, so their opposition to queer people is no surprise.<sup>91</sup> Wade’s story and the experiences of queer students at each campus show the harmful effects of conservatism on queer student visibility, but also how these students could advocate for themselves even when the national climate was hostile.

Chapter 6 deals with another attack on Florida queer people: The Trask-Bush Amendment of 1981, which would cause any state university to lose state funding if it allowed a gay group to form on campus. Alan Trask and Tom Bush harnessed some of the language and the climate that Anita Bryant and conservative forces in the state had introduced in the 1970s to put an end to campus gay groups. This had the unintended effect of pushing national gay rights groups and campus gay rights groups together as larger organizations helped advocate for queer students in their fight to retain office space. Chapter 6 looks at the interaction of the coming-out-as-political act and the conservative and religious opposition to queer visibility. In the face of Trask-Bush and administrative hostility, queer people framed their political position as out and important to the campus. Non-queer people, particularly at USF, also formed groups in explicit

---

<sup>90</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “Frats: High Ideals or Hypocrisy?” *Independent Florida Alligator*, February 17, 1984, 1.

<sup>91</sup> Peggy Sanday, *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Nicholas Syrett, *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

violation of the Trask-Bush amendment to highlight its discriminatory nature. Chapter 6 argues that the presence of political and religious opposition solidified queer communities and straight allyship, because the queer students and their straight ally classmates used what political capital they had (particularly in the case of straight students) and their increasingly insistent presence to form community.

Chapter 7 is about crises in the queer communities at these three universities brought on by AIDS and the murders of two UF faculty members. Chapter 7 covers from about 1982-1985, and will explore the landscape of queer visibility in 1985, the year this particular story ends. All ends are not neatly tied. The queer groups at all three universities are not permanently cemented into campus life, and queer people have not gained acceptance even now at any of the three schools. But by 1985, queer people were visible and part of the conversation. Even while facing homophobia and exclusion, there was no way to go back to ignoring queer people on an institutional level. Murders and AIDS threatened the lives of queer people and drew negative attention to queer communities. By this point, however, queer politics were focused on visibility, and queer students at the three universities had established themselves and changed the university climates. Chapter 7 argues that the presence of queer visibility and queer student activists strengthened the communities and the universities themselves, as they had to learn to protect their students from an epidemic many people knew very little about. While the universities may not have handled things well, they were made to pay attention.

Finally, the Conclusion, Chapter 8, argues that equal rights and equal protection are civil rights often denied to queer students in educational spaces. Thus, when queer

students seek visibility, they are engaging in activist work under oppressive conditions. Queer history and queer studies need to be incorporated in the K-12 and higher education curriculum so that schools are not complicit in marginalizing queer students or school workers. Queer students may not have any safe spaces in their lives, and schools can evolve from being the sites of bullying and torment to contexts of empowerment and liberation. Therefore, education historians should deliberately turn their attention to the history of queer people. Trans\* and genderqueer student experiences are especially understudied in education history, as are queer students of color. White cis gay and lesbian students sometimes find a safe space in schools, but queer students of color and those who clearly defy the gender binary do not. Education history can help overcome this marginalization through demonstrating how important trans\* and genderqueer students are to their school cultures, exploring their strategies of resistance, and discussing how these communities have educated themselves when schools and universities fail them. Because queer people overlap with every other demographic group, our identities are relevant to nearly every story education historians tell.

Queer students at UF, FSU, and USF were political agents. Their activism as students showed itself in their (often short-lived) partnership with other New Left groups; their opposition to conservatives and religious homophobes in their state and communities; their insistence on making space for themselves, in keeping with the work of racially marginalized students; and their coalition forming during the AIDS crisis. The state of Florida, as well as the administrations and campus communities of their universities, did not encourage their success and were often openly hostile.

Nonetheless, they made space for themselves and have now established permanent places for themselves on all three campuses.

## CHAPTER 2 GAY LIBERATION IS HERE

The 1960s in America are often considered the time of greatest change in modern American history, with student movements, black freedom struggles, the feminist movement, anti-war protests, and environmentalism pushing the boundaries of traditional ways of life. The Cold War, the widespread use of recreational drugs, and the shift in electoral politics as the South switched its allegiance from the Democrat to the Republican Party meant that the American socio-political landscape would look very different than it had in the 1950s in the eyes of many people. But the 1970s were perhaps more important in terms of the lives of queer people in the state of Florida and around the nation.

The University of Florida (UF), Florida State University (FSU), and the University of South Florida (USF) all underwent periods of tumult in the late 1960s. USF was perhaps the least affected in some ways, having been chartered so much later than the other two and not seeing its first entering class until 1960. It did not have the traditions of earlier decades, including a single-sex, whites-only campus to look back on. Nonetheless, as at the other two universities, students engaged with the protest culture of the 1960s and early 1970s. Florida has an odd reputation in this context—it is not often a place people think of when they consider bus boycotts and other classic black freedom movements, yet Florida residents have engaged in these and other social movements since Reconstruction.<sup>1</sup> One reason this has been left out of the culture and

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

the popular imagination is that Florida governance was interested in maintaining a façade of racial and social moderation in order to attract tourist money, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and retirees.<sup>2</sup> Just as the queer visibility and queer rights movements in the early 1970s are now conceived of as centered in New York City, they were, in fact, taking place all over the country. As this Chapter shows, queer student visibility was happening even in places left out of the narrative of 1960s and 1970s social change, including in Florida. Queer students at FSU, UF, and USF took part in this movement by forming groups and petitioning for their rights. Universities in Florida took longer to recognize these groups than universities in other states, including Kansas and Kentucky. Further, when the Florida groups did achieve recognition, they had changed from the militant, radical Gay Liberation Front (GLF) to more moderate, less explicitly political groups.

In the early 1970s, gay people were the focus of many court cases and pieces of legislation, which affected their communities in significant ways. In 1971, the Florida Supreme Court struck down the law making homosexuality a felony.<sup>3</sup> In 1972, the Florida Senate passed a law replacing the old statute about sodomy—it was still abominable, the Senate assured citizens, but the new law more clearly defined the act.<sup>4</sup> That year also saw the United Methodist Church condemn homosexuality<sup>5</sup> and the University of Kentucky recognize a Gay Liberation Front.<sup>6</sup> One landmark court case for

---

<sup>2</sup> Gary R. Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> “Homosexual Law Struck Down,” *Miami News*, December 21, 1971, 2-A.

<sup>4</sup> Tim Condon, “Legal Sex,” *Independent Florida Alligator*, February 23, 1972, 7.

<sup>5</sup> “Homosexual,” *Flambeau*, April 27, 1972, 2.

<sup>6</sup> “Gay Lib Front is Recognized,” *Harlan Daily Enterprise*, November 15, 1972, 10.

the recognition of gay groups was also decided: *Healy v. James* in 1972.<sup>7</sup> In *Healy*, the First District Court in Atlanta ruled that the First Amendment rights of freedom of association applied to students, and as a result, official university recognition was necessary to protect that right.<sup>8</sup> Students across the country led the movement. John D’Emilio argues that they were in a prime position to do so, because they did not have to worry about ruining their careers, at least right away. They were often far from home and so did not have to be concerned about complications with their families. Finally, the student protest movement of the 1960s had changed campuses to the point that activist students were far less concerned about being expelled.<sup>9</sup>

Queer students at the University of Florida and Florida State University were part of this movement in the early 1970s as they organized on their campuses. Whether they did so at the University of South Florida is unclear, but they also had an active student group by 1974. This Chapter explores the early years of organizing at all three universities, including the climate on each campus, the large socio-political contexts in which universities functioned, and how queer people positioned themselves as activists. Some, like Hiram Ruiz at FSU and Julius Johnson at UF, had experience with the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). Others were discovering activism for the first time. These student activists changed the three university campuses through forcing them, at last, to note the presence of queer students in a setting other than a witch-hunt.

---

<sup>7</sup> *Healy v. James* 408 US 169 (1972).

<sup>8</sup> Loren J. Rullman, “A Legal History: University Recognition of Homosexual Organizations,” *Association of College Unions Bulletin* 59, no. 2 (1991): 4-9.

<sup>9</sup> John D’Emilio, *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 228.

## Florida State and Hiram Ruiz

Hiram Ruiz probably never saw himself as a historically significant figure, and he is not mentioned in any textbooks or works of queer history. But this is an oversight in need of correction. As a student at Florida State University in 1970, he started the first GLF chapter in the South and thereby changed higher education in the state of Florida. Ruiz's story complicates widely held idea of the South as a desert of queer activism. It resonates with the memories of people like long-time activist Frank Kameny, who says that the unrelenting negative assault on gay people "took its toll not only by diminishing and eroding the self-confidence and self-esteem of gay people, but also by sapping the initiative for political organization and action." As Kameny notes, gay people needed an underpinning of positivity about themselves as humans to respond to psychological and ideological assaults from all directions.<sup>10</sup> Ruiz and his friends did this themselves. They formed a community of support in an extraordinarily hostile time and place. They forced the administration and community at Florida State University to notice them when the clear institutional preference was to ignore queer people. Ruiz's story is about the establishment of a GLF in a hostile environment where no precedent for it existed, the importance of Florida to the southern queer movement, and the revolutionary potential of a small group of people in an educational setting. In the words of historian James T. Sears, "Stonewall was coming South,"<sup>11</sup> and Hiram Ruiz was the person dragging it there.

---

<sup>10</sup> Frank Kameny, Foreword to *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South*, by James T. Sears (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001): ix-xi.

<sup>11</sup> Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 58.



The life of a gay Cuban teenager in Miami in the 1960s—a city that suffered raids on gay bars and ordinances banning wearing clothing of the other gender<sup>12</sup>—was not easy for Ruiz, but it was even more difficult in Tallahassee in the 1970s. Tallahassee had always been a small Southern town. In fact, the state would not invest in the capital city's growth until the late 1970s. Tallahassee was important to the Confederacy and to slavery since before the Civil War, when it was the center of the slave trade in the state. Even with the establishment of two universities in Tallahassee, it remained a one-light town with an agricultural focus until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most residents lived within a couple of miles from each other until the late 1970s, and there was an abundance of churches. Through the 19<sup>th</sup> and most of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a Tallahassee resident's social life was determined by their church attendance. Racial segregation prevailed well past the official end of Jim Crow, with discussions about school desegregation happening late into the 1970s. Tallahassee was marked by provincialism to the point that the state government contemplated relocating to Orlando in 1976. The motion was defeated and in 1978, the state invested more resources to growing the city.<sup>13</sup> This social and political climate was not hospitable to Hiram Ruiz and the Gay Liberation Front: It was tiny, church-centric, and still wedded to its confederate past. Nonetheless, Ruiz arrived and brought gay liberation with him.

After living a mostly-closeted life in Miami and New York, Ruiz's first encounter with visibility was at a party with gay people in a small town outside Tallahassee. It was a liberating moment for him: "At that point in time, I don't think I actually conceptualized

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>13</sup> Archibald "Archie" Robinson interview with Samuel Proctor, January 1, 1969, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program; Michael V. Gannon, *Florida: A Short History* (University Press of Florida, 2003), 30.

seeing same-sex couples dancing.” He made a group of gay friends, and in 1970 they went to Mardi Gras in New Orleans, where he went to his first gay bar. He also visited Los Angeles and attended a GLF meeting there. Upon returning to Tallahassee, Ruiz told his friends, “This is what I came across, and this is what I think it means. We have to do this. And so we decided to start our own Gay Liberation Front.”<sup>14</sup> He knew his words proclaiming gay liberation could “strike at the very foundation of a very uptight community.”<sup>15</sup>

The FSU student senate recognized the GLF on May 5, 1970, but the university banned the group from using campus facilities.<sup>16</sup> The head of the FSU administration, President J. Stanley Marshall, held political values that did not align with those of the GLF. After he left the presidency of FSU, he launched a security and fire-prevention business and then formed the James Madison Institute (JMI), a group that continues to favor limits on government. The JMI advocates traditional values, limited government, economic freedom, federalism, and applying ideas like free market economic principles to public schools.<sup>17</sup> Marshall also went on to work closely with Florida Governor Jeb Bush in the early 2000s to advocate for privatization of education—this despite having served as the president of a public university and on the FSU Board of Trustees and the Florida Board of Governors.

---

<sup>14</sup> Hiram Ruiz, interview by Jess Clawson; October 10, 2012, transcript, FQH3, Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

<sup>15</sup> Hiram Ruiz, “News: Tallahassee GLF,” *Washington Blade*, no date.

<sup>16</sup> Ruiz, “News: Tallahassee GLF;” “GLF Meets,” *Flambeau*, May 27, 1970, 9.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.jamesmadison.org/about/about.html>

Marshall's presidency is remembered for coinciding with "radical student protests."<sup>18</sup> He became president after the sudden and unexpected resignation of John Champion, whom Marshall described as "a classic southern gentleman." Champion resigned after he burned an edition of a literary magazine for using the words "shit" and "fuck." Champion was overwhelmed by student and faculty protests and the statewide news coverage. When Marshall became president, he was immediately met with the resignations of many faculty members and other members of the university administration who were upset about Champion's actions, which may explain his preoccupation with faculty and student activists. He subsequently wrote a book about that aspect of his administration called *The Tumultuous Sixties: Campus Unrest and the Student Life at a Southern University*.<sup>19</sup> According to reviews of the book, he referred to FSU as "The Berkeley of the South"—the same words the administrators of UF and USF used to describe their own universities.

One reviewer of the book was a student at FSU during Marshall's administration and was the editor of the student newspaper, the *Florida Flambeau*. Student and faculty activism on causes including the Vietnam War, free speech, women's rights, civil rights, environmentalism, and labor were common during his administration, but the book's focus is on one group: the Students for a Democratic Society. They were a small organization that had a brief but dramatic encounter with Marshall. There were far more serious student demonstrations happening elsewhere in the country, but Marshall focused on the SDS and the "Night of the Bayonets." On that night, he tried to prevent

---

<sup>18</sup> Florida State University, "The Presidents of FSU," <http://president.fsu.edu/The-Presidents-of-FSU>

<sup>19</sup> J. Stanley Marshall, *The Tumultuous Sixties: Campus Unrest and Student Life at a Southern University* (Tallahassee: Sentry Press, 2006).

the SDS from holding a meeting in an empty room in the student union, which the group had done several times before. The local sheriff enlisted 35 volunteer riot police who entered with M-1 rifles and fixed bayonets to force the SDS students to leave. Even Marshall admitted this played directly into the hands of the SDS, who thrived on confrontational politics. He overstated the dangers of the university to justify his overreaction, which also included having one of the SDS leaders deported. The reviewer states that the most revealing comment in the book is when Marshall described his reaction to seeing anti-war protestors with a Vietcong flag as “a mixture of anger and fear.” This combination explains many of his decisions during his presidency: “It was a period of dramatic change, and fear and anger are two emotions that were shared by many Americans in this period.”<sup>20</sup> Marshall’s fear of protestors and dissent and his general distaste for social liberalism, as shown during his presidency and his post-resignation career, meant that the GLF was unlikely to find an ally in him. As president of the university, his leadership was significant to a campus climate that downplayed activism and openly scorned queer students.

The GLF soldiered on anyway, and placed an ad in the *Flambeau* a week after Hiram Ruiz returned to Tallahassee. The ad declared that GLF members did not feel guilty or inferior and that they opposed “all forms of oppression whether sexual, racial, economic or cultural. We declare our unity with and support for all oppressed minorities who fight for their freedom.”<sup>21</sup> Their alignment with other liberation groups was consistent with the GLF stance at the time. It also shows how these students embodied

---

<sup>20</sup> David Lee McMullen, “Was Florida State Really the ‘Berkeley of the South’ in the 1960s and 1970s?” (H-Net, September 2006) <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=12237>.

<sup>21</sup> “Gay Liberation is Here,” *Flambeau*, May 12, 1970, 12.

a key component of queer theoretical values. Not only were they questioning taken-for-granted assumptions about identities, they also worked to oppose a social hierarchy that privileged mainstream identities and behaviors over marginalized ones.<sup>22</sup>

Homophobic reactions were immediate. Fourteen FSU employees wrote a letter to the editor of the *Flambeau*. The printing of the ad, they said, was “dangerous to the welfare of all citizens” because the GLF “advocate the violation of the Florida Statutes which makes certain homosexual acts a felony.”<sup>23</sup> Ruiz remembers that the university threatened to terminate the paper altogether over the advertising issue in the face of an off-campus “campaign by business people to prevent us from having ads in the paper.”<sup>24</sup> The students in the GLF were not just threatening because they were gay, but because they were explicitly attacking the heterosexism in their environment.

The homophobic reactions were not surprising. But what the GLF members did not expect were circulars that appeared on campus stating, “Realizing that any denial of sexual self-determination is an infringement of basic human rights, Tallahassee Women’s Liberation and the Malcolm X United Liberation Front extend their full support to Tallahassee Gay Liberation Front.”<sup>25</sup> The GLF had expressed its solidarity with other groups of marginalized people at the national level since its founding. The group early on argued that, “The current system denies us our basic humanity in much the same way as it is denied to blacks, women and other oppressed minorities, and the grounds

---

<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth J. Meyer, “From Here to Queer: Mapping Sexualities in Education” In *Sexualities and Education: A Reader*, ed. Erica R. Meiners and Therese Quinn (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 9-17.

<sup>23</sup> Letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, May 29, 1970, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ruiz interview.

<sup>25</sup> Ruiz, “News: Tallahassee GLF.”

are just as irrational. Therefore, our liberation is tied to the liberation of all peoples.”<sup>26</sup>

The GLF opposed the Vietnam War, while it supported the Black Panther Party and women’s liberation. They advertised themselves as GLF members even when other demonstrators harassed them. The GLF challenged the New Left’s sexism and homophobia. They wanted to be sure old oppressions were not replicated in new systems.

But not all GLF members wanted to be involved with the New Left and this created tensions. Some GLF members left the movement after it donated \$500 to the Black Panther Party, and this group of people formed the Gay Activists Alliance. Those who stayed grew tired of the persistent homophobia they experienced from other New Left organizations. Straight men belittled their oppression as trivial in comparison with the poor people and the “Third World,” and New Left rallies often used homophobic slurs against people like Ronald Reagan and President Richard Nixon.<sup>27</sup> Huey Newton took a stand to side with gay people and invited them to the Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, but it turned out that the gay people were only allowed one tightly-controlled workshop, which many people exited in protest.<sup>28</sup> So, this show of support at FSU was rare, despite the GLF’s specific intention to create these alliances. Perhaps these groups felt that Hiram Ruiz himself was worth supporting, as a person of color and a self-identified revolutionary. Nothing like this form of solidarity happened at UF or USF in the early 1970s. USF did not have a GLF

---

<sup>26</sup> “Gay Liberation Front” [http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Gay\\_Liberation\\_Front](http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Gay_Liberation_Front)

<sup>27</sup> Gay Liberation Front” [http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Gay\\_Liberation\\_Front](http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Gay_Liberation_Front)

<sup>28</sup> Lisa Power, *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles: An Oral History of the Gay Liberation Front, 1970-1973* (London: Wellington House, 1995), 4-6.

chapter at all. The UF GLF had connections to other groups and they worked together, but other radical groups did not openly give the same support to the UF GLF that the FSU branch received.

The GLF also had the support of the student body president, Chuck Sherman, when the *Flambeau* turned down its second ad.<sup>29</sup> He called for the paper to commit to freedom of expression and not be cowed by the prejudices of other advertisers, but the *Flambeau* defended its position.<sup>30</sup> Sherman faced criticism for this support of “perversion” and speculation that he might next condone murder and rape.<sup>31</sup> It remains unclear why Sherman risked so much for the benefit of the most reviled group of people on campus, but alliances need not be clear to be valuable. The FSU student body president’s support was an important feature of the FSU climate. This, combined with the support of other marginalized groups, helped create an environment with potential to grow from Ruiz’s efforts.

While the fighting over advertising and institutionalized homophobia raged, the GLF began to meet regularly. The first meeting was held in an apartment Ruiz shared with three other gay men. Around forty people came, including professors and students. Afterwards, Ruiz and his roommates were evicted because they were gay.<sup>32</sup> Unable to host future meetings, the group tried to gain access to space on campus. They were denied because they advocated violation of the Florida statutes dealing with an

---

<sup>29</sup> “GLF Ad Turned Down,” *Flambeau*, October 5, 1970, 1.

<sup>30</sup> David McMullen, “BOSP to Meet Today Over Refused AD: Sherman, Groups Support GLF,” *Flambeau*, October 8, 1970, 1; Len Majors, “Advertising Department Overruled: GLF Ads Accepted by BOSP,” *Flambeau*, October 9, 1970, 1; “From the Editor’s Desk,” *Flambeau*, October 12, 1970, 4.

<sup>31</sup> John C. Wallace, Jr., letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 9, 1970, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Ruiz interview.

“abominable and detestable crime against nature” and because the university was unwilling to grant “tacit approval of the views of the GLF.” So the group held a workshop on Landis Green, an open space on campus, to “acquaint the student body with the views of GLF and to give students a chance to ask questions of its members.”<sup>33</sup> These workshops were a key component of the GLF strategy on a national level and were also routinely used by anti-racist and feminist groups. The GLF students positioned themselves in the larger activist framework and wanted to educate their fellow students, right in the heart of FSU.

Ruiz and the GLF members were also being educated. When he was in Los Angeles, Ruiz met a trans woman named Angela Douglas, who then came to Tallahassee for a time. “It was really a very challenging thing for us,” Ruiz recalled, “because here we are in Tallahassee, we’re being bold enough to try to be out and be gay.” But Douglas was visibly trans, and “it was a very challenging thing, being out in public with her.” Douglas “really forced us to kind of deal with a lot of our own issues and stereotypes and hang-ups.” Ruiz said the group was not interested in conforming or blending in, but Douglas pushed them out of their comfort zones: “Having her there, we were going to be really different. It’s like we couldn’t just look like everybody else, but we were gay.”<sup>34</sup> The GLF members did make themselves visible and their non-assimilationist politics clear. They held love-ins and sit-ins on campus and traveled to the University of Florida in Gainesville to speak to a group of students there about a

---

<sup>33</sup> “GLF Meets,” *Flambeau*, May 27, 1970, 9.

<sup>34</sup> Ruiz interview.



variety of issues regarding gay identities and drew a crowd of 300.<sup>35</sup> They held a protest outside an on-campus military ball and at the airport when President Nixon came through the city.<sup>36</sup> The group even put on a bake sale in 1970 in the student union. The bake sale table was elegantly decorated with candles, nice dishes, and a tablecloth. “We were trying to make a statement about being gay,” Ruiz recalled. “We weren’t gonna just do any old bake sale. We were gonna do a gay bake sale.” They engaged in other flamboyant acts of protest like throwing flowers at construction workers. These queer students were “existing and existing in your face.”<sup>37</sup>

The collective politics of the group emphasized flaunting, not blending in. This was consistent with the national politics of the GLF, an organization that wanted to end all oppression, rather than aim for assimilating gay people into the mainstream. Ruiz also associated the non-conformity with their alliance to other liberation groups. Feminist and black liberation groups at the time tended not to be interested in conformity, either. Liberation was not about becoming just like everyone else; it was the freedom to be fully oneself in public, whether that self was female, black, gender-nonconforming, or gay. In this way, the FSU GLF members positioned themselves as radical activists. They embraced a queer agenda that positioned them outside of the “normal.” They did not want to assimilate. As the Angela Douglas story showed, this was not an uncomplicated project, as members of the GLF had to interrogate their own prejudices and biases.

---

<sup>35</sup> “Out of the Closets and Into the Streets, GLF of FSU,” *The Eye*, November 24, 1970, 1; Eunice Martin, “Gay Lib Students Seek Society’s Understanding,” *St. Petersburg Times*, February 6, 1971, 2-B; Ruiz interview.

<sup>36</sup> Ruiz interview.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

The choice to flaunt instead of blend had challenging implications. For example, the group did not receive official recognition from FSU. As was the case at UF, the GLF was too radical a group to receive charters, because the administrations were homophobic and opposed to student activists in general. This was an important element of the campus climate. The administrations at these universities had denied charters to groups like the SDS because many people considered their activist politics and revolutionary ideas threatening.<sup>38</sup> Flaunting one's homosexuality or gender queerness also attracted more threats of violence from other students.<sup>39</sup> The risks associated with living a more authentic life were many, most based in rejection from communities, universities, classmates, families, employers, and landlords. But for many of the gay students at FSU in particular, these risks were worth taking for liberation.

Ruiz extended his educational mission beyond the FSU campus. In September of 1971, the *Miami Herald* ran a series called "The Homosexual." It was "just scathing," according to Ruiz, who said they claimed, "all homosexuals are pedophile, prissy beauticians who have high-pitched voices who carry on... we have to protect our children from them." He found it horrific, even for the time: "I'm like, 'What the fuck?' And so I contacted the *Herald* and I said, wait a minute. This is 1970! Ha! What are you doing?"<sup>40</sup> The *Herald* agreed to speak to Ruiz. The reporter writing the series did two stories about him, one centered on him and one on the movement. In his interview in the *Herald*, Ruiz stressed that identifying as gay resulted in self-liberation and was one

---

<sup>38</sup> Gary Smith, "SDS Account Versus Administration in Injunction Hearing," *The Florida Flambeau*, January 7, 1970, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Ruiz interview; Pratt interview; Notaro interview; Halvorsen interview; McDonough interview.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

of the greatest things that ever happened to him.<sup>41</sup> In the profile of gay liberation, he talked about the group's formation and deliberately included the stories of lesbians whose struggles may have been "less obvious but no less torturous." He noted that unlike in New York, "in a place like Tallahassee, they still see homosexuality as a problem. It's not a problem. Homosexuality is a fact, and society's rejection is a problem. Making it a crime is a problem."<sup>42</sup> The GLF, he said, wanted to take homosexual acts off the criminal statutes. At that time in Florida, homosexual acts could carry a 20-year prison sentence.<sup>43</sup> Whether he realized it or not, Ruiz engaged with at least two important tenants of queer theory. First, he focused on resistance and the liberatory potential of owning one's identity. Second, he underscored the prevalence of heterosexism—the notion that it is better to be straight—and overturned it in a few short sentences.

In addition to threats from the law and a hostile campus environment, Ruiz recalls a discussion in the state legislature about whether he and another GLF member should be thrown out of FSU.<sup>44</sup> Their impact on the university must have been felt if the state legislature believed their expulsion was warranted—their influence had gone beyond the university itself, as had the reach of the GLF. A new chapter was forming in Gainesville, Florida, with the help of the FSU branch.<sup>45</sup> There were other efforts to

---

<sup>41</sup> Terry Johnson King, "Admitting his Gayness Led to 'Liberation,'" *Miami Herald*, 1971.

<sup>42</sup> Terry Johnson King, "Liberation Goal is Freedom and Official Recognition," *Miami Herald*, 1971. Clipping from the personal files of Hiram Ruiz.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> I could not find any confirmation of this in state records, but given that FSU tried to deport a student activist during Marshall's presidency, it does not seem impossible. See McMullen, "Was Florida State Really the 'Berkeley of the South' in the 1960s and 1970s?"

<sup>45</sup> Julius M. Johnson, "Gay Experience," *Alligator*, November 25, 1970, 9.

silence the GLF on campus, from tearing down signs to omitting any mention of them in the yearbook, despite their visibility on campus all year long.<sup>46</sup>

Ruiz recalled that while the specific group may not have survived, “it really changed a dynamic...like the opening of a closet door. Not just opening but really swinging it wide open, and saying, here we are, never went back from there.”<sup>47</sup> Ruiz and his friends became the role models they did not have and spread the movement to other places. They forced the university and the state government to deal with the presence of queer people. Feigning ignorance at their existence was no longer possible. A great deal of institutional and state-sanctioned oppression would characterize the following decades, but Ruiz and the GLF members at FSU lit the spark of liberation in an unlikely corner.

In 1974, a group of FSU students started the People’s Coalition for Gay Rights (PCGR). It is unclear whether the students who formed the PCGR knew of the earlier GLF chapter in their community.<sup>48</sup> They successfully attained campus space, despite Marshall’s initial hesitation. In 1975, the issue came to a head when they wanted to use the Union ballroom for a dance. The administration put off these requests at every turn. Marshall eventually sought the opinion of Florida Attorney General Robert Shevin. In his letter, Marshall admitted that “registration entitles a student organization to use University facilities,” but that he feared granting the requests “could result in adverse political and public reaction.” Jerry Maxham, PCGR spokesperson, wrote his own letter to Shevin, stating that “the university’s policy toward gay organizations is content

---

<sup>46</sup> Ruiz interview.

<sup>47</sup> Ruiz interview.

<sup>48</sup> Jerry Maxham, “Gay Coalition Defends Rights,” *Flambeau*, March 11, 1974, 4.

related; that which they (the administration) find abhorrent or offensive cannot provide the important governmental interest upon which impairment of First Amendment freedoms must be predicated.” According to Maxham, the litigation of the PCGR would undertake if denied space would in fact bring the adverse political and public reaction that Marshall hoped to avoid.<sup>49</sup> Ultimately, the group did hold its dance in the Union in March 1975, and planned another for April of that year.<sup>50</sup> The PCGR also worked to form a peer-counseling group to help support members of the Tallahassee gay community, for which they had help from a member of the FSU Counseling Center.<sup>51</sup> These efforts were significant because they show the persistence of queer organizing even in a difficult campus environment. The presence of a gay coalition, dances, and a “rap group” might not seem like activism after the high-60s era of boycotts and fire hoses, but the queer students continued to make their presence known. This was activism—they insisted on their right to be in a place from which they had been excluded, or included only on the condition that they be silent about their identities. These queer students knew that the FSU community at large saw their bodies and identities as “other,” and they found ways to be themselves in a space that did not want them, even if it was only for short periods of time.

### **The University of Florida and Julius Johnson**

The efforts of Ruiz and the FSU GLF to spread the movement paid off. Thanks to their help and to the hard work of a few people in Gainesville, the local chapter of the GLF was founded at the end of 1970. Gainesville was another town that did not seem

---

<sup>49</sup> “Gay Coalition Gets Union Space,” *Flambeau*, March 15, 1975, 5.

<sup>50</sup> “A Gay Time,” *Flambeau*, April 15, 1975, 5.

<sup>51</sup> “Gay rap group provides non-oppressive atmosphere,” *Flambeau*, April 17, 1974, 3.

receptive to gay liberation. It was a one-road town until the University of Florida was established there. Like Tallahassee, it had a strong religious presence from the 1920s well through the 1980s. Contemporary Gainesville still has many of the most extremist churches in the nation, including Dove World Outreach, Westside Baptist Church, and The Rock Church, all of which make homophobia a special mission. Gainesville's religious presence permeated city policy—it was a dry town, and students would go to Ocala or Jacksonville to bring back cheap bottles of Scotch. The Ku Klux Klan had a presence not only in Gainesville but among the faculty of UF, and they terrorized Catholics in town and on campus. President Albert Murphree (1909-1927) had very anti-Catholic sentiments and would not permit a Catholic person on faculty. Violence against Catholics reached its zenith in 1923, when the mayor and the chief of police, both Klan members, lynched and castrated a Catholic priest who had helped students on campus form a drama club.<sup>52</sup>

Despite—or perhaps because of—the violence of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Gainesville, by the 1960s, it was home to several activist groups. Carol Giardina, who was central to the local radical feminist movement, moved to Gainesville in 1963 after growing up in Queens, NY. She describes moving to North Florida as “culture shock.” At football games they would play “Dixie” and everyone would stand up except for her, and women had to wear dresses on campus until 5pm every day. There was a decent-sized beatnik community that worked with the civil rights movement. She remembers late-1960s demonstrations and strikes in favor of agricultural workers and black power, most of which took place off campus. There were several radical activists in town, although

---

<sup>52</sup> Archie Robinson interview; Charles Hildreth and Merlin Cox, *History of Gainesville, Florida, 1854-1979* (Alachua Pr. Inc., Gainesville, FL, 1981).

their presence did not usually translate into more progressive city policies or working conditions. There were also less-militant groups around, like the Gainesville Women for Equal Rights. The town had groups for black freedom, particularly the NAACP and Black Power. Groups tended to work together, including the Gainesville Women's Liberation and the Gay Liberation Front. At one point the women's rights groups and the black freedom groups had to tell the SDS to stop telling them what to do.<sup>53</sup>

The Gainesville Gay Liberation Front had a context of local activism that the Tallahassee chapter lacked, but the Tallahassee group was instrumental in its establishment. The Tallahassee GLF hosted a love-in in November 1970, which 10-15 people from UF attended.<sup>54</sup> The next day, a letter appeared in the *Independent Florida Alligator* written by Julius M. Johnson, a UF student and the president of the newly formed Gainesville branch of the GLF. Johnson proved critical to the early years of the GLF. That he was willing to be out of the closet was significant at a time when not many were. Furthermore, Johnson was black, and so a member of another group of students who held a relatively low profile on the UF campus at the time. Only 156 of the school's more than 22,000 student population were black.<sup>55</sup> Johnson was more than willing to ally with other activist groups on campus, including the Student Mobilization Committee and the Young Socialist Alliance.<sup>56</sup> These alliances helped all groups marshal

---

<sup>53</sup> Carol Giardina Interview with Stuart Landers. Transcript. November 11, 1992. Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL; James Hellegaard, "Remember 1968? City was Southern hotbed of Protest," *The Gainesville Sun*, September 5, 1965, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Mike Cahlin, "Gay Liberation Front Holds Weekend Gay-In," *The Independent Florida Alligator*, November 24, 1970, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen C. O'Connell. Memorandum, "Prepared Answers to Interview." August 18, 1969. Stephen C. O'Connell Papers, University of Florida Library.

<sup>56</sup> Scott Camil. Interview by Stuart Landers. Transcript. October 20, 2003. Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

resources, including speakers. They also helped the queer students achieve a level of recognition and legitimacy among activist circles that may have been difficult for them to come by otherwise. Had Johnson not been willing to be out, the GLF may never have found a leader and queer student emergence at UF would have been delayed. It is clear that a willingness to be openly gay and having alliances with straight people were the key to GLF's emergence in 1971.

Johnson wrote more letters to the *Alligator* during his time at the university. He claimed that students on campus were woefully ignorant about the facts of homosexuality and gay identities. In one letter, published January 15, 1971, Johnson recommended that the school form a psychology course dealing with sexuality, and that it allow a sanctioned and chartered GLF on campus. He emphasized that people did not become gay by talking about gay issues, and that the GLF could offer a base for the psychological studies of gays and to educate people. In a letter published on February 15, 1972, he appealed to UF's "leadership reputation" and encouraged the administration to be proactive in recognizing queer students. Johnson did not get his wish. Vice President of Student Affairs Lester Hale denied the charter in a letter to William Cross, Assistant Director of the Reitz Student Union. He pointed out that when students tried to form a GLF at Florida State University, the Board of Regents said that forming the GLF was against its policy, and thereby it would be inappropriate for UF to grant these students a permit.<sup>57</sup>

Lester Hale was a complex figure. Sincerely concerned about the students, he was also worried for the reputation of the university, as well as for his own personal

---

<sup>57</sup> Lester Hale, Letter to William Cross, Assistant Director of the Reitz Union, 1971. University of Florida Special Collections.



image. He began the decade of the 1960s with a positive relationship with the students, but by 1970, it seems they saw him as an enemy. This distressed him. He insisted that President J. Wayne Reitz had appointed him Dean of Men because of his “relationship with the students was a spiritual kind of relationship, not just an academic or structural relationship, but a real personal relationship.” Many students across the nation came to see their university administrations as tools of the government by the end of the 1960s. Hale, however, was not always on their side. He did nothing to stop the Johns Committee from removing gay students and faculty from campus in the 1960s purge, for instance. Even years later, in an oral interview, he refused to take any responsibility for the Johns Committee, although he admitted to knowing what was going on.<sup>58</sup> He contributed to a campus climate that was hostile to queer identities.

Despite a denial of support from Hale, Johnson remained committed to an educational agenda in the hopes that it would decrease homophobia and help queer people come out.<sup>59</sup> In the early years of the queer rights movement, education was a critical component of student activism. Consistent with his desire to educate people, Johnson worked with Accent, a student group that hosted speakers, to bring in two members of the Florida State University’s GLF. The speakers pointed out to the 300 attendees that gay people were faced with a great deal of struggle. It was hard to come out to family and friends because gays were defying society’s expected roles. If they were out, or if someone suspected their sexuality, they could “expect physical attacks, unfair laws, and occupational exclusions.” The Florida statutes against homosexuality

---

<sup>58</sup> Lester Hale, interview by Samuel Proctor, May 22, 1982, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

<sup>59</sup> Julius Johnson, “Gay Lib Here,” *Independent Florida Alligator*, January 25, 1971, 9.

referred to it as “that abominable crime against nature.” The speakers wanted to destroy the myths that they were “unnatural, perverted, immature, psychotic, or criminal.”<sup>60</sup> They emphasized the importance of being out as a strategy to change minds and gain allies. The early 1970s were a time of consciousness-raising in social movements generally. John D’Emilio has shown how the GLF on a national level adopted this strategy in its quest for acceptance.<sup>61</sup> The national atmosphere of campus protest gave the GLF a language and strategies to use in their early stages of emergence. This helped the GLF members position themselves as activists.

Throughout the nation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, students engaged in anti-establishment protests. Gay liberation groups considered themselves part of this radicalism and addressed issues that were mobilizing American youth. The political and social movements that comprised the New Left had an important impact on the gay rights struggles. By 1968 there were nearly fifty gay organizations throughout the country. They experienced bitter disputes over the direction of the homophile movement, just as there would be when the Gay Activists Alliance split from the GLF to become a single-issue movement focused on gay rights. Queer students at UF, FSU, USF, and around the nation fought for the same charters, recognition, and funding other student groups received. Many students sued their schools when they were denied charters. Gay students everywhere, including in Florida, began to hold events including dances and discussion groups. In some places, as would be the case in Gainesville by

---

<sup>60</sup> “Out of the Closets and Into the Streets,” *The Eye*, November 24, 1970.

<sup>61</sup> John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983); D’Emilio, *Making Trouble*.

the late 1970s, students even worked in their communities to include gay people in anti-discrimination laws.<sup>62</sup>

In a January 25, 1971 column in the *Alligator*, Johnson outlined the GLF's three main goals: to gain campus recognition, to educate people in the "virtues of homosexuality," and to secure an accredited course on gay psychology. Causes and cures, he was careful to state, would not be included among the priorities of the organization; rather, the focus would be on "growth through personal understanding and expansion." Johnson was clear that the GLF met all legal requirements of the State Supreme Court, so the Board of Regents would find it difficult to deny the charter. He was also sure to mention, in a nod to the risks of being out, that the organization would make no official membership list beyond the 16 required for the charter, a common strategy of gay groups on campuses at the time.<sup>63</sup> The American Psychological Association (APA) still pathologized homosexuality, however, which would give UF's leaders grounds for denying the charter. The administration's ability to resist recognizing these students was consistent with the nationally accepted idea that homosexuality was both deviance and disease, in accordance with the APA's listing of homosexuality in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*. This would not change until 1973.

Like the FSU students, the queer students at UF had no friend in their university president. Stephen C. O'Connell also faced student and faculty resistance to his administration, and was no stranger to controversy before his administration began. A native Floridian, O'Connell was born in West Palm Beach, and received his

---

<sup>62</sup> D'Emilio, *Making Trouble*, 171-72.

<sup>63</sup> Mike Cahlin, "Gay Front Seeks Campus Recognition," *The Independent Florida Alligator*, January 13, 1971, 3.

undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Florida. He served in World War II, and then worked as a lawyer while becoming active in the Democratic Party. He was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court by Governor LeRoy Collins in 1955, and was elected chief justice in 1967. That same year, he resigned the bench to become the sixth president of the University of Florida and the first alumnus to do so.<sup>64</sup>

In 1955, The Florida Supreme Court heard *Virgil Hawkins v. Board of Control*, in which Hawkins, who was black, was suing to be admitted to the University of Florida law school. He had been attempting to enter the law school since 1949, and the courts had refused to admit him based on the separate but equal doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The United States Supreme Court ordered the Florida Supreme Court to reconsider after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. The state court decried the federal government's interference in states' rights and proclaimed that Hawkins should not be denied admission because of his race, but because to do so would "cause a public mischief." O'Connell and the other members of the court felt that Hawkins was not trying to get an education. Instead, he was trying to "prove something." What exactly that was remains unclear, but the well-being of the university should not be jeopardized to serve that particular purpose. O'Connell also argued that Hawkins was not qualified for admission.<sup>65</sup>

Like Marshall at FSU, O'Connell faced a number of controversies during his presidency, which coincided with the height of student protests over the Vietnam War and civil rights issues. During his tenure, he saw student demonstrations and political

---

<sup>64</sup> Julian M. Pleasants, *Gator Tales: An Oral History of the University of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 55.

<sup>65</sup> Wallenstein, "Segregation, Desegregation, and Higher Education in Virginia."

struggles with the *Alligator*, student protests against the war, and faculty unrest.<sup>66</sup> O'Connell was a self-identified conservative: not "keeping the same order of things forever," but "respect for authority; respect for the law once it is tested and found to be good; and respect for other people's rights" as well as the opportunity to behave freely "so long as it does not harm anyone else."<sup>67</sup> He concurred with Florida Governor Farris Bryant in his belief that the United States Supreme Court overstepped its bounds in the *Brown v. Board* case. Even admitting that the legislative bodies were doing nothing to advance the cause of civil rights, and that the actions of the Court did improve the lives of many people, O'Connell maintained his belief that the Court acted wrongly in legislating.<sup>68</sup> The administration of UF, then, was not conducive to promoting queer visibility. They had a difficult time with the increasing population of students of color, which was another change in the traditional university. UF had served only white men for the first 42 years of its existence. The admission of women in 1948 and then of black people in 1968 forced people like O'Connell and Hale to reckon with a new reality in which diversity was less avoidable. Queer students were going to be a nail in the coffin of traditional collegiate masculinity, and none of the administrators at UF or FSU were eager to foster this change.

In September 1971, much more attention was drawn to the issues of queer Gainesville residents than had been previously. A black gay student named Rickey Childs was the victim of police brutality. As John D'Emilio notes, violence towards queer people often came with increased visibility because straight people would pay

---

<sup>66</sup> Pleasants, *Gator Tales*, 55.

<sup>67</sup> O'Connell, interview, 92.

<sup>68</sup> O'Connell interview.

attention.<sup>69</sup> Childs alleged that at 3am on August 1, Policeman MW Sapp of the Gainesville Police Department (GPD) “threw him to the ground, jammed his foot into his back and arrested him without any formal charge.”<sup>70</sup> He had been in a telephone booth calling for a taxi across from the Gainesville Court House. When he left the booth, the officer checked his identification and made him spread out and place his hands on the police car. He was questioned and then when he turned to speak to the taxi cab driver who had come to pick him up, the officer squeezed his wrist, put a lock around his neck, and threw him to the ground. He was handcuffed, put in the police car, and told that if he moved, he would be killed. At the police station, Childs reported being heckled about his Afro hairstyle, insulted about his sexual orientation, and then released after no charges could be filed. This was not his first incident with officer Sapp, who had once refused to arrest a man Childs claimed assaulted him with a knife.<sup>71</sup>

The GLF responded by holding a non-violent picket at the police station in support of Childs, meant to draw attention to the problem with harassment. They held signs that read “freaking fag revolutionaries” and “lesbians are lovely too.” At a press conference at the Reitz Union before the picket, Johnson said the picket line “would show gay and straight people that there is harassment in Gainesville and that there is another alternative to sitting back and letting these things happen.”<sup>72</sup> Johnson also verbally presented three demands to the GPD: The immediate dismissal of Officers MW

---

<sup>69</sup> D’Emilio, *Making Trouble*, 171.

<sup>70</sup> Dennis Arnold, “Gay libber claims police brutality,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, September 21, 1971, 6.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Dennis Arnold, “Gays peacefully march at local police station,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, September 24, 1971, 2.

Sapp and LC Mott (the latter of whom participated in harassing Childs at the police station), the immediate end to harassment of the gay community, and the establishment of “an educational forum to acquaint police and university officials with problems and fears created within the gay community by these agencies.”<sup>73</sup> Childs went on to sue the GPD for \$50,000. The suit claimed that the officers “maliciously assaulted and beat” Childs and that his “arm was twisted, choked around the neck, thrown to the pavement and kicked and stepped on his back.” He “suffered bruises and cuts to his body, mental pain and suffering” and demanded “judgment for both compensatory and punitive damages.”<sup>74</sup> The lawsuit was a bold step, as it—like the picket—would bring increased visibility and the possibility of further bullying from police and other community members. His willingness to sue, and the vocal nature of the queer community’s response, clearly indicated that the students were more willing to be visible and demand their rights in spite of the inherent risks. These students engaged in activist work to improve their lives in a hostile environment.

The *Alligator* published a series of letters over the next year in support of queer rights. The *Alligator* and *The Eye* (an underground feminist newspaper in Gainesville) more consistently covered the activities of queer students even though Hale’s denial of their charter meant the campus would not officially recognize their organization, did not provide it with funding or meeting space, and did not accord it the same status enjoyed by recognized student organizations.<sup>75</sup> The university administration, especially Lester

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> “‘Assaulted’ GLF member files suit against Gainesville cops,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, September 30, 1971, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Tom Cornelison, “Gay Lib to Hold ‘Festival of Love,’” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, March 30, 1971, 7.

Hale, had attempted to keep them invisible, but their increasing confidence and desire to be seen and heard prevented the fulfillment of the university's agenda. The gay students' need to be accepted meant they would risk the social consequences of being visible, and this persistence in the face of rejection strengthened them as a group in the early years of visibility.<sup>76</sup>

Undeterred by their failure to receive a charter, in 1972 the GLF members organized a consultation service for other local queer people.<sup>77</sup> These early years of the 1970s were a time of expansion of queer liberation movements nationwide, as queer students organized on college campuses throughout the country. In general, they wanted to build a sense of community and disabuse heterosexuals of myths about queer people. Queer students were holding parties and dances; running queer lounges and offices on campus if their schools allowed them; working telephone hot-lines for emergencies and counseling services; publishing newsletters; and finding speakers to address fraternities, faculty groups, and dorms. In many places, queer groups had little trouble getting official recognition and becoming visible.<sup>78</sup> This larger context was as important as the oppressive state and local governments: queer students could see others winning the visibility struggle.

But at some schools, queer students faced obstacles. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, these barriers tended to be older administrations and trustees. The University of Florida was among those universities still barring its queer students from organizing

---

<sup>76</sup> Cahlin, "Gay Front Seeks Campus Recognition."

<sup>77</sup> "GLF Initiates Consultation Service," *The Independent Florida Alligator*, January 19, 1972, 10.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Reinhold, "Gay Students Actively Fight to Explode All Myths," *Chicago Tribune*, December 26, 1971, E-7.



officially recognized groups, perhaps in part because of its history with the Johns Committee and faculty dismissals.<sup>79</sup> The university's approach to recognizing queer students was more extreme than at many universities, considering its history of deliberate oppression. Furthermore, many faculty who may have been sympathetic to the students' cause, because they were themselves queer, had been dismissed in the previous decade under the Johns Committee and could provide no institutional support to the students. Those who remained may have been hesitant to be publicly out. This lack of supportive faculty members and recent persecution contributed to a campus climate imbued with fear rather than liberation.

The government of Florida and the administrations of UF had, over the years, shown themselves willing to be punitive of minority groups. The Johns Committee is one example, as it was a state legislative committee that wreaked its havoc on public education in the state, with the full complicity of the presidents of UF and FSU. Deporting students they considered radical, as had happened at FSU, was an option that remained open to the administration if any of the students were foreign-born. The state government had always been willing to oppress non-white people as well, maintaining Jim Crow laws and school segregation long after the Supreme Court had struck them down.<sup>80</sup> The campus environment and the larger political state climate were not friendly to queer FL students. But these students had examples of other groups nationwide and took liberation into their own hands.

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*; Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams*.

## The University of South Florida: A Story of the Underground

Queer student visibility at the University of South Florida was less obvious in the early 1970s than it was at UF or FSU. There was no recorded queer student organizing on campus until 1974. Tampa had a very different history than Tallahassee or Gainesville. While it was part of the Confederacy and an important naval operation during the Civil War, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was more influenced by cigar production, illegal bolita lotteries, and bootlegging. The city government was involved in bribery and kickbacks in order to preserve the illegal activities, many of which were heavily influenced by the Cuban presence in the city. Corruption was open and rampant well into the 1950s. Tallahassee was ruled by churches and Gainesville by the Klan, but Tampa looked like Atlantic City with its black markets and underground gambling. In many ways, Tampa more closely resembled the cosmopolitan South Florida than it did the Confederate hold out towns of Tallahassee and Gainesville.<sup>81</sup>

In spite of its different context, the protest movements of the 1960s came to USF. Like FSU and UF, USF administrators referred to their university as the “Berkeley of the South.” Students and faculty questioned the war and advocated feminism and black civil rights, but it did not have the same uprisings as on other campuses. In June 1968, University President John Allen announced that USF “will not negotiate with any group or make any change in policy under conditions of duress such as unauthorized occupation of university property.”<sup>82</sup> But he was not entirely opposed to student

---

<sup>81</sup> Gary Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); Frank Trebin Lastra, *Ybor City: The Making of a Landmark Town* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2007).

<sup>82</sup> Jim Schnur, “Amazing Grace: Reflections on the John Allen Legacy,” *USF Magazine* (Fall 1996): 11-15.

activism. For instance, he refused to establish a Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) at USF, and after the shootings at Jackson State in Mississippi and Kent State in Ohio, he agreed to halt visits by military recruiters. Some students protested for a relaxation of restrictions that prevented political and activist organizations from forming on campus. Others demanded that the university show greater commitment to minorities. Tensions built between Allen and the students until he decided to resign in 1970.<sup>83</sup> The criticism came from nearly every corner of the university. The University Senate complained about Allen's role in the changes to its composition and regulations. Student Government accused him of attempting to factionalize students' voices. Faculty tended to dislike the loss of the independence of the colleges. Allen refused to endorse the university's first constitution, further straining relations between him and various segments of the university community.<sup>84</sup>

Cecil Mackey replaced John Allen as USF president. He served from 1971-1976. He came to USF after serving in the Office of Policy Development for the Federal Aviation Agency and then as the assistant secretary for the Policy Development in the US Department of Transportation. Mackey was attracted to the "opportunity to do something in leadership and development of an institution."<sup>85</sup> He brought a business understanding to running the university and replaced most of the top administrators. He also reorganized the curriculum. In many peoples' minds, he transformed USF from a local, Tampa-based university to a state university with a research mission. Mackey was

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Mark I. Greenberg, *University of South Florida: The First Fifty Years, 1956-2006* (Tampa: University of South Florida, 2006), 53.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 69.

concerned about the welfare of marginalized people on the USF campus, including making it more accessible for people with disabilities. He formed the Committee on the Status of Women in 1971 to evaluate how well the university was doing in its dedication to non-discriminatory practices. The report, published in February 1972, recommended the establishment of a full-time position of assistant to the president for women's affairs, as well as an advisory board. Mackey made the committee the advisory board, and formed a new committee to redress salary and promotion inequities. He made other improvements, including supporting the establishment of a women's studies program. He did not endorse the committee's recommended affirmative action plan for women, although he did take a more aggressive stance in the hiring of black faculty and staff.<sup>86</sup> Though his record was not flawless, he did work more proactively to foster a campus climate that valued diversity than did his contemporaries at UF or FSU.

The Gay Coalition (GC) at USF formed in 1974, during Mackey's administration, which seemed to be one at least somewhat interested in diversity. However, queer people were not considered as part of the diversity mission.<sup>87</sup> The GC was not yet a recognized campus student organization, but had weekly meetings on campus. Given that USF's founding was marked by a commitment to equity and academic freedom, why were queer students hidden for so much longer? It may be that the atmosphere was not as affirming and open as it seems. Fred Pratt, who was at USF in the mid-1970s, remembers Tampa as having a more oppressive atmosphere than Gainesville.<sup>88</sup> Tampa had a big gay bar scene, which Tallahassee and Gainesville lacked. It is

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 106-107.

<sup>87</sup> "Students form 'Gay Coalition,'" *Oracle*, October 24, 1974, 10.

<sup>88</sup> Fred Pratt, interview by Jess Clawson; October 5, 2012, transcript, FQH1, Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

possible that the presence of dozens of gay bars fostered community development in a way that was not available at the other two universities. People could find each other at the bars and develop some kind of solidarity. There was still a need for the Gay Coalition at USF, though, as shown by the pains the students took to found and nurture it.

The GC was founded by John Grannan, a white gay man who insisted on being anonymous in his first interview with the USF student newspaper, *The Oracle*. He knew that there was a large gay community in hiding on campus based on the positive responses he instantly got to the chapter's forming. Still, visibility on the campus in general was not high. The concept of homosexuality was not mentioned in the campus newspaper again until May 1975, and then it was in the form of a column about the history of lesbianism. Indeed, it was thirteen months after the *Oracle* article mentioning the GC that the paper again covered the group's progress. In that time, the GC received official recognition from the university, without all the controversy of the chartering struggles at UF and FSU. This smooth process may have resulted from the Mackey administration fostering an environment that had a diversity agenda, even if that agenda did not include queer people.

In fact, despite the Gay Coalition's relatively late founding, it received recognition sooner than the gay groups at the other campuses. The organization offered peer counseling, an emergency phone line, books and films on homosexuality, and speakers. Like the Gay Liberation Fronts at both UF and FSU, the USF Gay Coalition had an educational focus.<sup>89</sup> These support services were significant to USF and to other

---

<sup>89</sup> Carla Roundabush, "Homosexuals' parents are not aware," *The Oracle*, November 26, 1975, 16.

universities that had them. They gave queer students a sense of legitimacy and belonging, as well as a purpose in educating the people around them. Any impact these activist efforts had in homophobia reduction amongst non-queer students was valuable. They could help people like John Grannan feel comfortable coming out, which he did during this time. He made appearances on local television and rejected the producers' suggestion that he black out his face.<sup>90</sup> This was a symbolic as well as literal victory for the project of visibility. In rejecting the suggestion that he speak anonymously, Grannan was refusing to play into the long-held idea that homosexuality required a life in the shadows. Grannan rejected heterosexism.

Grannan said that one important reason for founding the Gay Coalition was that it provided an alternative to the bars and bathhouses. "It's a place where you can talk to people without the confusion of lights and music," he explained, "and you don't have to have a drink in your hand."<sup>91</sup> The rates of alcoholism among queer people have been and remain higher than among straight people, for various reasons, including the stress of living in a heterosexist society and the challenges presented by coming to terms with one's identity and coming out.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, gay bars have historically been the main venue for social contact for queer people, and drinking an important part of the culture.<sup>93</sup> The presence of a place for queer people to meet and support each other without the

---

<sup>90</sup> Ilene Jacobs, "Gay Coalition Founder Not Shy," *Oracle*, November 26, 1975, 7.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Tonda L. Hughes and Sharon C. Wilsnack, "Research on Lesbians and Alcohol: Gaps and Implications," *Alcohol Health and Research World*, 18, no. 3 (1994): 202-205; DJ McKirnan and PL Peterson, "Alcohol and Drug Use Among Homosexual Men and Women: Epidemiology and Population Characteristics," *Addictive Behaviors*, 14 (1989): 545-553; Marcel T. Saghir, and Eli Robins, *Male and Female Homosexuality: A Comprehensive Investigation* (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1973).

<sup>93</sup> Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 282.

presence of alcohol was critical to the health of the community. Grannan's comment should not be dismissed as flip or funny. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, queer people are much more likely to feel comfortable in "straight" bars and restaurants and do not necessarily need to go to gay bars to enjoy a night out, and they have other non-bar opportunities to meet other queer people. But in Grannan's time, those were rare. Martin Duberman points out that gay bars tended to encourage patrons to drink to excess as a way to pay the bills.<sup>94</sup> For many of these reasons, Grannan believed an alternative to gay bars was necessary for his community.

Overall, the USF gay community remained shadowed in the early 1970s. Frank Meyers, who attended USF in the late 1960s and early 1970s, said he could not explain why the university did not have any queer organizing. He had not heard of the movements at FSU or UF. He was open during his time at USF, hanging signs announcing his homosexuality on his dorm room door and walking arm-in-arm with his boyfriend through fraternity parties. That kind of visibility had the potential to lead to community, but he did not know very many other queer people on the USF campus. Most of his community, he says, came from the bars.<sup>95</sup> Despite its relatively low profile in the early 1970s, the Gay Coalition would become an important fixture on the USF campus over the next decade of its existence.

### **Student Affairs and Evolving Campus Climates**

The evolution of student affairs offices is key to understanding the importance of campus climate to queer emergence. The developments at UF illustrate the importance

---

<sup>94</sup> Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Plume, 1994).

<sup>95</sup> Frank Meyers, interview with Jess Clawson, October 19, 2012, FQH4, Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

of the changing administration. The Dean of Students office at UF changed dramatically over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in ways reflected national trends. The primary function, student development, remained the same, but the office adjusted to new trends, political structures, and types of students over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Adaptability was an important component of this change. The Dean of Men office at UF was established in 1920, followed by the Dean of Women office in 1948, when UF began to admit women to the undergraduate division. The functions of both offices were meant to fulfill the expectation that the university would serve *in loco parentis*. These offices were responsible for advising student groups, including fraternities, sororities, and student government. The Dean of Women office also handled rules that applied only to female students, including curfews and dress codes. Such regulations were lifted in the mid-1960s, when universities replaced *in loco parentis* with increased student rights in response to demands. These times brought major changes to the two offices, and in 1969 they merged to create the Office of Student Development. Carl “Art” Sandeen was appointed as Vice President for Student Affairs in 1973, and the Office of Student Development was renamed the Office of Student Services, although most of the functions in the office stayed the same.<sup>96</sup>

Phyllis Meek, who served as Associate Dean for Student Services and Assistant Professor of Education at UF, experienced this shift. Meek joined the Dean of Women’s office in 1966 after completing her PhD at UF in counseling. She witnessed a lot of activism and supported the black freedom and women’s movements on campus. She saw student activists “challenging the whole idea of to what extent universities should

---

<sup>96</sup> Phyllis Meek and David D. Bynes, “Historical Background of the Dean of Students Office” <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/publications/history.php>, last updated June 15, 2012).



pay attention to the behavior of students.” This was part of the merging of the two offices and the development of Student Affairs. As the university became more co-educational, it made less sense to have two separate offices. At the same time, Meek lamented the forfeiting of leadership opportunities for women.<sup>97</sup> They let a female top-level administrator go because, as happened nationally, “when the dean of men and the dean of women merged, it was not the dean of women who became the dean of students.”<sup>98</sup> In 1992, Meek argued that there were still problems with women on campus, because there were no female vice-presidents and only one female dean of a college. Women in administrative positions were not in powerful ones. She attributed this to “the heritage of its being an all-male school” and believed that it reflected a larger truth about society relating to “reluctance to give women positions of power.”<sup>99</sup> Meek witnessed a great deal of change over the course of her career at UF, and her insights into gender, politics, and activism illuminate the context in which queer students worked.

The eventual lifting of the Regents’ ban on queer student groups stemmed from a combination of student activism and student affairs advocacy. The students at UF were still running what they called the Gainesville Gay Liberation Front.<sup>100</sup> The group was now less radical in that it took an assimilationist approach. It had reorganized, elected new officers, and worked to become more businesslike. The members wanted to educate straight people, help gay people get counseling and support if they needed it,

---

<sup>97</sup> Phyllis Meek, interview by Lisa Heard, April 13, 1992, transcript, Samuel Proctor Oral History Archives, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Most GLF chapters had since died, in large part because they were not single-issue organizations and members eventually wanted to focus on gay rights instead of a larger anti-oppressive agenda.

attain legal protections for gay people, and provide a comfortable social gathering place. The GLF renewed the effort to get campus recognition.<sup>101</sup> The *Alligator* ran an editorial asking the Board of Regents to strike a paragraph from its operating manual reading:

In order to assure a wholesome educational environment within the state universities of Florida, the Board of Regents... enjoins the administration in each of the institutions to continue to guard against activities subversive to the American democratic process and against immoral behavior, such as sex deviation.<sup>102</sup>

This paragraph, particularly the final clause, was the basis of Vice President for Student Affairs Lester Hale's denial of official recognition to the GLF in 1971.<sup>103</sup> In March 1974, the university's faculty senate voted to delete the words "such as sex deviation" from the paragraph, although it would not be removed until the Board of Regents did so itself. Among the reasons the faculty senate voted to remove the clause was to lift the censure of the American Academy of University Professors (AAUP), which had reprimanded UF based on several faculty dismissals over the previous five years, and on many objections to UF policy that the AAUP felt were based on the question of academic freedom.<sup>104</sup> Art Sandeen was integral to this development. He asked the Council for Student Affairs to take action to eliminate that section, "which has been interpreted as the basis for denying university recognition to student organizations

---

<sup>101</sup> Janet Park, "Gay Lib: 'acceptance of natural inclinations,'" *Independent Florida Alligator*, January 25, 1974, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Board of Regents Operating Manual, Section 2-3.21, page 29-30, 1974.

<sup>103</sup> Hale letter to Cross, 1971.

<sup>104</sup> Brian Jones, "Faculty Senate Strikes Clause," *Independent Florida Alligator*, March 1, 1974, 1; Tom Schroder, "UF offers Blye, Cornwell Settlement," *The Independent Florida Alligator*, January 8, 1975, 1; Dennis Kneale, "A Question of Justice: Fired Homosexual Loses Fight for Job," *Independent Florida Alligator*, February 21, 1977, 1.

such as the Gay Liberation Front.”<sup>105</sup> Dr. Richard E. Hulet, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Chairman of the Council on the Board of Regents, responded that Florida law was unclear regarding homosexuality and that the laws had been interpreted as including homosexuality as a crime against nature and an unnatural act with another person. Hulet felt that “test case action would be necessary to resolve the basis upon which a university may recognize organizations which are excluded by present policies.”<sup>106</sup> Sandeen wanted to focus on building “healthy and humane communities” and a university that was more “open, accessible, and attractive to all persons in our society.”<sup>107</sup> He would also play a significant role in making sure students who openly threatened violence against queer people on campus faced punishment.

Student Affairs at USF was oriented toward increasing diversity since the early 1970s. Dean Herbert Wunderlich voted to recommend official recognition of the Radical Action Committee, after having approved the Student Mobilization Committee and the Youth International Party. The university also took racial diversity seriously, and in 1971 hired a black man named Troy Collier as assistant to the vice president for Student Affairs to help attract minority students to the USF campus. It would be about a decade before enrollment of racial minorities increased substantially, but it rose over 10 percent between 1982 and 1983.<sup>108</sup> This attention to diversity did not translate into immediate acceptance of queer students by the administration, but it probably did contribute to the earlier sanctioning of the Gay Coalition.

---

<sup>105</sup> Minutes: Council for Student Affairs, University South Florida, Tampa, December 13, 1973.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Student Affairs Newsletter, Vol. 6 (October 1973).

<sup>108</sup> Greenberg, *University of South Florida*, 79.

The role of student affairs in the visibility project at FSU was also significant. A group called the Center for Participant Education (CPE) held educational group meetings on campus. They offered a wide range of courses, most of them innocuous, but two of them were initially refused approval by Dr. Steve McClellan, vice president for student affairs, in 1971. These courses were “The Coming American Social Revolution,” taught by Jack Lieberman (co-founder of the SDS group that had so bedeviled President Marshall), and “Homosexual Viewpoints,” taught by Rictor Norton and Judy Fee, the latter of whom was one of the founders of the Tallahassee GLF along with Hiram Ruiz. McClellan had refused an earlier iteration of the course on homosexuality “on the grounds that it was taught on an open-ended basis by members of the Gay Liberation Front, which is not a recognized campus organization.”<sup>109</sup> The course was meant to discuss the various psychological, behavioristic, sociological, religious, anthropological, and legal views of homosexuality. It would also evaluate these views in relation to the homosexual’s viewpoint and experience.<sup>110</sup> That the student affairs office had to approve a course that was not offered for credit in 1971 is surprising considering that the *in loco parentis* justification for regulating morals had theoretically faded by that point. The university was forced to approve the groups when the CPE Board of Directors found that both courses were within the law after their attorneys approved the syllabi and found them legal.<sup>111</sup>

The Division of Student Affairs at FSU was changing in the early 1970s. As at UF, the office was beginning to involve students in the actual administrating of the

---

<sup>109</sup> Sam Miller, “CPE Courses given go-ahead,” *Flambeau*, October 22, 1971, 1.

<sup>110</sup> “CPE edu-group to discuss homosexual views,” *Flambeau*, November 1, 1971, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Sam Miller, “Infamous CPE Courses Axed,” *Flambeau*, September 28, 1971, 1.

university. The Division of Student Affairs employed students who were involved in the decision-making and engaged in projects and research.<sup>112</sup> It was again renamed in 1973, as the Division of Student Educational Services, which Marshall hoped would enable it to “become a stronger advocate for students in academic matters.”<sup>113</sup> But the major reorganization came in 1979, when Bob Leach was appointed the Vice President for Student Affairs. It was under Leach that minority affairs, along with several other offices, were added to the student affairs purview. His philosophy was that student affairs should be “concerned with the total development of the student as a human being.”<sup>114</sup> Although Leach arrived at FSU well after the GLF itself had come and gone, his attitude fit with the sort of program that had begun ten years before, when student affairs went from being about rules-enforcement and student government-management to a group meant to advocate for students. This sort of attitude opened the possibility for queer students to have an ally in the administration. Although diversity was not always meant to include queer people, the universities were being forced to grapple with student bodies who were not entirely straight white men. This created new opportunities for alliances between queer and non-queer students. It also gave queer students a more obvious path to addressing issues of discrimination through Student Affairs, even if those concerns were not always handled adequately.

### **Gay Student Groups Nationwide: The Legal Strategy**

Student Affairs offices played important roles in creating campus climates for queer emergence. The national context of gay student group formation coincided with

---

<sup>112</sup> “Student Affairs Progressing,” *Flambeau*, January 19, 1972, 3.

<sup>113</sup> “The Name Isn’t Only Change in Student Affairs Division,” *Flambeau*, December 5, 1973, 9.

<sup>114</sup> Bart Church, “Student Affairs: The Making of an Empire,” *Flambeau*, September 17, 1979, 14.

this evolution and informed local contexts. There was historical and legal precedent for university recognition of gay student groups. In fact, when the GLF students at FSU were first trying to gain campus recognition, they handed the Division of Student Affairs a list of other universities that had recognized similar groups, including Columbia, UCLA, Cornell, the University of Chicago, Berkeley, University of Michigan, San Jose State, New York University, and University of Minnesota.<sup>115</sup> Students had been coming out on campuses since the late 1960s.

Brett Beemyn's work shows that student groups had begun forming before Stonewall. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students at Columbia University in New York City, and then Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, formed Student Homophile Leagues (SHL) in May 1968. Beemyn argues that these groups were critical to laying the groundwork to support the militant movements like the GLF that would follow Stonewall. They shared some of the responsibility with the Mattachine Society (MS) and the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) for creating an atmosphere in which Stonewall was possible, but were much more likely to use the militant tactics of antiwar and black freedom movements. The SHL was more visible and confrontational than the MS or the DOB. Their politics more closely resembled those of the Tallahassee and Gainesville GLF chapters than might seem immediately obvious. Unlike the GLF in Florida, the SHL received university recognition after a couple of years. In 1967, Columbia chartered the nation's first student gay rights group. Over time, the students at Cornell formed their own group. They began to organize politically and be more open about their identities. They "took it upon themselves to create public gay spaces" and in so doing, they

---

<sup>115</sup> "GLF Meets," *Flambeau*, May 27, 1970, 9.

encouraged more students to come out and be political in their identities. The groups eventually became chapters of the GLF.<sup>116</sup>

The GLF, the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) and the Gay Academic Union (GAU) followed Stonewall. The GLF was not strictly a student movement, although several campuses had chapters. Gay liberation was a product of its time. The 1960s saw social attitudes change, in terms of feminism, the anti-war movement, black freedom, and counterculture. Many alienated people sought equality, freedom, and justice. Gay people were part of all of these movements, even if they were closeted. By the end of the 1960s, though, the movement gained more visibility. John D'Emilio argues that it is apparent in the rhetoric, style, and tactics of the early years of the GLF that they had learned from earlier protest movements. The GLF was in solidarity with other oppressed groups. Autonomous GLF chapters adopted the politics of confrontation, but were too radical to attract large swaths of gay communities. In 1973 some members split off to form the Gay Activists Alliance, which maintained the confrontational tactics but was a one-issue organization, looking only to further acceptance of gay people.<sup>117</sup> But before this, two universities in perhaps unlikely places made national news in their quest for recognition of GLF chapters. Students at the University of Kansas and the University of Kentucky fought hard for the recognition they gained at their universities. Students at the University of Kansas went through the legal system and eventually attained university recognition in 1972, two years after they formed the chapter.<sup>118</sup> The University

---

<sup>116</sup> Beemyn, "The Silence is Broken," 221.

<sup>117</sup> D'Emilio, *Making Trouble*, 120.

<sup>118</sup> <http://wgss.ku.edu/about/history.shtml>; "Topeka Judge Bars Kunstler," Associated Press, January 27, 1972, 10.

of Kentucky GLF was initially denied recognition by the Dean of Students and the Vice President for Student Affairs, but the University Appeals Board ruled in favor of the GLF. Although homosexuality was illegal in Kentucky—the argument the administration made, just as Lester Hale made at UF—the Appeals Board said the GLF’s activities did not disrupt educational endeavors.<sup>119</sup>

The Gay Academic Union, formed in 1973, was also an important victory for queer visibility in higher education. Gay historian John D’Emilio was one of the founders of the GAU. The group wanted to end discrimination against women and gay people in academia and support academics in coming out. They also wanted to promote studies of the gay experience and encourage the teaching of gay studies in the educational system. The GAU was important because it was about “gay women and men struggling together around their place of work” and about bringing “private self and public role together.” The organization struggled mightily with sexism and feminism. Gay women did not show up for many meetings or stay with the organization long and the gay men had to deal with their internalized misogyny.<sup>120</sup> The GAU opened new discussions about sexuality and the human experience: “At the very least, thousands of other gay brothers and sisters in the academy and elsewhere may not need to remain lonely, alienated, and afraid for as long as some of us chose to do.”<sup>121</sup> At the 1973 Gay Academic Union conference in New York, health policy professor Dr. Howard Brown said, “One of the

---

<sup>119</sup> “Gay Lib Front is Recognized,” *Harlan Daily Enterprise*, November 15, 1972, 10.

<sup>120</sup> D’Emilio, *Making Trouble*, 121-127.

<sup>121</sup> Louie Crew, “The Gay Academic Unmasks,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 8 (February 25, 1974): 20.



purposes we hope to achieve is that being a homosexual is not a contradiction to being an acceptable human being and a satisfactory role model.”<sup>122</sup>

The courts again proved helpful in 1974, when in *Gay Students Organization of the University of New Hampshire v. Thomas N. Bonner*, the court ruled against the university, stating that mere speculation of future illegal activity (in this case, sodomy) was an insufficient reason for university regulation. Law and medicine were turning against those seeking to use them as justification for denying queer students their rights to peaceably assemble. The courts continued to consider legality of homosexuality and the presence of clubs in 1976. The Court of Appeals in Virginia ruled in *Gay Alliance of Students v. Matthew* that although Virginia law prohibited practicing certain forms of homosexuality, being a homosexual was not a crime. After these and other cases, courts have consistently ruled that universities can only limit an organization’s rights when the group activities are illegal.<sup>123</sup> These developments, coupled with the growth of student affairs as a body meant to support diversity, helped facilitate emergence and acceptance of queer student groups at UF, FSU, and USF. Legal precedent having been established, queer students in Florida and around the nation needed another important victory: to no longer carry the stigma of mental illness.

### **The APA and the Changing Queer Movements**

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the court system both helped queer students gain footholds in their campus communities. These were signs that the national climate was growing somewhat friendlier. Those in favor of a visible queer

---

<sup>122</sup> Malcolm Carter, “Homosexual College Teachers, Students Hold Conference,” *The Robesonian*, November 27, 1973, 2.

<sup>123</sup> Rullman, “A Legal History: University Recognition of Homosexual Organizations,” 7.

student presence on campus pointed out that the APA had removed homosexuality from its list of mental illness in 1973, so it was no longer considered a deviant behavior. This was one of the most important developments in gay rights history and was important to the history of psychology, as a behavior that was once thought of as deviant was normalized. Before homosexuality was demedicalized, secrecy about homosexuality was considered normal and desirable. Openness was an expression of pathology, and was also thought to put all gay people at political disadvantage. Since the depathologizing of homosexuality, disclosure of one's sexual orientation, particularly to straight people, was considered psychologically and politically advantageous. In the 1950s and 1960s, most clinicians believed that homosexuality was a psychopathological condition. It was included as a "sociopathic personality disturbance" in the APA's list of mental illnesses, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, or *DSM-I*. The second edition (*DSM-II*) was released in 1968. In it, homosexuality was classified as a sexual deviation, alongside fetishism, pedophilia, transvestism, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sadism, and masochism.<sup>124</sup> It took years of hard work by gay activists to lift this stigma.

The 1960s militancy on the part of many marginalized groups who were seen or defined as deviant changed the landscape of activism, and they rejected others' definitions and called themselves "oppressed" rather than "deviant." Gay activists, such as those in the GLF and GAA, pointed to oppressive social institutions instead of maladjustment of gay people as the problem. Along with this came the idea of the importance of disclosure of one's gay identity as a healthy development psychologically

---

<sup>124</sup> Roy Cain, "Disclosure and Secrecy Among Gay Men in the United States and Canada," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 1 (July 1991): 24-45.

and politically. Many in the New Left adopted the popular slogan, “The Personal is Political,” and refused to be complicit in their own visibility. Mental health professionals came under scrutiny by radical activists in the 1960s and early 1970s, and they were identified as part of the political structure that kept gay people oppressed. During this time, more mental health professionals began to see homosexuality as not a psychopathological condition, although many still supported conventional pathology-based views of homosexuality. The pressure of activists and the political divisions within the APA led to an internal debate over the definition of homosexuality as a mental illness.<sup>125</sup> Gay activists, including Barbara Gittings, a member of the GA, who took on this declassification as a special mission, argued that homosexuality was a variation in human expression, not a pathological condition. Some mental health professionals agreed with her. In 1972, she helped organize a panel discussion with the APA entitled “Psychiatry: Friend or Foe to the Homosexuals: A Dialogue.” All of the psychiatrists on the panel were straight, and Gittings felt they needed a gay psychiatrist. They could only find one, who spoke heavily disguised and using a voice distorter as “Dr. H. Anonymous.” This was Dr. John E. Fryer, who spoke about the problems with being forced to be closeted while practicing psychiatry.<sup>126</sup> Gittings and other gay activists argued that listing their sexual orientation as a disease denied them jobs, housing, and other rights.<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Mark Moran, “Activists Forced Psychiatrists to Look Behind Closet Door,” *Psychiatric News*, November 3, 2006. <http://psychnews.psychiatryonline.org/newsarticle.aspx?articleid=110448>.

<sup>127</sup> “Homosexuality: Mental illness stigma removed,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, April 10, 1974, 4.

Some mental health professionals agreed with Gittings and the GAA and supported their group, but this debate was among the bitterest in APA history. Those opposed to the decision were led by Dr. Charles Socarides, who wrote a book called *The Overt Homosexual*, in which he contended that homosexuality was a result of a disordered sexual development and was thus a psychiatric condition. Socarides circulated a petition that forced a membership vote on the trustees' actions and called the decision "the medical hoax of the century." He argued that it "flew in the face of the one fact we know, which is that male and female are programmed to mate with the opposite sex, and that is the story of 2.5 billion years of evolution and any society that hopes to survive."<sup>128</sup> Despite Socarides's unfounded protests, the APA trustees overwhelmingly approved the decision to remove the mental illness stigma. Opponents successfully forced a membership vote, which also turned out to be a landslide in favor of approval of the trustees' actions.<sup>129</sup>

Classifications for people unhappy in their orientation (ego dystonic homosexuality) replaced homosexuality as a mental illness until 1986, at which point all reference to homosexuality was dropped in the revision of the *DSM-III*. Gay-positive professionals and activists achieved this through successfully arguing that no research or clinical function was served by including ego dystonic homosexuality and that a stigma remained. The APA continued to be involved in the process of gay visibility, when its official position became one in favor of the benefits disclosing one's sexual identity based on the idea that there was nothing inherently pathological about

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

homosexuality. Coming out to oneself and others came to be an important step in identity development, rather than a sign of further pathology.<sup>130</sup> The president of the APA issued a statement that individuals and groups should not have to live in fear of persecution for their sexuality. Furthermore, whether the administration considered it a deviation or not, “to bar a group of students from the use of university facilities because of their stated sexual preferences seems blatantly unconstitutional to us.”<sup>131</sup> This was a very important moment in queer rights everywhere, including on campuses, because it took away the excuse that gay people are diseased and therefore unfit for public life.

The rights of queer students to organize on Florida campuses would be seriously challenged by two state legislators in 1982, but between the new Student Affairs mission, promising case law, and the depathologizing of homosexuality, queer students had a firmer foundation from which to support their rights to inclusion on campus. If a homosexual identity was no longer considered sick or illegal, opposition to queer visibility based on that rationale was less dangerous. These national developments empowered queer students in Florida.

Student activism in the mid-1970s would look different than it had in the late-1960s. Despite the overall decline in direct-action protest and other forms of student activism, the queer students at UF, FSU, and USF continued to work to improve their lives. Queer activism on campuses nationwide had actually increased in the spring of 1974, with court cases deciding in favor of queer students’ rights. Gay counseling services, which existed at all three universities, helped with community acceptance.

---

<sup>130</sup> Cain, “Disclosure and Secrecy Among Gay Men,” 26.

<sup>131</sup> “Gay Rights,” *Independent Florida Alligator*, January 30, 1974, 6.

Thanks to the APA, campus psychologists who were asked about the effects of greater openness for queer students typically approved, on the grounds that it was healthier to be open about anything than to be hidden or repressed. Two barriers were identified as common to recognition of queer groups: the widely held concern that official campus recognition might be used as a cover for seducing younger students, and the legal argument that recognizing queer groups would be violating state laws against homosexuality. Queer groups worked nationwide, including at Florida universities, to repeal such laws. The greater challenge would be convincing people that the groups did not intend to recruit anyone.<sup>132</sup>

The level of visibility the queer students achieved by the end of 1975 set the stage for open debates about the importance of queer visibility, as well as for the attainment of official recognition. The students had achieved a great deal through their activism and educational efforts. Recognition, and the attendant distribution of resources, mattered to the students at these three campuses. As they would learn going forward, however, justice could be attained simply through official campus recognition. Even after they attained campus charters, they would still need to challenge “oppression, the institutional constraint on self development, and domination, the institutional constraint on self-determination.”<sup>133</sup> But the work queer students at UF, FSU, and USF did in the early 1970s served to improve their own lives and the campuses on which they lived, paving the way for them to survive the struggles they would face in the years to come.

---

<sup>132</sup> Iver Peterson, “Homosexuals Gain Support on Campus,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1974, 89.

<sup>133</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 37.

CHAPTER 3  
DRAG AND THE PEDAGOGY OF SILENCE:  
PERFORMANCE AND GENDER IN THE QUEER STUDENT MOVEMENT

“We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it,” became a rallying cry of Queer Nation activists in the 1990s as they attempted to reclaim public spaces in the name of queer people. The phrase pointed out that most public spaces were assumed heterosexual. But in the decade and a half leading up to the establishment of Queer Nation and other direct action groups, university students in Florida were using this attitude, if not these words, to increase their visibility on their campuses and in their communities. Florida was far from many of the famous movements, including Queer Nation and the Stonewall demonstration, but queer students there were working hard to educate themselves and their straight peers, as well as build their own communities. As Chapter One has shown, queer students at the University of Florida (UF), Florida State University (FSU), and the University of South Florida (USF) had begun making their presence known in 1970. Drag—the art of transforming one’s gender identity through costuming and performance—was one tool they used for education about gender, queer people, and community. At the same time, they debated the merits of the presence of straight people (and their money) in gay bars.

This Chapter will discuss the use of drag as an educational tool, particularly in the setting of a university. It will also discuss the failure of drag to educate straight people, as well as the contested nature of straight people in queer spaces. It will highlight how the intersections of queer spaces and straight people sometimes resulted in oppressive silences, but had the potential to silence heteronormativity (the idea that being straight is normal and being queer is abnormal) and heterosexism (the notion that

being straight is superior to being queer). Drag shows and gay bars carried the possibility of being activist spaces through being educational tools, but this did not always work as intended, as some straight people found their homophobia bolstered by the presence of drag queens and queer spaces like bars. Nonetheless, creating queer spaces was an important form of activism for these queer Florida students. Drag in particular was a uniquely activist endeavor. Just because it was not always successful does not mean it was not important.

Social movements are complicated. It would be an oversimplification to write a story about how drag and gay bars were mostly positive tools of the queer student movement, that they educated their peers through drag and access to queer spaces. Even the idea of “the” queer student movement is reductive, as there have been many separate groups and efforts meant to centralize queer issues in educational settings. However, drag has had transformative potential. As Jerry Notaro, a long-time makeup artist for drag performers and a one-time disco performer, said of drag, “It can always educate if it’s done right.” Straight people loved going to the famous El Goya bar in Tampa because it was a big, rehearsed performance. But most drag, he noted, “is not done at that level. And it just makes a lot of people uncomfortable.” Beyond just straight people, Notaro pointed out, “There’s a lot of drag phobia among the homosexual community, in the gay community, in the lesbian community, too.”<sup>1</sup> This challenge to the queer community is the focus of this chapter. In particular, it examines the use of drag shows and gay bars as part of this movement and the different kinds of silence they

---

<sup>1</sup> Jerry Notaro interview by Jess Clawson, October 9, 2012, transcript, FQH2, Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.



involve.<sup>2</sup> This Chapter presents two arguments about queer cultural spaces and student activism. The first has to do with drag. While it sometimes revealed the social constructions of gender to straight people who may not have considered it otherwise, it did not reduce homophobia overall. One commonly held belief is that drag helped the movement by reducing homophobia and revealing the extent to which gender is a set of ideas and not something rooted in nature. Drag queens and queer activists have believed this to be drag's greatest potential for decades. In contemporary studies, people who see drag then report being unable to ignore the gay rights struggle and think differently about gender and sexuality.<sup>3</sup> This form of education combated heteronormativity, in that it silenced gender essentialism and gave voice to gender construction. It was an empowerment, a queering of the oppressive silences used on marginalized people. It turned queer bodies and identities into a mechanism that silenced the wall of homophobic sound and created a space for straight people to listen.

However, drag did not always reduce homophobia amongst the general population.<sup>4</sup> Sources show many instances in which bigoted straight people might see drag queens as pathological justifications for their feelings about gay men: that any man wearing a dress must be sick. This is what some homophobic reactions to drag demonstrated, and continues to be the belief of many mainstream gay and lesbian activists, who, in response to conservative gender baiting, feel that drag is an

---

<sup>2</sup> This chapter's discussion of drag will focus on drag queens, simply because my sources do not include drag kings. Drag kings did not become prominent parts of queer movements in the United States until the early 1990s, and they have become just as important to queer spaces as drag queens.

<sup>3</sup> Verta Taylor, Leila J. Rupp, and Joshua Gamson, "Performing Protest: Drag Shows as Tactical Repertoire of the Gay and Lesbian Movement," *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, 25 (2004): 105-137.

<sup>4</sup> Jose Eseteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 99.

embarrassment to the movement and will prevent gay and lesbian people from being able to assimilate fully into society. Similar arguments are used against other “visible queers,” like trans and genderqueer people.<sup>5</sup> This silence is almost a mirror of the first kind. It silenced the queer people themselves. In this sense, to know is not enough. Education does not always combat bigotry. Even if drag has not always succeeded in the reduction of homophobia, however, it has not hindered the queer rights movement. It serves many positive functions for queer communities unrelated to educating straight people, like self-fulfillment, bringing joy and laughter to a community, family, and in some cases, financial gain. However, the students who used it as a tool for visibility and homophobia reduction at FSU, USF, and UF in the late 1970s and early 1980s found that it did not always serve the purposes they had hoped. It was more effective at community building amongst queer people than educating straight people.

The second argument is that while gay bars and drag shows had the potential to educate straight people about queer issues, the inclusion of straight people in those spaces also carried potential threats to the queer community because straight people could turn a safe space into a venue for voyeurism or violence. Many gay people continue to believe that welcoming straight people into gay bars will let straight people see that queers are “just people” and thus convince them to shed their homophobia. Some straight people also argued for their inclusion in gay bars, often because they just liked those bars better. Cis straight women<sup>6</sup> in particular argued that they felt gay bars

---

<sup>5</sup> Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer* (New York: Alyson Books, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> To be cis is to identify with the gender one was assigned at birth, whereas to be trans\* is to identify with a gender other than what one was assigned at birth.

were a safe space for them, too. This is a silencing of heterosexism: using the “queer people are just like you” strategy to encourage empathy amongst straight people.

Gay bars, though, did not always help straight people become less homophobic. Many queer people argued that it was not their responsibility to educate straight people to be less homophobic, and therefore those bars should not be open to them. That gay bars did not always help is clear based on the homophobic responses some people gave to having been to a gay bar, or the ways they reacted in queer spaces. And some gay people felt it violated their safe space to have straight people there, because it was not their job to educate straight people, at least not in the context of their bars. This was silencing straight people by not allowing them to enter queer spaces, and resists attempts of untrustworthy straight people to silence them in their own bars. Again, both arguments—that queer spaces should include straight people for homophobia reduction, and that some spaces should be queer-only for the health of queer people—held some truth. Some straight people have entered queer spaces and left feeling less homophobic, or more committed to combating anti-queer hate. Others have been outraged by the concept of a queer space. The students at UF, FSU, and USF had to learn how to use queer spaces for their visibility project, and how to use them as emotionally restorative in their fight for legitimacy on their campuses.

### **Queering Space in the South**

Students at the helm of the queer visibility movements at UF, FSU, and USF engaged in various forms of education, ranging from letters to the editor to bringing in guest speakers to hosting love-ins. They created queer spaces, on paper or in person. In doing so, they queered corners of their world, making them safer wherever possible. The significance of these efforts in these towns is noteworthy because they created

these spaces in a state that remains notoriously hostile to queer people. All three universities were sites of persecution under the Johns Committee and were situated in towns with communities unafraid to voice their objections to the presence of gay people on religious grounds. That these students could establish safe spaces in this context is remarkable. Drag was also powerful for the performers themselves. Jerry Notaro explained it as “a quick, cheap, and easy way to be somebody else. And to be dazzling.” At Rene’s, the biggest gay bar in Tampa since 1972, he noted the performers tended to be large black people and Cubans, “people who couldn’t get a break anywhere else... and for a little bit of a while, you were somebody different, and you weren’t put down by somebody else walking by on the street. It gave you a quick opportunity to get a little bit of recognition.”<sup>7</sup>

In Gainesville, one such safe space was the Melody Club, which evolved in its first year of existence from a “straight” bar to a gay bar that hosted drag shows. It opened in 1970, and by 1974, had become not only part of the queer student existence, but part of the queer liberation experience. Other clubs, such as the Spectrum Disco and the Zoo, would open and occasionally host drag shows. In Tallahassee, a few of the founders of the GLF opened a gay bar called Elsewhere. Another Tallahassee bar, City of Night, became a gay bar once queer people started to patronize it. Drag shows were frequently held there as well. Tallahassee was also home to a secret lesbian bar, which was described with the alias “Whispers” in the student newspaper. Both Gainesville and Tallahassee were steeped in Dixie culture and bore little in common

---

<sup>7</sup> Notaro interview.

culturally with other Florida cities like Miami. Their Deep South roots snarled firmly into campus life.

Tampa was a slightly different story. Although queer USF students did not establish any kind of queer group until after they had formed at FSU and USF, the town was urban and riddled with gay bars. Its urban setting and context as an important port city meant it was home to a wider variety of people and experiences than the more provincial Tallahassee or Gainesville. El Goya and Rene's were the two most famous gay bars in Tampa. Jerry Notaro remembers, "El Goya was known all over the world as one of the greatest gay clubs, certainly one of the premier drag clubs in the world... It was like Disney World." The town also had bathhouses and other public meeting places for gay people. Eventually, the area known as Ybor became the "gayborhood"—Gaybor—because gay people moved there and spent time there in large numbers.<sup>8</sup> Plenty of homophobic opposition faced queer people in Tampa, but there were gathering places in their own corner of town. These were important to the students at USF, but some students there also wanted to create queer spaces outside of bars to preempt some of the problems that arise when a community can only find itself in environments centered on alcohol.<sup>9</sup> The students at all three universities who worked in a hostile political landscape and in unwelcoming university climates to establish queer spaces did important activist work, even if they did not conceive of it as such.

---

<sup>8</sup> Notaro interview.

<sup>9</sup> "Students form 'Gay Coalition,'" *Oracle*, October 24, 1974.

## Silencing Heteronormativity: The Power of Drag

Many, though not all, queer people have long considered education of themselves and of straight people as crucial to the struggle to end gender and sexuality oppression. The common understanding of the early gay and lesbian movement is that it was essentialist in that it was rooted in binary ideas of men and women being distinct and fixed categories. The assumption goes that the new queer movement is based more in social constructionism, or the idea that men and women are two options in a more open field of gender possibilities and that the differences between genders are created through ideas, not rooted in biology. This is an oversimplification. Even people involved in the early homophile movement were interested in radical examinations of identities.<sup>10</sup>

Drag is one way these identities have been examined since the 1920s.<sup>11</sup> Drag performances are intersectional spaces wherein variations on queer interact within and between people, and wherein heterosexual people can encounter queer identities in a setting they perceive to be entertaining. In these venues, they are given an education on queerness that is often deliberately pedagogical. This is the first kind of silence: straight people were meant to encounter queer cultures and identities but without the power to dominate them. Their beliefs about gender essentialism might break down in the face of a beautiful drag queen as the symbolic language of gender is laid bare. However, this was not always a realistic outcome, and some queer people preferred to

---

<sup>10</sup> Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 62-92; Cris Mayo, "Queering Foundations: Queer and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Educational Research," *Review of Research in Education* 31, no. 1 (March 2007); 78-94.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Kaminski, "Listening to Drag; Music, Performance and the Construction of Oppositional Culture" (Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2003), 21.

abdicate responsibility for engaging with heterosexuals at all. This implies two points. First, that the educational goal was not always met because straight people did not consistently display reduced homophobia. Second, some queer people did not (and do not) adopt the educational project for themselves. The stances of the queer student groups at UF, FSU, and USF were all oriented towards educating their peers. However, each group also found the need for restorative queer spaces in which people could have fun and form bonds.

Drag was becoming more visible nationwide in 1974. A writer from the *Palm Beach Post* wrote a culture column about a drag show in New York City in the Hotel Plaza, and noted immediately that the audiences for these shows were overwhelmingly straight. As this drag show took place not in a gay bar, but in a ritzy hotel, the audience had not entered a queer space. According to the featured entertainer, Craig Russell, “Female impersonation has a stigma because of American sexual hang-ups, so audiences are often uptight, unsure and nervous when they arrive, but they soon get over that. They enjoy, relax. They are entertained and that’s very important with all the bad news we have to live with today.” The general manager of the show argued that the straight people were “amazed and amused” and “don’t feel like they’re watching a freak show.” Rather, they focused on the artistry of the drag performances.<sup>12</sup> The context was different—a non-queer space in the north—but it shows the potential drag had to acquaint straight people with queer identities.

---

<sup>12</sup> Frederick M. Winship, “Female Impersonators on Stage Gain Popularity,” *Palm Beach Post*, July 14, 1974.

Just two months later, student reporter Bob Morris wrote a feature story for the *Independent Florida Alligator* about the Melody Club, Gainesville's gay bar.<sup>13</sup> The profile included a description of the clientele as he saw them (feminine men and butch women, mostly). He also wrote about the need people felt for the bar in the community as a safe space for them to exist and meet each other. Morris focused in particular on drag and the ways people encountered it. He opened the article by describing in detail the feminine presentation of a drag queen, not revealing her identity as a drag queen until several paragraphs in. His reporting itself played into the idea that people should question the construction of gender by leading readers to believe that they were reading about a cis woman, only to find out that she was in drag. However, this discourse could also be construed as legitimizing the idea that trans women and drag queens sought to deceive cis straight men. This was dangerous—many trans women have encountered violence from straight men who may not have realized they were trans, or who knew but were troubled by their attraction to trans women.

The USF *Oracle* also carried a feature on a gay bar and a drag show, but much later, in 1981. The feature opened with the statement that the bar was mysterious and “people”—one might assume the writer meant straight people—were ignorant, so it was incumbent on the *Oracle* to lift the veil.<sup>14</sup> This article, like Morris's, spent a great deal of time on the attire and physical appearance of each drag queen. The writer took pains to note that “the female impersonators will be referred to as females out of respect for their talents. Several have had cosmetic surgery; some take hormones; while some rely fully

---

<sup>13</sup> Bob Morris, “This is My Life: At the Melody Club, Being Gay is No Lie,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, August 19, 1974.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Gerard, “Three views of the unique El Goya Experience,” *The Oracle*, May 19, 1981.



on their talents to portray the illusion that they are real women.”<sup>15</sup> This underscores one of the important pedagogical aspects of drag: it teaches about the ways gender identities are constructed by illustrating how they are performed through external signifiers like clothing and mannerisms. As Judith Butler argues, heterosexuality has naturalized itself through setting up “certain illusions of continuity between sex, gender, and desire.”<sup>16</sup> Drag is important because it “constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation.”<sup>17</sup> Some drag queens, such as Melanie of El Goya, were trans people.<sup>18</sup> Their performance as drag queens went beyond the idea of “man impersonating woman” into “a person perceived as a man but who is actually a woman performing as a woman.”<sup>19</sup> In the context of the queer student movement, then, drag encouraged people to confront the ways their own identities were constructed. The silencing in this case is the silencing of heteronormativity. It is de-naturalized, and the silence brings people into a queer space where the taken-for-granted assumptions about power and privilege are inverted, such that a man performing “woman” or “feminine” is in control.

The drag show Morris described had other elements of pedagogy. For instance, during the show, the drag queens emphasized the work they did in the community, including a Jerry Lewis telethon, a gift drive for underprivileged children, and raising

---

<sup>15</sup> Gerard, “Three views of the unique El Goya Experience.”

<sup>16</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 25.

<sup>17</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Gerard, “Three views of the unique El Goya Experience.”

<sup>19</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 22.

money for a heart disease foundation. In the last case, the foundation turned down the \$2,000 that the drag queens raised, refusing to accept it from “those” kinds of people. The drag queens were making a point of demonstrating their role in the community to the audience, and also enlightening them to the struggles of being cultural outsiders. Fred Pratt, a Gainesville gay activist who is wheelchair bound, remembers the importance of drag queens to local activist efforts. In the mid-1980s, when Pratt, who has drawn a great deal of the Gainesville-based anti-gay fire, was being threatened, he remembered the drag queens standing up for him: “I had these two very, very good friends who were drag queens, and they said, if something happens to you, we’ll start a Stonewall for us, we’ll start a Stonewall riot.” He begged them to keep the gay bar quiet if anything happened to him because he did not want anything to happen to anyone else. This memory is still painful for him—he cried while talking about it.<sup>20</sup> Drag culture often includes an element of community defense, and the queens themselves engaged in activist work when they raised money for people and rallied to protect their own.

In addition to proving their use to the community, the drag queens were participating in what José Estéban Muñoz calls “disidentification,” by using humor, rage, and imagination to form a powerful component to the queer liberation agenda. Muñoz writes about disidentification as a strategy of recycling dominant images and structures to form a political resistance from the mainstream. For instance, as discussed later in this Chapter, some drag queens in Gainesville formed a group called Smiles on Christmas to deliberately oppose the homophobic Save Our Children campaign. Comedic drag performances should not be seen as all good-humored fun, as this would

---

<sup>20</sup> Fred Pratt, interview with Jess Clawson, October 5, 2012, transcript, FQH1, Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

ignore the “scathing anti-normative critiques” of so many performers. Humor is pedagogy, and Muñoz argues, “comedy does not exist independently of rage.”<sup>21</sup> Rage is a call to activism and an important way to counteract the colonization of heteronormativity. In discussing their exclusion from even the world of charitable giving, the drag queens evoked humor and rage to make a point about the bigotry queer people faced in mainstream society. Drag performances can set up a confrontation with the audience that draws a line between gay and straight people and affirm a gay collective identity that opposes mainstream heterosexuality. In so doing, they undermine identity classifications and expand sexual and gender categories. It is because drag is entertaining that it succeeds, because it makes political expression possible that might not be otherwise appealing to an audience. The queer student groups who sponsored drag performances at their universities hoped to accomplish precisely this aim.

### **When to Know is Not Enough: Silence as Echo Chambers of Oppression**

In discussing the importance of drag to queer movements, it would be a mistake to omit Stonewall, the 1969 demonstration in New York City against a decades-long epidemic of police brutality directed at queer people. Stonewall is famous for being the first time queer people collectively responded to violence with in-the-streets anger. Although Stonewall may not have been the impetus for all queer rights movements everywhere, it has undeniable significance, and drag queens were at the forefront of it. Drag queens and other visible queer people have long been at the frontlines of the battle for queer rights, too often bearing the most visible, literal scars.<sup>22</sup> The importance

---

<sup>21</sup> Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, x.

<sup>22</sup> Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory*; Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, *Why are Faggots so Afraid of Faggots: Flaming Challenges to Masculinity, Objectification, and the Desire to Conform*, (Oakland: AK Press, 2012).

of drag queens to Stonewall, though, was not their deconstruction of heteronormatized gender ideas; it was their acts of public protest. They, and other genderqueer and gender non-conforming people, had been subject to the harshest and most violent crackdowns of the police, and faced the most danger from civilians in their everyday lives for not being willing or able to “pass.” The bravery of the Stonewall rebels is undeniable, but their importance is not based in their education of the straight policemen at whom they threw bottles; it was in their public willingness to stand up for themselves. They demonstrated for queer people that standing up for themselves is an option. Perhaps this is the most crucial pedagogy of all.

Drag has not always worked to these ends. Muñoz makes the point that the “sanitized and desexualized queer subject” provided for mass consumption “represents a certain strand of integrationist liberal pluralism.” Mainstream drag culture has enjoyed an increased presence in the mass media but has not led to social understanding and tolerance from the religious right or the political elite, and the rate of violence against queer people has remained steady.<sup>23</sup> As Muñoz explains, the drag boom “helps one understand that a liberal-pluralist mode of political strategizing only eventuates a certain absorption and nothing like a productive engagement with difference.”<sup>24</sup> This can clearly be seen in the context of UF’s 1981 Gay Awareness Week.

It had been an eventful week from the start. On May 15, 1981, a group of six UF students set up a table and asked passersby to sign a petition “calling for the execution of homosexuals.” Five of the six students were members of the Kappa Alpha fraternity.

---

<sup>23</sup> Catherine Lugg, *Thinking Queerly Blog*, <http://cath47.wordpress.com/>; Julia Heffernan, *Schooling Inequality Blog*, <http://schoolinginequality.wordpress.com>.

<sup>24</sup> Muñoz, *Disidentification*, 99.

This fraternity was not known for its sensitivity: it held a Confederate parade every year, and had committed anti-Semitic acts. The fraternity prided itself on the maintenance of Southern heritage, and queer people did not fit their Lost Cause narrative. They held signs reading: “Homosexuals need bullets—not acceptance,” “Students for the public execution of queers,” and “Eat shit and die faggots.” The group also passed out papers reading “No More Homos—Students for the draft and public executions” and “Clean up America—Shoot a Queer. Everyone should do his part—Take aim today.” They encouraged students to “sign up, if you are an American.”<sup>25</sup> The university administration quickly squelched the protest, but it set a context for the rest of the week’s events, one that seemed to increase the urgency many gay students felt to educate their peers.

The next day, UF’s Rathskeller, an on-campus pub, hosted a drag queen named Glenn Elliott as part of the Gay Awareness Week festivities. Elliott argued that “Gay Awareness Week is for straights... We gays are aware we’re here. This week is to make the straights aware we are here.”<sup>26</sup> Like the Melody Club queens seven years before, Elliott spoke of his charity work. He had appropriated the acronym of Anita Bryant’s “Save Our Children” campaign, starting a group called “Smiles on Christmas,” a “gay-organized drive in conjunction with Toys for Tots to collect gifts for needy children.” As the journalist pointed out, “Elliott hopes this will show the community that

---

<sup>25</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “Student Petitioners Accused of Harassing Gays,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, May 18, 1981.

<sup>26</sup> Sarah Ritterhoff, “Female impersonator ‘not just bitchy drag queen,’” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, May 27, 1981, 10. The only pronouns used for Elliott in the piece, in or out of drag, are male pronouns.

gays can be a functioning, contributing segment of society.”<sup>27</sup> R.A. Pier, a student at UF, wrote to the *Alligator* to proclaim that the greatest aspect of the evening was not so much Elliot’s act, which was very good, but that lesbians, gays, and straights could enjoy the evening together as a campus event. The importance of Elliot at the Rat was the opportunity for heterosexuals to see that homosexuals are not strange, not crazy and not sick. Rather, we are people like anyone else who enjoy doing the same things you straights do when out for the evening. Pier believed that the open-mindedness of the straight woman who had booked Elliott was commendable, and if more people were like her, there would be “less talk such as was on the Plaza of the Americas last Friday of the bullets for those who do not meet someone’s narrow-minded view of things.”<sup>28</sup>

But drag does not always succeed in educating people and making them less homophobic. A student named Brett Broadwell responded to Pier’s letter to tear down their ideas about education and support the “fun” of the Kappa Alpha activities of the Plaza: “I don’t see the significance of Mr. (or should I say Ms.?) Glenn Elliot’s appearance at the Rathskellar. According to R.A. Pier... it was to prove to the normal people of UF that homosexuals aren’t sick. Don’t you think that a man that dresses like a woman is sick? Homosexuals are not normal, they are sick people who need help.”<sup>29</sup> In response, a fellow student named Richard Wesley defended Elliott on the grounds that he “is very much a man.” Promoting one’s masculinity was often the first line of defense for gay men, thanks to the conservative gender-baiting of the early 1980s. Wesley went on to point out that “UF offers many classes which can provide you with an

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> R.A. Pier, “Gays show they’re not so bad,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, May 19, 1981, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Brett Broadwell, letter to the editor, *The Independent Florida Alligator*, May 27, 1981, 8.

educated viewpoint on homosexuality and the homosexual lifestyle.” Wesley, who identified himself as gay in the letter, believed that education would reduce a person’s homophobia and that the university was a context in which that could happen.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps, as letter writer Kathy Baisley pointed out, it was because he was “afraid to be open to even the expression of alternate philosophies,” which was too bad considering that he was “supposedly here for an education.”<sup>31</sup> Exposure to queer people, including drag queens, had not had the effect of educating at least some people that the students had hoped it would. And while it might be true that some people felt their eyes had been opened at a drag show, no evidence of this appeared in fifteen years’ worth of *Alligator*, the *Oracle*, or the *Flambeau*. No students wrote to the newspaper to exclaim about what drag had taught them or how they may once have been homophobic but were no longer, thanks to a drag show. While this does not mean that no education took place, it does show that no students thought to write to the editors or to publish columns in support of drag as a pedagogical tool. That students did do this with other events meant to raise visibility only serves to further demonstrate that drag may not have had the educational outcomes students like Pier hoped for.

There were also downsides to drag having to do with the performers themselves. Paul McDonough recalled that in the 1980s in Gainesville, the Melody Club had issues with cultural appropriation: “I worked for a time at the Melody Club and I just never wanted to see another white boy lip synch to Diana Ross again in my life after that experience. I’d sit there and just either laugh or be completely appalled, depending on

---

<sup>30</sup> Richard Wesley, “Homosexuals don’t taunt straights, straights should return the courtesy,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, May 29, 1981.

<sup>31</sup> Kathy Baisley, “Opening the closet door and opening minds,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, June 1, 1981.

the show at the time.”<sup>32</sup> Notaro spoke about the downside of the dazzling potential of drag:

The young [drag queens], the ones that died, especially, how quickly they could be turned around and recognized and that attention they got. But you know a lot of that attention killed them, too. Too quick, too fast, too easy... Some of them have been murdered. They were street people, they were both prostituting because it was all they knew, it's all they could do.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, the transphobia that is common in the gay and lesbian community contributed to the oppression of the drag queens. The gay men he spoke of did not want straight people to think that all gay men were feminine.<sup>34</sup> This tendency of some gay men to shy away from the classification “feminine” or “trans” shows that the queer communities had some internal work to do as well. Drag could educate people, but it could also reinforce the bigotry of straight people and gay people who wanted to assimilate. In spite of this, it served many other valuable functions, particularly self-expression and community building. Drag queens were often the activists who took the most risk.

### **Gay Bars as Contested Sites**

Bars were important to the early queer liberation movement, because they were where many queer people gathered.<sup>35</sup> Queer people are typically not born into queer families the way other minority groups are usually born into families of people like them.

---

<sup>32</sup> Paul McDonough, interview with Jess Clawson, October 12, 2012, FQH6, Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

<sup>33</sup> Notaro interview.

<sup>34</sup> Notaro interview.

<sup>35</sup> June Thomas, “The Gay Bar: Is it Dying?” *Slate*, [http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the\\_gay\\_bar/2011/06/the\\_gay\\_bar\\_6.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_gay_bar/2011/06/the_gay_bar_6.html), June 27, 2011.



They have to find their own communities and form their own kinship networks. The benefit of being born into a community of people who share one's outsider status is that they fundamentally understand what certain forms of oppression feel like. No explanation is needed. However, queer people often find that the place that should be the safest—home—can be the most dangerous if family rejects them. Thus, queer people often find new spaces like bars. Furthermore, gay bars have historically been the sites of harassment by police, locating them as a natural center of resistance, as they were at Stonewall. As police harassment ended, bars would become less about militancy and more about socializing, but this shift would happen more quickly in places like San Francisco and New York than it would in places like Gainesville and Tallahassee, which were culturally more aligned with the Deep South than with urban Miami.<sup>36</sup> Morris's 1974 piece on the Melody Club discussed the idea of the club as a queer space and highlighted the ways people touched and interacted with each other there as a kind of wordless affirmation. This queer space was vitally important to the University of Florida's queer liberation movement. He noted that the club's warm atmosphere provided "refuge from a society that still labels homosexuals as 'deviates' and 'degenerates.'" Outside the bar, he pointed out, the well being of the patrons was under threat should they engage in the same sort of fond embrace that straight people did.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 231-238; Of course, raids of gay bars still happen, as in the 2009 raid of the Rainbow Lounge in Fort Worth (<http://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/Tempers-Flare-During-Raid-at-the-Rainbow-Lounge.html>) and the 2011 raid of The Eagle in Manhattan the night gay marriage passed the New York Senate 9 (<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/25/sudden-inspection-at-gay-bar-mars-victory-celebration-for-some/?hpw>).

<sup>37</sup> Morris, "This is My Life."

McDonough remembers the downside of the gay bar scene in Gainesville. The Melody Club was older and more conservative while Spectrum hosted college students interested in disco. Racism was a particular problem at Spectrum, where a black friend of his was falsely accused of stealing and thrown out. While Melody Club was more conservative, it was more diverse in terms of gender and race.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, patrons of these establishments formed their own networks in order to achieve a sense of security. Part of this network involved aligning themselves specifically with each other as queer and creating a queer space that worked against the dominant heteronormative world. They silenced the hate they faced outside.

In 1978 and 1979, gay bars became much more visible in both Gainesville and Tallahassee, and perhaps consequently, became the sites of much controversy. In 1978, one queer Gainesville resident wrote to the *Alligator* to argue that straight people should not patronize gay bars. “On any crowded night at either of Gainesville’s gay bars, there usually is at least one tableful of straight people gawking at the clientele,” the anonymous letter writer explained. “This tends to be annoying for gays who ask nothing more than to be left alone in their social environments. This form of harassment is the reason gay people need their own bars: to get away from the sneers, the snide remarks and ridicule toward homosexuals found in everyday life.” Paula Mendelsohn argued with this person, making the case that they just liked the gay bars more and were willing to spend money there.<sup>39</sup> One person, in support of the original letter writer, argued that so many people who wanted to be cool felt they needed to understand

---

<sup>38</sup> McDonough interview.

<sup>39</sup> Paula Mendelsohn, letter to the editor, *The Independent Florida Alligator*, July 6, 1978.

“homosexuals and drag,” and applauded “the gay person who did not wish to share his/her bar with the leering, sneering imbeciles who find entertainment and self-fulfillment in the ridicule of others.”<sup>40</sup> But the educational purpose bars, like drag, might serve, was articulated nicely by another letter writer, who said that respectful and curious straight people should go to gay bars to “meet gay people and really seek to understand homosexuals.” For such straight people, “going to a gay bar is an educational and expanding experience, hopefully one which will further their acceptance of gay folks in a broader context.”<sup>41</sup> This justification closely mirrors the ideas around education of straight people through drag. Rather than silencing hate, those in support of allowing straight people in queer spaces hoped to use the potential of productive silence—silencing heterosexism—to educate heterosexuals.

At FSU, the *Flambeau* ran four long-form feature stories in the summer of 1979 about gay life in Tallahassee. In the second installment, the paper printed a picture of a drag queen on the front page of the newspaper, with the caption “Dana Douglas prefers the pronoun *she* when in costume as a female impersonator, doing a show at the mostly gay City of Night. Tallahassee’s most famous drag entertainer is, however, very much a he. You’ve come a long way, baby.” The article did not go on to discuss drag much, aside from a brief reference to the fact that the bar held shows. But it did discuss the City of Night and the secret lesbian bars as places where gay people formed communities, as well as places where straight people could go. Straight women, the writer argued, often went to the bar to dance without the obnoxious presence of entitled

---

<sup>40</sup> Nancy Noblin, letter to the editor, *The Independent Florida Alligator*, July 13, 1978.

<sup>41</sup> Letter to the editor, *The Independent Florida Alligator*, July 13, 1978.

straight men. But their primary purpose was not to soothe the egos of straight women; they were there to give people a chance to engage positively with their communities.<sup>42</sup>

The *Flambeau* received substantial criticism from straight people who wished they'd stop covering gay people so extensively. One even announced that he had taken to calling the paper the *Faggot Flambeau*.<sup>43</sup> Another writer mocked the educational value of the news stories and the drag queen. "Everyone knows that heterosexuality is old hat, so why not inform us about queers and faggots or homosexuals? So you did!" Jack Potter exclaimed. "Not only that but treated us to the transvestite. Oh, I do not mean to say all transvestites are queer. I learned that you can get dressed up in women's clothes and not be queer, in fact some straights do it." Potter again disproved the idea that drag would educate straight people into being less homophobic: "I even went to City of Night to see the beauty that was displayed on your cover story. What an education."<sup>44</sup> This writer had identified the idea behind welcoming straight people into queer spaces and drag shows and mocked it. At least for him, the goal had failed.

The bars in Gainesville remained a contested space in 1981, as Bruce McCoy argued in a letter to the *Alligator* that there was a problem in the local gay bars having to do with straight people entering with "a noticeably bad attitude" and making gay people uncomfortable. He was unhappy with the increasing numbers of straight people in gay bars because of the "unquestionable sightseeing air, tourist atmosphere, and especially

---

<sup>42</sup> Bart Church, "I'll be back—I always come back," *Flambeau*, June 28, 1979.

<sup>43</sup> R. Bruce McKibben Jr. J.R. Andrick, letter to the editor, "Flambeau infatuated with gays," *Flambeau*, July 9, 1979; Lee Sebricks, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, July 12, 1979; Steve Figard, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, July 23, 1979; Letter Dan R. Dardin, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, August 6, 1979; Jack Potter, letter of the editor, *Flambeau*, August 13, 1979; Karen Jenkins, letter to the editor, *The Flambeau*, August 20, 1979.

<sup>44</sup> Jack Potter, letter to the editor, "Aquarium hijinx: Nothing too kinky," *Flambeau*, August 13, 1979.

the rudely harassing remarks are totally inexcusable.” This was especially a problem because, he explained, “Gay men and women have historically sought, and often created, in the case of our local clubs, places in which gays can mingle in a social atmosphere free from the nasty looks and homophobia of daily life.” Gay people needed social environments where they could openly show affection for each other. He went on to tell stories of harassment he and others had faced, concluding by welcoming open-minded and friendly straight people, but encouraging bigots to stay home.<sup>45</sup> He was citing the discourse that considered the importance of allowing straight people into queer spaces while also making the argument that sometimes queer-only spaces and their ability to silence heterosexism and homophobia is important to the health and survival of queer communities.

Although some people felt strongly about the presence of straight people in queer spaces, some queer people refused to welcome them at all. The 1979 profile of gay bars in Tallahassee points out that “lesbians seem to have an entirely different perspective on gay bars, and even a different way of relating to them.” It should be noted that the author of this column was probably being a bit reductive, and might even have applied the word “lesbian” to people who would not claim it for themselves. He attributed certain qualities to all lesbians, and assumed that every woman who dated women was a lesbian. But in the interest of being inclusive, he did interview lesbians about their evening hangout spots: “If lesbians do go to a bar in Tallahassee, where do they go? They won’t tell for fear the ‘straights will come and spoil the place.’” Even the owners of the bar, who would certainly stand to benefit financially if it was more widely

---

<sup>45</sup> Bruce McCoy, letter to the editor, *The Independent Florida Alligator*, November 20, 1981.

known, would only speak to the reporter “on the condition that its name and address not be released,” and refused to have their real names printed. They discouraged straight people from entering the bar, did no advertising, and set a high (by 1979 standards) cover charge of \$3. All of this was to maintain the “safe atmosphere” of the bar. The owners said their most important function was to encourage socializing and community building. Whispers was not strictly a lesbian bar, although more lesbians seemed to frequent it than they did City of Night.<sup>46</sup> The silence of the space itself, its invisibility from the mainstream heteronormative bar scene, created a place for lesbian-identified women to be together without the intrusion of straight people. In this way, silence was a protective shroud, a refusal to engage with the idea that they, as marginalized people, needed to educate their straight peers.

Of course, the concept of “women’s-only spaces” was not new by 1979. Highly problematic because of their tendency to prohibit trans women from participating, women’s-only spaces were meant to give women (particularly, it seems, lesbian women) a chance to socialize together in a safe space, not to educate straight people about how lesbians are just like everyone else. In 1980, FSU hosted Alix Dobkin, a lesbian musician who gave a concert to a women-only crowd. This spurred an uproar from men, who called it sexist, pointed out that this precise kind of thing was what was holding the ERA back by convincing everyone that all feminists were bra-burning radicals, and that by excluding men from women’s spaces, the women lost an opportunity to educate men on feminist issues.<sup>47</sup> As one student wrote in his letter to the

---

<sup>46</sup> Church, “I’ll be back.”

<sup>47</sup> Steve Watkins, “A matter of gender, a matter of style,” *Flambeau*, April 15, 1980.

editor: “How are men expected to learn if they are not allowed to see or hear the teacher?”<sup>48</sup> According to fellow student Kelli Aiyana, he missed the point: “Don’t expect women to be your teacher. We will teach you if and when we want to. Please note that in order for us to grow to our potential and to even want to teach you, we need space from you (men) when we want it.”<sup>49</sup>

It seems unlikely that gay people would have objected so strongly to straight people entering queer spaces if they had behaved respectfully. But the bars and the drag shows and other sites of communal entertainment did not always serve to educate people or make them less homophobic. According to the evidence available in the *Flambeau*, the *Oracle*, and the *Alligator*, some people who were exposed to drag queens and real live queers in gay bars only increased their vitriol. They were not silenced, made to listen and learn. While this was, one hopes, the experience of some people in their forays into gay nightlife, it is clear that it increased the justification for violence many people felt, like the fraternity brothers at UF in 1981, who seemed especially concerned with asserting their masculinity. And in some instances, queer people were simply not thinking of educating straight people, and were using the bars as places to just be gay in the open, to come out, to find community.<sup>50</sup>

Increased visibility of queer people on the campuses of UF, USF, and FSU did not mean immediate acceptance from their straight peers. The mere presence of the students on campus did not please many conservative students, who would amplify

---

<sup>48</sup> from Bob O’Lary, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, December 2, 1981.

<sup>49</sup> Kelly Aiyana, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, Thursday, December 10, 1981.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas, “The Gay Bar: Is it Dying?”

their attempts to marginalize the queer students for years to come.<sup>51</sup> However, these efforts at marginalization continue to fail, thanks to the persistence of queer students. While drag and gay bars might not have always worked to increase acceptance, they did not hinder the movement. Perhaps they did help some people. Contemporary social movement theory holds that drag is an important part of the pedagogy of the queer liberation effort. Drag has the potential to challenge audience members' "taken-for-granted notions of gender, sex, and sexuality."<sup>52</sup> It is important to social protest, particularly for the queer movement, because it introduces mainstream audiences to challenging aspects of queer life and provides space for building collective identities that disidentify with heteronormative gender and sexual boundaries.<sup>53</sup>

Straight people and queer spaces did sometimes combine to create a silence that further oppressed queer people, but they also contained the possibility of silencing heteronormativity and heterosexism. In the case of separatist or queer-only spaces, the silencing of heterosexual people could be restorative and healing for its participants. This would be critically important for queer people who had no other safe space, facing family rejection and social exclusion in any straight-dominated setting, including home and school. Therefore, the stakes for educating straight people were high: until they could make more spaces safe, queer students often had few places where they could be themselves openly.

---

<sup>51</sup> Jessica Clawson, "Coming out of the Campus Closet: The Emerging Visibility of Queer Students at the University of Florida, 1970-1982," *Educational Studies*, in press.

<sup>52</sup> Dana Berkowitz and Linda Liska Belgrave, "'She Works Hard for the Money': Drag Queens and the Management of their Contradictory Status of Celebrity and Marginality," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 39, no. 2 (April 2010): 177.

<sup>53</sup> Rupp, Taylor, and Gamson, "Performing Protest," 5.



The students in these conservative Florida university towns found ways to empower themselves and their communities. They overcame the barriers presented by a culture especially hostile to queer people because of its attachments to heteronormative traditions, religion, and good old boys' networks to use silence to their advantage. In addition, they engaged with a kind of education that the university could not provide them or the straight people they encountered. One way these queer students performed activism and educated people was by bringing straight people into queer spaces. Despite the urge some people felt to have separate spaces, they did not tend to lead entirely separate lives.

CHAPTER 4  
THOROUGHLY MODERN HOMOPHOBIA:  
HOW ANITA BRYANT BOLSTERED QUEER STUDENT ACTIVISM

In 1977, Christian pop singer and Florida citrus spokesperson Anita Bryant uttered words that would introduce into the national discourse a series of justifications for opposing the rights of queer people and their very visibility. “Behind the high sounding appeal against discrimination in jobs and housing—which is not a problem to the ‘closet’ homosexual—they are really asking to be blessed in their abnormal lifestyle by the office of the President of the United States,” Bryant explained after a group of gay rights activists met with an aide to President Carter about repealing anti-gay laws. “What these people really want, hidden behind obscure legal phrases, is the legal right to propose to our children that there is an acceptable alternate way of life—that being a homosexual or lesbian is not really wrong or illegal.” Furthermore, she thought people should think of the children: “Our children are to be told, indirectly, that their mothers and fathers and others who respect the law of God are fools.”<sup>1</sup> Bryant clearly believed that gay people should stay in the closet and not ask for “special rights,” and that their real agenda was to teach children that it was okay to be gay. She started the “Save Our Children” (SOC) campaign to challenge an ordinance passed in Dade County, Florida, in 1977 to give gay residents protection from discrimination. Bryant spun queer activism and national fundraising into evidence of a nationwide “homosexual conspiracy.”<sup>2</sup> Her efforts primed the queer students at the University of Florida, the University of South Florida, and Florida State University for battles of their own. These struggles in the

---

<sup>1</sup> “Gays’ Meeting at White House Angers Bryant,” *Independent Florida Alligator*, March 28, 1977, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Karen M. Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators: Personal Freedoms, Public Constraints* (Malden, MA: Amethyst Press & Productions, 1997), 42.

university context have not been discussed in scholarly studies of education or queer history. However, Florida students and their fight for inclusion need to be represented in the literature. Bryant was, after all, in their back yard.

In the vivid recollections of some queer people who grew up in Florida, Bryant was everywhere. Nancy Wilkinson and Deb Carr are a couple in their 50s who grew up together in Gainesville. Wilkinson attended UF in the 1970s. They felt that Anita Bryant “dominated everything” because she was so present in every context of their lives. Carr remembers that “it was like, Oh god, here comes somebody else to pound at us, and bring it to light and stir up the masses with different things and rules and laws and whatever they want to do to us.” Wilkinson thought it was particularly damaging to them in their early 20s, because they were figuring out who they were and finding themselves in the world, “and here’s this woman getting national broadcasts telling everybody how evil you are and how it must be stopped. And it’s like, ‘Holy shit, here it comes.’” They concurred that a lot of the things Anita helped put in place, like an adoption ban, are or recently were still in place. Wilkinson spoke about how she believed Bryant did “great damage nationally and here in Florida,” and that “her legacy is still in place.” The couple moved to Georgia in the late 1970s, largely motivated by Bryant and her followers. Before Bryant, they believed, criticisms of gay people were largely whispered, but she “brought it out and spread it across the world, how evil these people are.”<sup>3</sup>

This Chapter examines a critical turning point in the struggle for queer rights in America and at three of Florida’s major universities. In particular, it discusses how Bryant cemented the interplay of conservatism and religion in the 1970s, to create

---

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Wilkinson and Deb Carr personal interview with Jess Clawson, January 26, 2013, transcript.

imagined communities of religious conservatives but also of queer activists.<sup>4</sup> The focus is on the effects of the religious conservative community on the queer activists at UF, FSU, and USF and vice versa in the late 1970s. Opposition to the oppression by religious conservatives was and is an expression of political agency. In short, Bryant trained both conservatives and queer rights advocates through her rhetoric. Both communities were evident on the campuses of UF, FSU, and USF in the late 1970s, where queer visibility was on the rise but was typically met with derision and even violence. But queer students at each campus resisted, and insisted on their own right to exist openly.

### **Conservatism**

Historian Jackie Blount shows that the visibility of gay and lesbian communities led to “right-wing pressure to push gender transgressors, particularly gay men and lesbians, back into hiding.” Through Bryant, conservative politicians used the “problem” of gay and lesbian teachers to raise money and get votes. On a nationally-syndicated Christian radio show, she said of her “Save our Children” campaign, “We believe in the Word of God, and there it says that homosexuality is an abomination.” Bryant worried that the gay rights ordinance in Miami to protect peoples’ jobs and housing would lead to “a national homosexuality bill that would make it mandatory to hire known practicing homosexuals in public schools and other areas.” The bill, however, would not have applied to schools, public or private. As the national media took hold of her message, money flowed to her campaign and to conservative politicians who supported her. The

---

<sup>4</sup> Fred Fejes, *Gay Rights and Moral Panic: The Origins of America’s Debate on Homosexuality* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 215.

ordinance was defeated in large part thanks to “the specter of gay men and lesbians in the classroom.”<sup>5</sup> Anti-gay sentiment helped tie religion to political conservatism.

Gillian Frank argues that the furor over the Dade County ordinance was over the definition of citizenship, because the anti-discrimination ordinance was important to the ability of gay people to integrate into public life. Frank does not discuss Bryant’s effects on university students, but she shows that Bryant and others “appealed to the powerful belief that all children ought to be heterosexual and that society had a stake in preventing homosexuality in children.” She argues that the conservative opposition to gay rights and to black civil rights evolved alongside each other in the 1970s, as “a strong emphasis on child protection ran through white conservative opposition to both racial and sexual minorities that helped legitimize and popularize conservative ideas and activism.”<sup>6</sup> Conservatives used discourses about family and privacy that dated back to the Civil War to resist desegregation and racial equality under the law. Floridians in particular used fears about interracial sexual contact among youth to fight school desegregation. Dade County residents also referenced the Ku Klux Klan when they called the office of the Dade County Coalition for the Human Rights of Gays and told them that “if anything happens to Anita Bryant there’ll be a homosexual hanging from every tree in the country.” In fact, members of the Ku Klux Klan were committed to protecting Bryant during her public addresses, although no attempts were made on her

---

<sup>5</sup> Jackie M. Blount, “Spinsters, Bachelors, and Other Gender Transgressors in School Employment, 1850-1990,” *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 83-101, 96.

<sup>6</sup> Gillian Frank, “The Civil Rights of Parents’: Race and Conservative Politics in Anita Bryant’s Campaign against Gay Rights in 1970s Florida,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22, no. 1 (January 2013): 126-160, 126.

life.<sup>7</sup> Florida was still the Deep South in many ways. That even citizens in the relatively-liberal Dade County felt comfortable using Klan imagery—and that Klan members themselves believed they had a public role to serve—shows how little distance had been achieved from the culture of lynching. Racism and homophobia were never far apart.

Frank examines the Save Our Children campaign within the contexts of antibusing efforts, anti-ERA struggles, and antigay campaigns. White conservatives were able to imagine themselves as part of a “silent majority” opposed to racial integration and women’s equality. This majoritarianism, in addition to the language of child protection, undergirded the opposition to civil rights claims by gay people, women, and African Americans, because it allowed the conservatives to broaden their appeal through linking the issues of parents’ rights, sexuality, race, and gender. The SOC campaign occurred in when schools in Dade County and the rest of the nation were being resegregated because of white flight. Despite the SOC invocation of racial conflicts, however, antigay activism crossed racial and religious lines, “allowing for the formation of multiracial and multifaith conservative coalitions around narrowly defined issues of sexual morality.” This tactic became “a template for emerging conservative coalitions in the 1970s” as they “placed the maintenance of sexual boundaries at the center of a political agenda that in the 1980s came to be known as ‘family values politics.’” President Nixon and other conservative politicians argued that white people were having their rights infringed upon by black people. SOC argued that discrimination was “the fault of the aggrieved minority, not of the majority”—a claim that explicitly

---

<sup>7</sup> Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 51.

echoed antibusing discourses. Liberal gay activists also reformulated their activism and their identities in response to reactionary conservatives. They used strategies around gay pride and placing gay people in families by wearing t-shirts that said “We ARE Your Children” and emphasized the roles of gay people as siblings, children, and parents.<sup>8</sup>

Karen Graves has also discussed Bryant’s influence on conservative politics. She argues that Bryant’s use of teachers as a wedge issue in the campaign against gay people became a linchpin of conservative strategy in the late 1970s. Furthermore, Bryant framed gay people as infiltrators into the nation’s moral fiber. Their presence would corrupt and confuse captive children. Some educators formed a task force to strike back at the SOC propaganda. She also notes that it was not gay activists who brought the gay-rights fight to schools; it was the anti-gay activists who declared the turf open for battle. They did so because of schools’ long-standing, if tacit, mission to make “boys more manly and girls more womanly.” Denigrating gay and lesbian teachers in the name of protecting students from unsavory gendered influence had effects beyond schools, as those attacking these teachers intended. However, Graves shows that the SOC people were wrong on two counts. First, they were not protecting children when they crushed the hopes of the countless gay and lesbian children who saw what persecution awaited them if they came out. Second, by creating a culture of fear in schools, conservatives damaged the educational process for all students.<sup>9</sup>

Karen Harbeck references a more literal kind of violence born of the SOC rhetoric. In Florida and California, young men ganged up to harass people they

---

<sup>8</sup> Frank, “The Civil Rights of Parents,” 134.

<sup>9</sup> Karen Graves, “Political Pawns in an Educational Endgame: Reflections on Bryant, Briggs, and Some Twentieth-Century School Questions,” *History of Education Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (February 2013): 1-20.

identified as gay or lesbian. In California, four such assailants beat a man to death as they yelled, "Here's one for Anita!" In Dade County, some cars had bumper stickers that read, "Kill a queer for Christ." A Dade County gay activist's car was bombed after he participated in a radio show about the ordinance, and another gay man was shot when he left a pro-ordinance fundraising dance. Coalition members repeatedly asked SOC to discourage violence, but without apparent success. The mother of the slain California man filed suit against Bryant, California State Senator John Briggs (a vocal supporter of Bryant), and SOC, charging that "they had conspired to incite physical violence against homosexuals."<sup>10</sup> This, coupled with the Klan presence at Bryant's side, demonstrates how very real was the threat that grew from her words.

Bryant's influence was directly connected to state- and national-level policies. Florida State Senator Bob Graham attributed the United States Senate voting down the Equal Rights Amendment in part to Bryant.<sup>11</sup> The ERA debate raged and conservatives who opposed it often cited homophobia as one of their justifications. They argued wrongly that it would open the door to gay marriage and adoption, calling it "an attack upon the institution of marriage and family."<sup>12</sup> However, this would not have been the case, because state laws prohibiting gay marriage were legal as long as they applied to both genders equally. So if a man could not marry a man and a woman could not marry a woman, it would be consistent with the ERA.<sup>13</sup> Frank argues that the backlash against civil rights and racial integration influenced anti-ERA activism. The conservatives' fears

---

<sup>10</sup> Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 50.

<sup>11</sup> Andy Kanengiser, "Government 'perverted,'" *Florida Flambeau*, April 15, 1977, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Froman, "Fiery Debate Rekindled in Florida," *Alligator*, January 27, 1977.

<sup>13</sup> Froman, "Fiery Debate Rekindled in Florida."



of gay marriage and mixed-gender bathrooms “blatantly invoked specters of the civil rights struggles, for which the legalization of interracial marriage and integration of public accommodations in the 1960s were central.”<sup>14</sup> Gender roles were subject to national conversation after the United States Senate passed the ERA in 1972 and turned it over to the states for ratification. By 1977, 35 of the necessary 38 states had ratified the amendment, but a coalition of anti-ERA activists led by Phyllis Schlafly contested it in states such as Florida. Between 1972 and 1977, the anti-ERA and anti-gay groups forged important connections in Florida as people argued about the limits of civil rights.

Many people who would become involved in SOC were part of the campaigns opposing the ERA, which associated the ERA with concerns about “sex mixing,” “homosexual marriage,” and the specter of “homosexual schoolteachers.” Anti-ERA activists also borrowed the anti-busing idea that they were a silent minority that was now speaking out: “This public claim of being a silent majority performed political labor, empowering a reactionary politics and defining a constituency that was familial, normative, and indicatively white.”<sup>15</sup> The Florida group leading the charge against the ERA, Women for Responsible Legislation (WFRL), openly discussed the danger of homosexuality to children as early as 1973, claiming that the ERA would upset legal codes and traditional values. Concerns that the ERA would allow gay marriage meant, according to Schlafly and others, that the heterosexual nuclear family would no longer

---

<sup>14</sup> Frank, “The Civil Rights of Parents,” 135.

<sup>15</sup> Frank, “The Civil Rights of Parents,” 135.

be esteemed in American society. This position became central to the social conservative ideology of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>16</sup>

Both the WFRL and SOC were informed by homophobia. Their campaigns crystallized in 1977 with the defeat of the ERA and the Florida state government's subsequent move to outlaw gay marriage and gay adoption. The latter happened in spite of an impassioned plea by Sen. Don Chamberlin (D- Clearwater), who asked where the line would be: could gay people teach children, drive a school bus, practice health care with children? Could children be removed from homosexual parents? Chamberlin argued that "there is no sufficient justification for denying a child and a parent love, tolerance, and dignity" and asked whether "we [will] sleep better knowing we have institutionalized shame where there is already shame?" By contrast, proponents of the bill, like Sen. Dempsey Barron (D-Panama City) expressed his concern for children put in the "unfortunate situation" of being raised by two gay people.<sup>17</sup>

Senator Curtis Peterson (D-Lakeland) was among the most outspoken in favor of the ban, arguing that, "The problem in Florida has been that homosexuals are surfacing to such an extent that they're beginning to aggravate the ordinary folks who have a few rights of their own." Even worse, in his mind, "They're trying to flaunt it. We're trying to send them a message telling them, 'we're really tired of you. We wish you'd go back in the closet.'" He also advocated stores having no unisex bathrooms and separate dressing rooms for men and women, because they were "trying to stop men from trying

---

<sup>16</sup> Frank, "The Civil Rights of Parents," 135.

<sup>17</sup> Mindi Kiernan, "Senate outlaws adoption of kids by homosexuals," *Alligator*, May 12, 1977, 7.

on women's clothes," which he felt was becoming "a real problem in Tallahassee, Lakeland, and Miami."<sup>18</sup> Peterson was an avid Bryant supporter and openly cited her ideas in support of his homophobic views. Both Peterson and Bryant saw the mere visibility of queer people to be "an affront to decency." That queer people had organized themselves and asked for legal rights was "characterized as an aggressive act of hostility towards God and American society," further proving that liberal humanism meant the threat of social destruction.<sup>19</sup>

Students at FSU were particularly outspoken. Greg Kunzi, for instance, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Flambeau* to discuss his feelings on the matter of whether gay people had "basic human rights." In essence, he denied that idea because human rights were given by society, so if society chose to not give a group rights, they had no claim to them until such a time that the minority viewpoint was widely accepted and became the view of the majority.<sup>20</sup> Another writer, Frank Singewald, argued that homosexuality (along with lesbianism, pornography, smut, crime and corruption, and venereal disease) was immoral and he could not support "a breakdown of moral values in pursuance of freedom."<sup>21</sup> Tallahassee and FSU were not especially gay-friendly environments even in 1979. One person, anonymously profiled in a column on gay life in Tallahassee, noted that if he was public about his identity, he would lose his job immediately.<sup>22</sup> But the queer community at FSU, like those at USF and UF, were not going to be so easily

---

<sup>18</sup> "Homosexuals sent 'back to the closet,'" *Oracle*, June 1, 1977, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 46.

<sup>20</sup> Gregg Kunzi, "Majority decides on 'basic human rights,'" *Flambeau*, June 6, 1977, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Singewald, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, August 15, 1977, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Bart Church, "Coming Out: The story of gay Tallahassee," *Flambeau*, June 28, 1979, 1.

dismissed. In a context in which anonymity was often key to survival, being open about one's existence was a political act, even without attending anti-Anita Bryant rallies.

### Religion

Among the central features of Bryant's campaign was the idea that she was a victim of religious persecution. She argued that not being able to discriminate legally against gay people was an infringement of her rights. In a letter to the Dade County Commission, Bryant wrote, "If this ordinance amendment [to give gay and lesbian people job and housing protection] is allowed to become law, you will in fact be infringing upon my rights, or rather discriminating against me, as a citizen and a mother, to teach my children and set examples and to point to others as examples of God's moral code as stated in the Holy Scriptures."<sup>23</sup> Other Christian opponents to gay rights appropriated this language, especially when queer students asserted their own visibility. For instance, a few UF students argued that the student newspaper was too flooded with pro-gay letters: "It is our belief that gays... do not have the right to be pretentious in their assertions and flood the newspaper with ludicrous articles that affront our sense of propriety."<sup>24</sup> This "stay in your place" rhetoric became the norm. Bryant also blamed the California drought on gay people when, in an interview with *Miami Magazine*, she stated that there was evidence that God punished those civilizations that tolerated gay people.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> "Bryant Moves on Gays," *Independent Florida Alligator*, January 8, 1977, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Bill Mattox, Greg Scoville, John Locke, Steven Lowenthal, and Steven D. Bensen, letter to the editor, *Independent Florida Alligator*, July 15, 1976, 11.

<sup>25</sup> "Bryant—Gays Cause Droughts," *Florida Flambeau*, May 5, 1977, 6.

UF, FSU, and USF all reported rises in religious participation in the mid-1970s. Their campuses were fertile ground for the Bryant campaign and for the rise of religious conservatism in general.<sup>26</sup> Students at all three universities wrote letters to their school newspapers using Bryant's language to oppose queer visibility. The debate over gay lifestyles in particular, and moral values in general, became issues of national discussion with political implications far beyond Florida. The stakes were extremely high, and queer students in Florida found themselves battling homophobic straight people who co-opted Bryant's religious and moral language.<sup>27</sup>

Religious interest was increasing at UF in 1975. Father Michael Gannon, director of the Catholic Student Center, noted that it was at its highest point since the 1960s.<sup>28</sup> One student wrote to the *Alligator* to argue that the upsurge was most notable among evangelical denominations, led by people such as Paul Little, Billy Graham, Bill Bright, and John Stott.<sup>29</sup> In fact, others noted that the evangelical recruiting on campus was increasing.<sup>30</sup> It was not difficult to connect the dots to homophobia. In January of 1977, the defense of a lesbian Episcopal priest by a student in a letter to the *Alligator* set off a

---

<sup>26</sup> Barbara Johnson, "Student Religious Interest High," *Alligator*, Monday, November 19, 1975; John Bellum, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, November 18, 1975; Donald Charles, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, September 21, 1976; Stephen Cassal, "Religion Still 'A Serious Concern' for Students," *Flambeau*, November 24, 1975; Stephen Cassal, "Religion Participation on Campus is Growing," *Flambeau*, November 25, 1975, 1; Leonard Kransdorf, "Religion... Once Rarely Discussed, Interest Has Grown Dramatically at USF," *Oracle*, November 10, 1976; Timothy K. Mora, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, June 1, 1977; Joseph R. Applegate, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, June 1, 1977, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Trysh Travis, "A Brief History of Queer Florida." Presentation at the Pride Community Center of North Central Florida, Gainesville, FL. 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Barbara Johnson, "Student religious interest high; variety of denominations explored," *Alligator*, November 10, 1975.

<sup>29</sup> John Bellum and Linda Calhoun, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, November 18, 1975.

<sup>30</sup> Donald Charles, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, September 21, 1976.

flurry of responses.<sup>31</sup> Most of these letters claimed that the Bible clearly condemned homosexuality, but many writers claimed not to be anti-queer themselves. As Catherine Lugg argues, a common tactic of those opposing queers on religious grounds was to claim that the decision was out of their hands, decided by God.<sup>32</sup> This attitude was indicative of the political environment on the UF campus. It was not yet friendly to queer students, who had to cope with bigotry both on campus and off. Although they had gained ground, the queer students had to continue to press for their rights in the face of conservative backlash.

Chip Halvorsen remembers Anita Bryant's time in Florida in terms of his church and his parents' involvement. He was a teenager in 1977 and his family attended a Gainesville church that distributed Bryant's pamphlets. The preacher delivered a three-part series of sermons on homosexuality and its evils. His father sent her money, and he recalls that he "got to see the Anita Bryant thing from the perspective of seeing the pamphlet on the end table next to my dad's easy chair and knowing he'd sent money." These actions pushed Halvorsen to repress his gay identity even more.<sup>33</sup>

Wilkinson also grew up in Gainesville with a very religious Southern Baptist mother, and that context loomed large her life: "That effed up, conservative, Southern Baptist thing just dominated." Wilkinson is still struggling with the effects of growing up in a homophobic religious environment. She was hounded out of the church for being

---

<sup>31</sup> Melanie Meyer, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, January 24, 1977, 9; Kathleen McMillin, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, January 28, 1977; Cindy Mann and Kathi Clemons, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, January 28, 1977; Tom Ybarema, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, February 2, 1977

<sup>32</sup> Catherine A. Lugg, "Why's a Nice Dyke Like You Embracing this Postmodern Crap?" *Journal of School Leadership* 18, no. 2 (2008): 164-199.

<sup>33</sup> Chip Halvorsen, interview with Jess Clawson, October 15, 1977. Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, University of Florida.

outspoken: “When you try to rock their world, they come after you... I couldn’t really be who I wanted to be and be accepted for that. You got thrown out...you got laughed at, you got tortured emotionally, so you just flee.” All of the churches in town, Wilkinson and Carr believed, were homophobic to one degree or another. None of them were actually affirming until the 1990s.<sup>34</sup> Bryant’s influence was hitting people on and off campus in Gainesville thanks to the conservative religious community in the area. Her work created a more dangerous political landscape and legitimized the hostile campus climate.

The *Oracle* noted an increase in religion in the USF student body in 1976. The campus religious centers were getting more students than ever before. Campus religious leaders believed that students were seeking new identities that they felt religion offered. Some, including Rev. Hawkins of the Baptist Student Center, argued that while some students might be drawn in by the Eastern religions, those students would eventually find those religions lacked substance and stability.<sup>35</sup> In 1977, the campus newspaper ran a series of letters to the editor about a perceived schism between homosexuality and Christianity.<sup>36</sup> Many students would write in to protest Gay Day, a day in which all gay students and their supporters would wear blue jeans, on religious grounds. Open expressions of homosexuality or support for it were, in their minds, contradictory with biblical practices.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Wilkinson and Carr interview.

<sup>35</sup> Leonard Kransdorf, “Religion... once rarely discussed, interest has grown dramatically at USF,” *Oracle*, November 10, 1976.

<sup>36</sup> Joe Potter et al., letter to the editor, *Oracle*, February 14, 1977, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Timothy K. Mora, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, May 26, 1977, 4; Joseph R. Applegate, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, June 1, 1977.

Tallahassee and FSU experienced serious tension between religion and gay rights in 1977 and 1978. A growth in religious affiliation and participation had also been noted at FSU in the fall of 1975. Statistics compiled by the *Flambeau* noted that about 60 percent of all FSU students had some kind of religious affiliation, and the respective figures had increased in relative proportion to the growth in overall enrollment at FSU in the previous few years.<sup>38</sup> Austin Holladay, chaplain of the United Methodist Wesley Foundation, concurred with other Tallahassee religious leaders that students were “again asking the serious questions, trying to discover what real life is all about.” Religious interest was greater among students at the time, he said, because students had been shaken up by Vietnam and Watergate, and desired “something that does not change.”<sup>39</sup>

This strong religious affiliation did not lead to a community in favor of gay rights. The *Flambeau* ran quite a few negative letters to the editor about the Christian mandate to oppose gay rights, and the Tallahassee Baptist Church got on board, posting signs in favor of Bryant and against gay people.<sup>40</sup> FSU held a conference on the church and homosexuality in 1978 because the local United Ministries Center wanted to talk about a topic that had previously been too risky to discuss openly. Bryant’s presence forced the conversation out into the open. The conference dealt with topics like “how the Bible views homosexuality; how church tradition views it; what positive guidance can be gained from a biblical view of homosexuality, and the problems of being a Christian gay

---

<sup>38</sup> Stephen Cassal, “Religion still ‘a serious concern’ for students,” *Flambeau*, November 24, 1975, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen Cassal, “Religion participation on campus is growing,” *Flambeau*, November 25, 1975, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Montgomery, “The One with the Beard,” *Flambeau*, November 3, 1977.



today.”<sup>41</sup> This set of topics demonstrates Bryant’s importance to the imagined community of queer rights activists, who were capitalizing on the fact that queerness was now out in the open. The conference helped show that homosexuality was something that could be discussed. The conversation was emotional, and the discussion leader worked to remind the participants that Christianity was supposed to be about love. The whole ordeal was pro-gay.<sup>42</sup>

The event did not come without backlash, however, as people wrote in to the FSU student newspaper to decry the twisting and de-authorizing of the Bible and the legitimizing of criminality: “Just think of the tremendous impact these principles can have in our daily lives... Thieves and rapists, rejoice! The method of justification for your favorite activities is finally coming of age. Hypocrites, perverts, and hedonists, come out of your closets!”<sup>43</sup> Many students made the case that Christianity was about love, while others pursued a more Leviticus-based scolding of gay people.<sup>44</sup> Bryant called to the surface the presence of queer people, but much of this discourse at all three universities appropriated her anti-gay religious rhetoric.

Later that year, the larger religious community of Tallahassee jumped into the fray. A Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) opened north of town to cater to gay

---

<sup>41</sup> Danni Vogt, “Church and Homosexuality to be Discussed,” *Florida Flambeau*, October 11, 1978, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Kent L. Noel, “Do Anti-Homosexual Acts Reflect Society’s Meanness?” *Flambeau*, October 16, 1978, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Steve Figard, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 15, 1978, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Steve Figard, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, December 5, 1978, 4; Charlie Brown, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, December 5, 1978, 4; Jim Petrosky, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, April 9, 1979, 4; William Brazzell, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, April 23, 1979, 4; A. Williams, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, April 25, 1979, 4; Jeanne Taylor, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, April 27, 1979, 4; Lucinda S. Hernandez, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, April 27, 1979, 4; Karen Jenkins, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, August 20, 1979, 4.

people. These churches existed all over the country to provide spiritual homes to people who felt alienated by the anti-gay views of evangelical Christianity. But Rev. Gerald Sutek, minister of the Tallahassee Baptist Church, argued that the Tallahassee community should not tolerate the MCC's presence. He used his church's billboard to get the message across: "Did you know there is a queer church on N. Adams Street?" The worship coordinator for MCC, Bob Angell, responded in a way perhaps most designed to irk Sutek: "I appreciate the pastor's concern for our lack of ability to advertise. It was a very Christian thing for him to do." Sutek vowed to devote all his time and attention to getting rid of "what God hates," and while he stated that he would not do so through illegal or extralegal measures, many people in town worried that others would take his overt hatred as a justification for violence.<sup>45</sup> "This church asserts that right-wing Christians don't have a monopoly on God," Angell said, "and affirms, with all faith, that God loves gay people in just the same way that God loves non-gays." He emphasized that homophobia and hatred were sins that must be confronted. Rev. Les Carlton, pastor of the Jacksonville MCC, debated with Sutek about individual interpretations of the Bible and how they related to gay people. Sutek argued that "the Bible is our entire authority, and no one has any human rights outside the bounds of the Bible" and that "society has changed but that doesn't change our stand." Carlton—himself a gay man—countered that there were many different interpretations of the Bible and argued that the Bible actually condemned male prostitution, not homosexuality.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Rose Goldsborough, "Pastor says gay church must go," *Flambeau*, October 8, 1979, 1.

<sup>46</sup> Rose Goldsborough, "Local demonstration to coincide with national gay rights march," *Flambeau*, Friday, October 12, 1979, 5.

Sutek and his church opposed all things that did not fit with his views of traditional morality. He also used the sign to denounce feminism (“Women’s lib, the devil’s fib”), promote the death penalty (“Bible believers are for capital punishment”), take a stand on the still-relevant issue of race relations and black freedom (“The Lord is a strict segregationist”), and announce his philosophy on Hallmark holidays (“Only Born-Again fathers can have a happy Father’s Day”).<sup>47</sup> Sutek faced a great deal of scorn and ridicule from the FSU student community, many members of which insisted that he was misusing scripture or should be more focused on ending pressing problems like starvation.<sup>48</sup> The church lost its insurance because it opened itself to increased risk of vandalism and arson.<sup>49</sup> A group called the Tallahassee Ministerial Association passed a resolution expressing support for the MCC in a surprising 11-3 vote. The resolution stated that “many people have been disenfranchised from their houses of worship through prejudice,” and so the Tallahassee Ministerial Association “supports the efforts of the Metropolitan Community Church in ministering to the oppressed, and that every person, including the homosexual, is created in the image of God and therefore is worthy of God’s care.”<sup>50</sup> This was an unpopular move among some FSU students.<sup>51</sup>

In response, Sutek organized an alternative religious organization to condemn homosexuality, called the Tallahassee Bible Believing Preachers Association. Their resolution read in part, “The Metropolitan Community Church... is a church to supply

---

<sup>47</sup> Gerald Ensley, “Sutek’s intolerance a reflection of his own anxiety,” *Flambeau*, October 9, 1979, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Darrell Erickson, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 11, 1979, 4; Kevin Deyo, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 15, 1979, 4; Ollie Lee Taylor, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 24, 1979, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Editorial, “First Amendment Rights Even Cover Gerald Sutek,” *Flambeau*, November 1, 1979, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Sidney Bedingfield, “Local ministers back gay-oriented church,” *Flambeau*, November 16, 1979, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Stephanie Goins, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, December 3, 1979, 5.

salve for the seared consciences of those who have... delved so far into the sin of homosexuality that they actually desire the perverted relationship of the same sex over the God-ordained, proper and normal male-female relationship." These people were "in need of some semblance of 'Religion' in order to rid themselves, temporarily, of the guilt that comes when faced with God's dogmatic and clear statements of condemnation and judgments upon those who violate his commands concerning sodomy."<sup>52</sup> It was signed by 24 pastors representing 17 local churches. Sutek himself wrote to the *Flambeau* to clarify his position that he did not oppose preaching to "the homosexual" as long as the preaching included a path to heterosexuality, but that the MCC intended to make homosexuals comfortable in their sin.<sup>53</sup> Angell pointed out that Sutek was unlikely to conform to every law in Leviticus—a common strategy for those opposing the religious-based opposition to queer rights.<sup>54</sup> When the MCC took part in a group of activists in April 1980 to demand that the Florida state legislature repeal anti-gay laws like the ones outlawing sodomy, they had another showdown with Sutek. He was vocally opposed to the very presence of gay people and that the law against homosexuality should be enforced.<sup>55</sup> Sutek and other religious conservatives thus enlisted Bryant's strategies all along, with varying success along the way. This Southern religious context was one queer students could not escape. Sutek contributed to a hostile environment and many FSU students capitalized on it. People like Angell, however, did their best to mitigate

---

<sup>52</sup> Sidney Bedingfield, "Sutek organizes preachers to oppose homosexuality," *Flambeau*, January 7, 1980, 6.

<sup>53</sup> Gerald Sutek, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, January 11, 1980, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Robert W. Angell, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, February 4, 1980, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Karl Beem and Mike Moline, "'Somebody asked that it hail on us; God sent sunshine,'" *Flambeau*, April 28, 1980 1.

Sutek's damage and promote the worth of gay people. Beyond a call for simple recognition of gay presence, Angell did the important work of explaining why gay people mattered in religious terms.

Some queer people, however, found her brand of bigotry useful for defining themselves. Paul McDonough, a UF student in the early 1980s, was in high school in Panama City while Bryant campaigned. He was already out to himself and had been reading about homosexuality in books. Instead of repressing him, Bryant helped things come together in his mind: "And that was where things really started coalescing as far as my ideas, what was, what I had read in books, and what I had read in theory, and here's the practical application of it happening right down the street, right down the road from me."<sup>56</sup> McDonough was not raised in a religious household, so his perspective was not as immersed in religion as Chip Halvorsen's or Nancy Wilkinson's. Bryant's religious opposition to queer people had far-reaching effects. It introduced ideas and language into individual lives and the national discourse. Her efforts contributed to the rise of modern conservatism through tying Christianity to conservative opposition to expanding civil rights. Bryant contributed to a hostile discourse amongst conservative students on campus and a homophobic political landscape in Florida. But she also ensured queer visibility, and queer Florida students took advantage.

### **Queer Community Responses**

Tina Fetner argues in "Working Anita Bryant: The Impact of Christian Anti-Gay Activism on Lesbian and Gay Movement Claims" that much of the change in public opinion in favor of gay people, and the attainment of rights for lesbians and gays,

---

<sup>56</sup> Paul McDonough, interview with Jess Clawson, October 12, 2012, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, University of Florida.

resulted from the rhetoric, strategies, and successes of religious anti-gay efforts. Many gay organizations, even those not directly affected by Bryant, used her to show threats to gay and lesbian people. Fetner argues that national lesbian and gay groups employed the hierarchical structure used by the religious right. The religious right put the gay and lesbian movement on the defensive by choosing the issues around which the gay and lesbian movement had to mobilize and thus religious right controlled the conversation. However, they also brought gay and lesbian people to the light in a way that gay and lesbian groups had not had the resources to accomplish on their own.<sup>57</sup> It fostered the imagined community of gay people but also caused significant stress within queer groups.

The responses of queer people in Dade County were mixed and often in tension with each other. Bryant's attacks focused on the stereotypical effeminate gay man, so flamboyant queer people responded by heightening their outrageousness and visibility. They demanded the right to live openly. However, more conservative or mainstream gay people wanted to distance themselves from overt queerness because they feared for their cause.<sup>58</sup> As one lesbian said, "We're going to lose our rights because of these guys and their god-damned drag queen/fist-fucking/chicken-hawk/leather-bar image."<sup>59</sup> These sorts of internal conflicts have been a part of the gay and queer rights movements since the Mattachine Society and are still in effect. Those who wished to

---

<sup>57</sup> Tina Fetner, "Working Anita Bryant: The Impact of Christian Anti-Gay Activism on Lesbian and Gay Movement Claims," *Social Problems* 48, no. 3 (August 2001): 411-428.

<sup>58</sup> Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 44.

<sup>59</sup> Lindsay Van Gelder, "Anita Bryant on the March: Lessons of Dade County," *Ms. Magazine* (September 1977): 100.

assimilate and those who want to disrupt heteronormativity may be oppressed for the same reasons but continue to see their struggle very differently.

Gainesville clearly set itself in the context of the statewide antioppression efforts in 1977 when queer residents began to agitate for a local queer rights ordinance.<sup>60</sup> Once again, religious conservatives set the tone. A local group called Citizens for Decency (CFD) started an anti-pornography campaign that many people, including the on-campus Gay Community Center (GCC) director Liz Williams, saw as a front to attack gay people. Gay people in Gainesville had been working to have sexual orientation added to the city's anti-discrimination ordinance.<sup>61</sup> The CFD organized an anti-obscenity movement against local adult bookstores and movie houses and then used the support they gained from community members to lobby against the ordinance. CFD member Jim Glass argued against the ordinance at a Human Relations Advisory Board (HRAB) meeting as well as against campus recognition of gay groups. HRAB was a branch of the city government meant to advise the City Commission on human relations issues. Glass was not worried about stigmatizing gay people. "If they want to be homosexuals," he said, "let them pay the price." CFD chair Diana Duva argued that that the ordinance would "cause problems" in education and government. She thought that men would try to use women's restrooms, boys would try to take girls' PE classes, and that the ordinance would "make the community standard of decency much lower than we hope." Williams was concerned: "They have money, they have a following, and they have an

---

<sup>60</sup> Ceci Cole, "Gays Seek National Law," *Alligator*, February 18, 1977.

<sup>61</sup> "Gays to testify at hearing," *Alligator*, February 21, 1977, 6; Andrea Murray, "City reviews gay rights," *Alligator*, February 23, 1977, 12.

emotionally-based appeal which gives them power, and we've got to take that seriously."<sup>62</sup>

An *Alligator* editorial pointed out that discrimination was very real: Surveys of gay and lesbian people in Gainesville showed that 26 percent of gay people had been discriminated against in housing, 48 percent in employment, and 43 percent in public accommodations. But this was not widely known because "many gays are simply not willing to risk their careers and family life on a discrimination lawsuit which they might lose." Thirty-nine other communities in the country had such anti-discrimination laws, and the editorial argued that Gainesville should be number 40, because gay people were entitled to basic civil rights.<sup>63</sup>

In an *Alligator* column, Brian Jones made the case that calling oneself a decent citizen does not always make it so. He pointed to the case of Richard Heakin, a young gay man who was beaten to death by a group of high school students in 1976. Heakin, 21, was vacationing in Tucson from Lincoln, Nebraska. Early on the morning of Friday, June 6, 1976, thirteen local high school students attacked and beat him to death. The students were involved in a group who had been looking for "homos to beat up" all night. Most of the group fled the scene, and four of the assailants (Charles J. Shemwell, Herman Jesus Overpeck, Scott McDonald, and Russel Van Cleave) were charged with first-degree murder, conspiracy to commit aggravated assault, and violation of being out past curfew. They were set to be tried as adults. The presiding judge, Ben C. Birdsall, dropped the charges from first degree murder to involuntary manslaughter, and from

---

<sup>62</sup> Andrea Murray, "Gays charge anti-porn group uses front to attack them," *Alligator*, March 28, 1977, 7.

<sup>63</sup> Editorial, "Number 40," *Alligator*, March 10, 1977, 12.



being tried as adults to tried as children, thus sealing their trial records forever. Birdsall ignored the testimony of all witnesses and ruled that he could find no evidence of malice or premeditation. Birdsall called the four football players—who confessed to the crime—“basically good boys” and put them on probation. The next day, all 13 of the assailants were back in school. They continued to bully other students and paraded around school boasting that they had “murdered a homo” and gotten off “scott free.”<sup>64</sup> These were the citizens considered decent enough to get away with murder.

Jones drew a parallel between Heakin’s murderers and The Citizens for Decency in Gainesville, who were “determined to repress and slander local homosexuals” and therefore were not being decent citizens, either. Before the CDF became involved, Jones contended, the debate over the issue had remained level-headed, but they brought “the ugly cloud of unreasoning, hateful bigotry” to the discussion. They made patently false cases, like stating that gay people were responsible for 50 percent of all murders in the country, that gay people were child molesters, that UF would become a “queer college” and then be shut down if the gay ordinance passed, and that gay people were “satan worshippers.” The CFD did not attempt to provide evidence for its outrageous statements. Jones feared that the natural endpoint of the CFD claims was an environment that sanctioned more murders like Heakin’s, or another Hitler-like assault on gay people everywhere. The CFD slogan was “save our children from homosexuals,” but Jones pointed out that children really needed to be saved from bigots.<sup>65</sup> In response, Glass clarified that the position of the CFD in relation to

---

<sup>64</sup> Tucson Gay Museum, Richard Heakin Collection, <http://tucsongaymuseum.org/richardheakincollection.htm>, accessed January 23, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Brian D. Jones, “‘Citizens for Decency’ is latest cover for bigotry,” *Alligator*, March 29, 1977, 9.

homosexuality was that it was wrong to give rights and recognition to a group of people who chose to be gay. They also felt that “recognition given to homosexuals as a group is an imposition on our rights” and were concerned that bestiality groups would also attempt to gain rights.<sup>66</sup> Again, Glass and the CFD were using Bryant’s language about whose rights were more important in their attempt to prevent civil rights for gay people.

The HRAB subcommittee on sexual orientation voted against recommending a proposal to include gay people in the city’s anti-discrimination laws.<sup>67</sup> An editorial in the *Alligator* criticized this decision, noting that one subcommittee member believed that the ordinance was not necessary as long as gay people kept their orientation to themselves. The editorial argued that gay people did not have freedom of speech if they could lose their jobs over a slip of the tongue, while opponents to the ordinance were saying, “If the gays keep their place, everything will be fine.”<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, a re-vote was held and the HRAB approved the proposal, which it then presented to the City Commission. In preparation for the vote, the Gay Community Center members handed out a 26-page fact book on the issue to every commissioner.<sup>69</sup>

The meeting about the amendment itself drew a large and emotional crowd. People in favor of the ordinance argued that they had no protections, or that they had gay people in their lives whom they loved and wanted to protect. Those opposed recruited much of Anita Bryant’s rhetoric, including talking about saving children and about how homosexuality constituted a choice. The amendment was defeated 4-1. The

---

<sup>66</sup> Jeff Jones, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, April 1, 1977, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Pat Cronin, “City panel gives area gays first legal setback,” *Alligator*, May 18, 1977, 5.

<sup>68</sup> Editorial, “First Down,” *Alligator*, May 19, 1977, 8.

<sup>69</sup> Carmen Lopez, “City faces gay rights questions,” *Alligator*, June 21, 1977, 3.

one person who voted for the amendment, Bobby Lisle, explained his vote: “They (homosexuals) are asking for the same things the rest of us want. We are not discussing pornography, sexual habits or techniques, or moral values. We are discussing the civil rights of a minority.” Commissioner Gary Junior opposed the amendment because he did not want to have to tell his children that homosexuality was an acceptable alternative. When racial protections had come up a few years before, he “learned to live with it,” but he could not do the same with homosexuality. Commissioner Joseph Little and Mayor Mark Green were both concerned about the effects on the community; they worried that turmoil would ensue if the amendment passed.<sup>70</sup> Local leaders (including former UF president Stephen C. O’Connell) had used the “public mischief” argument in denying black civil rights as well.<sup>71</sup> The people in power were concerned about disruption if oppressed groups were given rights, prioritizing their comfort over the principle of equality—and without consideration for the fact that the people likely to be causing the mischief would be those in the privileged group who were upset about the change, not marginalized people who got what they wanted.

An anonymous letter to the editor pointed out that plenty of straight people engaged in legal immoral activity, like affairs and professorial coercion of female students, but that the city had not decided against giving straight people rights.<sup>72</sup> Another writer argued that the people opposed to the amendment “would prefer to be forever lied to,” and that “these same people are calling themselves Christians.” This

---

<sup>70</sup> Dave Hodges, “Emotional gay rights question draws crowd,” *Alligator*, June 21, 1977, 7.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Wallenstein, “Segregation, Desegregation, and Higher Education in Virginia” (Policy History Conference, Charlottesville, VA, June 3, 2006).

<sup>72</sup> Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, June 28, 1977, 9.

person also disliked that the commissioners were not protecting all their citizens in allowing some to be openly discriminated against.<sup>73</sup> Some argued that the debate also had the positive outcome of making gay people in Gainesville more visible. For instance, Elizabeth Williams was appointed to the HRAB.<sup>74</sup> The changing morals of the 1970s and the hard work of the GCSC were a large part of that increased visibility.<sup>75</sup>

Gainesville had another problem in the fall of 1977: The Gainesville Police Department (GPD) was at odds with gay students, particularly gay men. They arrested eleven men for fellatio and masturbation in public restrooms, and the GPD and GCSC met to discuss a liaison and awareness-raising to decrease further arrests. Part of the plan was to discuss alternatives for gay men so that they would not have to meet in public restrooms. Brian Jones, a senior at UF and a GCSC member, said that gay people had been seeking alternatives, but that the bathrooms were still used for meeting people because there was so much discrimination against gay people in town.<sup>76</sup>

A similar issue was ongoing at FSU. The Student Senate passed a resolution calling for “an increased patrol by the university police of one men’s restroom on campus to prevent loitering and “to protect those occupying the restroom from being propositioned by homosexuals.” A *Flambeau* editorial—the first pro-gay editorial in the paper—suggested that this resolution was homophobic and sexist, and that the

---

<sup>73</sup> Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, June 28, 1977, 9.

<sup>74</sup> Dave Hodges, “One-way plan eyed for University Avenue,” *Alligator*, July 14, 1977, 5.

<sup>75</sup> Tom Smart, “Gay rights: Opening the doors,” *Alligator*, September 19, 1977, 13.

<sup>76</sup> Ralph Diaz, “Gays, GPD seek liaison, awareness,” *Alligator*, September 26, 1977, 28.

university police could better spend their time preventing the harassment of women.<sup>77</sup> Many students protested this act of homophobia on the part of the student government,<sup>78</sup> while at least one student found the idea acceptable because other sexual outlaws, like prostitutes and streakers, were also prohibited on campus.<sup>79</sup> The issue gained even more attention when 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals Judge G. Harold Carswell was arrested in a Florida bathroom that was well-known to be a cruising spot. Carswell had national recognition because he was only a few votes away from being confirmed to the US Supreme Court. An *Alligator* editorial made the point again that the persecution of gay people contributed to this bathroom cruising, and that UF needed to recognize the Gay Community Service Center in order to help gay students cope with an oppressive society.<sup>80</sup> Groups like Bryant's SOC and the Gainesville CFD contributed to a dangerous political landscape and worsened the campus climate to the point that universities felt free to use their police against queer students, just as they had during the Johns Committee.

The emphasis on the dangers of queer people in public spaces was part of Anita Bryant's campaign. While the UF students were addressing her obliquely, queer people in Tampa were dealing with Anita Bryant and her forms of homophobia directly. They formed a coalition in response to Bryant when she held a concert in St. Petersburg in November 1977. Members of the USF Gay Coalition were in attendance at a protest

---

<sup>77</sup> Editorial, "Resolution shows SG as oppressor," *Flambeau*, April 21, 1976, 4.

<sup>78</sup> Jerry Maxham, "SG has 'bathroomphobia,'" *Flambeau*, April 20, 1976, 4; Hank McKeown, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, May 3, 1976, 5; Linda Sarver, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, May 6, 1976, 6; Mike Meyers, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, May 14, 1976, 5.

<sup>79</sup> Letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, Monday, May 3, 1976, 5.

<sup>80</sup> Editorial, "Queer," *Alligator*, July 6, 1976, 6.

held outside the venue.<sup>81</sup> The Ku Klux Klan was present to show its support for Bryant, but several groups aligned to oppose her, including religious organizations, the African People's Socialist Party (ASPS), and Tampa citizens who were not necessarily affiliated with any group. The Gay Coalition had a prepared statement about dispelling the myths about homosexuality and wanting to put the focus on children and morality: "We believe it is immoral to lie to children." The Metropolitan Community Church statement said in part: "The purpose of her (Bryant's) appearance is to promulgate false teachings and incite our citizens to contribute to the persecution of minorities."

The ASPS put its finger on the idea of imagined community that Bryant created, calling her "the central magnet for every rightist and fascist force in this country." It was "no accident that both Anita Bryant and the terroristic, black-hating Ku Klux Klan hide behind the cross," the group argued. It was clear to the ASPS that oppression of one group justified oppression of all marginalized people. "Not only are the rights of homosexuals endangered by her philosophy and actions," the ASPS declared, "but also the rights of women, workers, oppressed nationalities and black people."<sup>82</sup> This sort of inter-group support was not common in Florida at the time, but is evidence that Bryant inadvertently fostered solidarity among people who did not wish to relegate all queer people to the closet.

Perhaps even more surprising than the support of the ASPS was a caucus of gay farmers formed to support a Florida citrus boycott. Two members of the Florida Farm Bureau, Gary Hopfmann and Jeff Dupre, presented a petition with 5,000 signatures in

---

<sup>81</sup> "Anita Bryant will Attract More Than Just Music Fans at Her Concert Tonight," *St. Petersburg Times*, November 8, 1977.

<sup>82</sup> Peter Fiskio, "It Was a Carnival Night of Protests and Hallelujahs," *Oracle*, November 10, 1977, 3.

support of a boycott. They organized the “gay farmers caucus” and passed out leaflets at the Kissimmee gathering, taking “strong exception” to what they said were “opinions, myths and misconceptions” about the “so-called gay rights controversy earlier this year in the Miami area.” They stated that they felt a gay boycott could “produce an economic impact.” Rather than trying to get Bryant fired, “The purpose of our boycott is to obtain a statement of policy from the Florida Citrus Commission permitting all individuals to work, regardless of their sexual preference.”<sup>83</sup> In response, the Florida Citrus Commission issued a statement that it wholeheartedly supported Bryant’s “right to freely express her convictions without fear of reprisals in any form from the Florida citrus industry and its representatives.”<sup>84</sup> It is difficult to know how effective the “gaycott” was. Bryant at times expressed concern about the serious financial harm to herself and the Commission, but at other times delighted in a backlash that caused a 25 percent sales increase. However, Bryant noted that she lost over 70 percent of her bookings and commercial endorsements due to her work to oppress queer people.<sup>85</sup> People on both sides felt strongly about her, bringing all sorts of unlikely activists to the surface.

All three universities experienced another form of queer activism in the form of “Gay Blue Jeans Day,” put on by their respective gay student groups. These events attempted to raise queer visibility and show that gay people were no different from straight people. The first such event was held at USF in May 1977. Some students objected, as they would at the other two universities, that straight people would be unintentionally confused with gay people because they would not see the

---

<sup>83</sup> “Two Farm Bureau members support citrus boycott,” *St. Petersburg Times*, Nov. 8, 1977.

<sup>84</sup> “Anita will still get paid,” *Oracle*, November 16, 1977, 2.

<sup>85</sup> Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 51.

announcements and they would wear jeans: “Why should this person be subject to public ridicule and be identified as a member of the gay population?” These writers also claimed that having to “alter our lifestyles to be on the defensive against one of their events” meant that their rights were being curtailed.<sup>86</sup> Another group wrote to the *Oracle* to argue that they also felt their rights were being infringed upon, because jeans were the norm on campus. These writers seemed to miss the point entirely. Some suggested that gay people should wear signs that label themselves.<sup>87</sup> Student Dan Romano argued that straight people should stay home that day, lest they wear the wrong pants and risk “being forever labeled as a ‘queer’ or a ‘weirdo.’”<sup>88</sup> These were clearly ideas they borrowed from Bryant, who saw her rights as a homophobe being taken away by openly gay people and gay rights.

Other students did not take it seriously. Perry Bridges, for example, said he and his friends were not “going to let a bunch of limp-wristed fags run their life.”<sup>89</sup> Phyllis Marshall, director of the University Center, told the students that the fundamentalist community in Tampa supported Bryant and that the community “probably wasn’t ready to handle such an against-the-grain activity.”<sup>90</sup> Some students opposed the event on religious grounds: Greg Furno argued that Miami residents and people anywhere else in the country would be acting within the constraints of God’s law if they “decide to prohibit homosexuality in the same way that they have prohibited murder, burglary, and

---

<sup>86</sup> “Have a Gayday,” *Oracle*, May 24, 1977, 4; Bob Nathan and John Fritts, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, May 24, 1977, 4.

<sup>87</sup> Kevin Fuller, Linda Melbourne, John Medeiros, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, May 27, 1977, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Dan Romano, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, May 27, 1977, 4.

<sup>89</sup> Jeff Whittle, “Who’ll wear jeans on Friday?” *Oracle*, May 26, 1977, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Matthew Bokor, “Gayday Complaints Heard,” *Oracle*, May 27, 1977, 1.



prostitution.”<sup>91</sup> The coordinator of the USF Gay Coalition, Cynthia Edwards, explained the backlash in terms of ignorance and fear: “You don’t know the target of your ridicule. What you may have learned about gay people is probably biased, reactionary and untrue.”<sup>92</sup> The event was considered a success by at least one person, who called it “stirringly effective” and who looked forward to “more events that will bring the sexually insecure and homosexually paranoid out of their self-righteous closets.”<sup>93</sup>

FSU tried on the gay blue jeans day event next. Dave Seibert, director of the Gay Alliance, said that these events were in part thanks to Anita Bryant, who “has done a lot for gays. Anita has sort of brought everybody together.” One member of the Tallahassee gay community argued that “What Anita Bryant has done for us is to make us mad enough to come out.” The event faced opposition from some locals, who stole banners intending to publicize the event.<sup>94</sup> Other students also learned a valuable lesson. One wore jeans and a denim jacket on purpose, even though he was straight, because he wanted to show support. He admitted to feeling uncomfortable and noticed a lot of negative cues. Over the course of the day, he said, he began to feel happy that he was able to assert himself as an individual, and the uneasiness he perceived in other people struck him as “very humorous in a pathetic sort of way.” This student was disturbed “that a university campus (supposedly more aware, liberal and educated in comparison to the rest of society) chose not to support peoples’ rights” and expressed sympathy towards those who felt so restricted in their ways of thinking and lifestyles that

---

<sup>91</sup> Greg Furno, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, May 27, 1977.

<sup>92</sup> Cynthia Edwards, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, May 27, 1977, 4.

<sup>93</sup> TM Schulz, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, June 3, 1977, 4.

<sup>94</sup> Neil Abell, “Gay jeans day tomorrow,” *Flambeau*, October 13, 1977, 2.

they could not wear jeans.<sup>95</sup> Three straight women reported that they wore jeans, and over the course of the day, “it became apparent to us that the sexual freedom so conspicuous on this campus is limited solely to heterosexuals. We were constantly inundated with questioning looks, whispers, outright stares, etc.” They had hoped for a sense of pride in their ability to accept others, but they felt uncomfortable and unsure of themselves. They thought the “tragedy” of Blue Jeans Day was “the revelation of the restrictions on individual freedom,” especially considering the non-conformist nature of their generation. On that day, they thought “the student body of FSU revealed itself to be consciously opposed to human rights (either that or it does not consider homosexuals to be human beings). The intolerance to differing beliefs and ideas is so strong that even those who recognize the oppression are afraid to publicly acknowledge their beliefs.”<sup>96</sup> Bryant’s work in the state raised awareness among some straight people as to the plight of gay people. Had she not brought visibility to queerness, sympathetically-inclined but unaware straight people may never have given a thought to the importance of advocating for queer people.

FSU saw a renewed effort to celebrate National Blue Jeans Day in 1978. Public displays of homophobia seemed to be on the rise on the FSU campus. Someone painted the words “Gays Eat Shit” on the sidewalk next to a prominent building on campus. Others made obscene or threatening phone calls and bomb threats.<sup>97</sup> The efforts to oppose queer people in Tallahassee and at FSU must have made Bryant

---

<sup>95</sup> Letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 25, 1977, 5.

<sup>96</sup> Kimberly Lisle, Janet Kellough, and Korina Hahn, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, November 4, 1977 4.

<sup>97</sup> Dave Seibert, “Homophobia,” *Flambeau*, April 14, 1978, 5.

proud. However, the queer students worked hard to assert themselves anyway, and as they said, they had Bryant to thank for driving them to come out.

The Gay Blue Jeans Day attempt at UF in 1977 was unsuccessful in that it went mostly unnoticed. One straight student, David Moore, objected to it: “I have nothing against gays... but don’t blatantly attempt to include me in your ranks. I am a healthy, male Republican, and I don’t want to be labeled otherwise because of what I wear.”<sup>98</sup> No letters were published in the *Alligator* to rebut his stance that being healthy, male, and Republican meant a person was straight. Many people saw queerness as a disease and an affront to masculinity. By this time, the Republican Party had solidified its anti-gay stance and this would contribute to its surge in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The students at UF tried again in 1978. One openly gay student, Miles King, wrote an op-ed in which he pointed to another benefit of the effort: “If a person is aware of the significance of the day, that person might stop before dressing on that morning to think, ‘What if people think I’m gay?’” Those few seconds could “make a person feel, if only for a moment, the anxiety a closeted gay person feels their entire lifetime.”<sup>99</sup> King went on to explain that wearing jeans was a symbol of the queer rights supporters’ unity and advocacy, and that everyone should feel free to wear jeans: “You are the only person who can prove you are gay and the people that matter will accept your denial if you aren’t.” The student group was working hard to sustain the momentum of the movement. By this point in the 1970s, many other student protest groups that had

---

<sup>98</sup> David Moore, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, October 27, 1977, 11.

<sup>99</sup> Miles King, “Gay Blue Jeans Day: Effort to ‘Raise Consciousness,’” *Alligator*, April 13, 1978.

organized in response to the political culture of the 1960s had diminished in their activity and campus profiles, but the GCSC was determined to continue fighting for its rights.<sup>100</sup>

That it needed to do so is clear from the letters opponents continued to write to the *Alligator*. On May 1, 1978, a letter by an anonymous gay student provoked responses from those who based their anti-queer feelings in religion. The student wrote to the *Alligator* to rebut the ideas that all gay men were stereotypes and child molesters, and that homosexual sex was unnatural because it was not procreative. The writer also argued that the church's role in deciding laws was "ridiculous" and churches should stay out of civil rights. Homophobes, not homosexuals, were the sick ones, the letter writer argued. A week later, on May 8, a student who identified himself as a straight Christian named Jeffrey Lee Bialek felt obligated to respond. He first mocked the writer of the May 1 letter writer for not being identified. He argued for his "right" to not have his children taught by queer teachers, and closed with, "Queers are abnormal people who refuse to accept their proper roles in life as a man or a woman." Once again, gender performance and sexual orientation were conflated. People like Bialek saw their homophobia as a defense of the gender binary and its attendant "correct" behaviors.

On May 10 two other gay students replied—one anonymous and one named William Fulton—arguing in their own letters that religion was hegemonic and Christians were trying to impose their views on everyone. They made the case that gay people merely wanted the same protection as everyone else; that gay people did not want to impose their views on others, although religious people wanted to do just that; and that straight opponents to gay rights had nothing to lose by exposing their names, but gay

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

people did. The queer students increasingly spoke up for themselves, buoyed by their status as an official organization and their recent campus-wide movements like National Gay Blue Jeans Day. Their willingness to be visible, even if controversial, showed a more confident front to the rest of campus. That some queer students preferred to remain anonymous, however, was evidence that being out of the closet was still not easy in 1978. The campus climate was not friendly even though the students had a recognized group. The university may have permitted their presence, but it did not value their contributions as queer people.

Gay students were not avoiding the public eye, however. Student groups at USF and UF each planned dances to promote community and campus visibility.<sup>101</sup> Elizabeth Williams noted that gay people were usually restricted to private parties for socializing, but the dance at UF gave other people who were just coming out to themselves the chance to meet other gay people. The dance provided the group the opportunity to talk about themselves and their reasons for existing in the *Alligator*. They spoke about discrimination in the military, education, and society in general, and about how being gay did not make one a predator.<sup>102</sup> Although turnout was less than expected, it was considered successful “because it marked the first time an event oriented toward homosexuals was held on city property,” at the Northeast Recreational Center.<sup>103</sup> They engaged in a form of activism when they created positive community events in the face of Bryant and her sympathizers.

---

<sup>101</sup> Jim Jones, “Gay Coalition Plans Dance,” *Oracle*, October 5, 1977, 7.

<sup>102</sup> Chris Moss, “They Danced Out of the Closet,” *Alligator*, October 22, 1977, 20.

<sup>103</sup> Lauren Pisasik, “Gay Disco Dance Termed a Success,” *Alligator*, October 17, 1977, 15.

Straight people also made their objections to Bryant known. A *Flambeau* editorial stated that Florida had “a reputation for conservatism in the face of demanding social problems and changing social and sexual mores.” The editorial noted that even Governor Reubin Askew supported Bryant, but that “reactionary defensive measures such as these may well be indicative of the last-gasp resistance to a social idea whose time has come.” But visibility had increased, and this editorial made the point that the resistance to gay rights was “much the same as the reception for the civil rights, women’s rights and anti-war movements—a defensive stance grounded in fear and a crumbling traditionalism.”<sup>104</sup> The *Oracle* also spoke against Bryant’s particular brand of intolerance: “It’s one thing to try to oppress masses of people, but attempting to make them think you love them while you’re beating them down is quite another matter.” Bryant’s “love” did not square with her efforts to deny people rights, and she was unlikely to be of any real help. “If all the gays in this country (which, as Bryant has realized, are more in number than she reckoned) were to lose their jobs,” two University of Michigan students wondered, “would Bryant invite them all to her mansion on Miami Beach for some fine old Christian charity?”<sup>105</sup>

Bryant’s influence transcended Florida and prompted people to think about their own communities. For instance, gay people in Ann Arbor, Michigan, argued that the Save Our Children campaign would not find the local gay and lesbian community cowering in fear, but “Ann Arbor gays, proud of their local history and united in a broad-based community, would be ready to oppose any attempt to rescind their limited but

---

<sup>104</sup> Editorial, “Gay Rights: The Time has Come,” *Flambeau*, Monday, June 20, 1977, 4.

<sup>105</sup> Editorial, “Chiquita Anita: No top banana,” *Oracle*, November 10, 1977, 4.

hard fought civil rights.”<sup>106</sup> This was encouraging in terms of its outlook on the Ann Arbor gay community, but it seemed to suggest that people in Florida were not willing to stand up for themselves, which was clearly not the case. Students at UF, FSU, and USF worked to consolidate support networks in light of Bryant’s persecution. They celebrated, protested, and spoke out for themselves. Their visibility in this charged time was an important element of political activism.

Anita Bryant caused a great deal of disruption in Florida and nationwide for gay people, but she also called into existence a national-level pro-gay discourse as well—one that has not gone away. The conditions are less than ideal, in that the religious conservatives were and are able to define the terms of the debate, and in that their arguments still hold more water than pro-queer people are comfortable with. But students at UF, FSU, and USF had been facing discrimination and violence for decades, and in this moment they leapt into the spotlight in a way they had not before, with their Gay Blue Jeans Days and their anti-Anita rallies. They hosted conferences, held dances, and existed as queer people. In the words of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay person elected to political office, “In 1977, gay people had their rights taken away from them in Miami. But you must remember that in the week before Miami and in the week after that, the word ‘homosexual’ or ‘gay’ appeared in every single newspaper in this nation... on every radio station, on every TV station, and in every household.” This had historical significance, as “for the first time in the history of the world, everybody was talking about it, good or bad... In those two weeks, more good and bad, but *more* about the word homosexual was written than probably in the history of mankind... In

---

<sup>106</sup> Laura Sky Brown and Lionel A. Biron, “Local Gays: A Lively Community,” *The Michigan Daily*, September 8, 1977.

1977, we saw a dialogue start.”<sup>107</sup> This dialogue was crucial to the queer politics of the students at FSU, USF, and UF, for whom visibility was an act of political courage. Queer students did not have to become involved in anti-Bryant activism to be doing the important work of carving out spaces for themselves. Their visibility made them impossible to ignore. The coming years would bring struggles in the form of university-specific anti-gay legislation and, of course, AIDS, but the queer students had laid the groundwork for strong responses in the wake of Anita Bryant.

---

<sup>107</sup> Harvey Milk, “The Hope Speech,” in *We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics*, ed. Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan (New York, 1997), 451-452.



## CHAPTER 5 HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY: CONSERVATIVES, FRATERNITIES, AND PRINCESSES

The early 1980s were a turbulent time for queer students at the University of Florida, Florida State University, and the University of South Florida. The campus fraternities were empowered by the right wing political climate and by the rise of the Moral Majority, which took on an anti-gay plank to its platform. Social conservatism in the early 1980s came to mean an ideology focusing on preserving “traditional values,” including opposing abortion, gay rights, and desegregation. This development directly affected queer people and other minorities as the Republican Party’s resurgence created an environment in which oppression became not only acceptable, but a key element of conservative credentials. Fraternity membership rose in correspondence with conservatism. Fraternity members participated in the political atmosphere by excluding and often abusing queer people and women.

Each university felt the effects of these forces in different ways. The struggles at FSU were primarily embodied in 17-year-old junior Bill Wade, an openly gay student who ran for Homecoming Princess and won by a substantial margin. The fraternities in particular and the student body in general reacted to Wade’s gender-bending with such force and violence that he withdrew from the university. Bill Wade’s story and the experiences of queer students at all three universities demonstrate the deleterious effects of conservatism on queer student visibility, but also show how students could organize to advocate for themselves in times of increased pressure.

## Conservatism, The Moral Majority, and Lethal Homophobia

Conservatism in the 1970s began to take on a more religious element, thanks largely to Anita Bryant and her skill at marrying anti-gay coalitions under the umbrella of patriotism. The 1980s saw a solidification of these alliances. As the debate over the Equal Rights Amendment continued, so did the discussion about whether gay rights would be included. The Moral Majority garnered attention beginning in 1980. Jerry Falwell, the pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, founded and headed the group of fundamentalist Christians. Its goal was to “create a moral climate in which it will be easy for a politician to vote right,” according to vice president Ronald Godwin. The Moral Majority’s political conservatism was a direct outgrowth of its religious conservatism. The group argued that if the country did not turn away from the women’s movement and gay rights, along with school desegregation and abortion, it would risk incurring God’s wrath. They worked to secure a right-wing voting bloc and to identify socially conservative candidates. The group would hold those candidates accountable once they were in office as well.<sup>1</sup>

The Moral Majority was an effective political machine that recruited nearly half a million members in its first year of existence. During the 1980 presidential campaign, some people credited the Moral Majority with persuading roughly 3 million new conservatives to register to vote—many, perhaps, via summonses from the pulpit. People like Jerry Falwell had to walk a “severe tight-rope of public opinion and legal scrutiny, striving to avoid the appearance of mingling their faiths with their politics.” Raymond Blair, a Moral Majority leader and pastor in Tallahassee, insisted that the

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Moline, “Moral Majority Preaches Conservatism,” *Flambeau*, August 28, 1980, 1; See also William A. Link, *Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008).

Moral Majority was “political and moral, but not religious.” He argued that “some of us cannot separate our moral convictions from our politics.”<sup>2</sup> This ambiguous—and sometimes inextricable—relationship between law and religion that led the Moral Majority to oppose issues like gay rights and the ERA often created internal conflicts in the Moral Majority, as its leaders were Christian fundamentalists. They wanted to saturate the country with evangelical Christianity to help “improve” the nation’s morals.<sup>3</sup>

The effects of the Moral Majority were felt nationwide. Bruce McCoy, a UF student who was interested in the broad national political context, pointed out that the Moral Majority was specifically anti-gay and that it planned to spend \$3 million to attack San Francisco’s gay and lesbian population in a media blitz. McCoy warned *Alligator* readers of the dangers of media campaigns against minority groups, reminding readers that this was how Hitler rose to power, and that the fundamentalists should not be underestimated. Dean Wycoff, the spokesperson for the Santa Clara Moral Majority, said, “I agree with capital punishment and I believe that homosexuality is one of those sins that could be coupled with murder... that it would be the government that sits upon this land who would be executing the homosexuals.” Rev. Charles McIlhenny said homosexuals should be stoned to death after a biblical state was established in the nation. Not only was this “a \$3 million tax-free campaign to viciously persecute people who have done nothing to harm anyone,” but he noted that “millions of people are starving while these ‘Christians’ attack innocent, peaceful, law-abiding citizens.”<sup>4</sup> Pat

---

<sup>2</sup> Paul Weimer, “Beaming in the Old Time Gospel: Saturation Evangelism and the New Right come to North Florida,” *Flambeau*, August 24, 1981, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce McCoy, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, March 6, 1981, 9.

Rowantree, a columnist for the *USF Oracle*, argued that this attempt to rid San Francisco of homosexuals was horrifying and called Wycoff the Anti-Christ because he hid behind “the Bible and Christ’s teachings to perpetrate the most extraordinary unchristian behavior and attitudes toward [his] fellow human beings.”<sup>5</sup> The political climate was as hostile to queer people as it had ever been, and the fight came to the doorsteps—sometimes literally—of queer students at FSU, USF, and UF.

The Moral Majority held a forum for political candidates in Tallahassee in September 1980. The 16 political candidates who spoke “stressed their sympathy with Moral Majority’s ethic,” and school superintendent Ed Fenn said he opposed hiring gay people as teachers—a sentiment met with “sustained applause and amens.”<sup>6</sup> The sordid history of the Johns Committee persecution of gay and lesbian teachers rendered this sentiment particularly chilling.<sup>7</sup> This statement was not unchallenged by FSU students. The next day’s *Flambeau* editorial called Fenn’s statement absurd and ignorant. It went on to discuss the idea that anyone who believed that gay people were more likely to be child molesters must have been willfully ignorant and that the idea that teachers could convert students to homosexuality “might be dismissed as merely silly if it weren’t so damaging to gays.” Given that students were constantly bombarded with anti-gay messages, and had been since Anita Bryant, even someone who believed in the possibility of “converting” straight people to homosexuality would have to see that

---

<sup>5</sup> Pat Rowantree, “The True Anti-Christ?” *Oracle*, March 2, 1981, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Moline, “Moral Majority cross examines candidates at local church,” *Flambeau*, September 24, 1980, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Karen L. Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida’s Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* (University of Illinois Press, 2009).

one openly gay teacher could not overcome all of the homophobia in the culture. Furthermore, the *Flambeau* editors showed themselves to perhaps be a bit ahead of their time in considering the benefits of gay teachers. “While the presence of a happy, well-adjusted, successful gay individual in the classroom wouldn’t create homosexuals,” they argued, “it might give some desperately needed comfort to gay children who feel themselves ‘different’ and have no idea what to do about it.” The Moral Majority would have to see beyond its own “hatred and insecurity” in order to see how children could benefit. All that Fenn could do, the editorial claimed, “is to force gay teachers to hide their own sexuality. And that accomplishes nothing at all.”<sup>8</sup>

The Moral Majority was not there to ask nuanced questions or engage in serious intellectual debate. As one FSU student noted, their purpose was to ask only yes-or-no questions, which had predetermined correct answers. This reflected their entire attitude, which had “no room for words like variance, relative, compromise.”<sup>9</sup> Whether the *Flambeau* staff had any gay or lesbian staff members in the early 1980s is unknown, but the newspaper, like the *Alligator* had and the *Oracle* would, aligned itself firmly on the side of gay students. The student newspapers continued to be powerful tools in the fight for visibility and rights.

However, some students linked their support of the Moral Majority to their feelings about gay people. One FSU student wrote to the editor of the *Flambeau* to assert that the ERA would legalize same-sex marriages because it would eliminate legal

---

<sup>8</sup> “Fenn Phobia,” *Flambeau*, September 25, 1980, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Paul K. Williamson, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 21, 1980, 5.

discriminations based on sex. He opposed it for this reason.<sup>10</sup> While many students shared this view, some, like Darrel Erickson, were forthright about their disapproval of the “fundamentalist Christian community” that was working to prevent gay peoples’ “right to share love relationships without legal or social penalty.” Their prejudice resulted in denial of choices for all kinds of people, including women who wanted abortions, men who might not want to be drafted, and gay people who wanted rights. This, Erickson pointed out, created a “narrowly-defined, traditional dichotomy,” in which “either one is male and a husband, father, and breadwinner, or one is female and so, of course, a wife, mother, and homemaker. There are no other choices! And that is horror.” He linked the freedom to be openly gay with the freedom to perform gender differently. Erickson espoused the idea that people should be able to choose what their lives looked like, including gay people, and that what most people needed to do was learn about gay people and not just accept what the Moral Majority had to say about them, because “The greatest weapon in the New Right’s arsenal of hatred is ignorance. They want you to stay ignorant. They plan to use your ignorance against you.”<sup>11</sup> Once again, education was recruited as a strategy for increasing acceptance of queer people.

Erickson’s ideas were perhaps not in the mainstream of his community, however. When asked if FSU students were getting more conservative, Vice President for Student Affairs Bob Leach said, “I think students may be becoming more with the times, not that they are becoming more conservative or liberal.” If one looked around campus, he said, there were outward signs like the changes in hair length and clothing that

---

<sup>10</sup> Paul T. Mazzotta, “Would Equal Rights Amendment OK Gay Marriage?” *Flambeau*, May 1, 1980, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Darrell Erickson, “The New Right: Its Greatest Weapon is Your Ignorance,” *Flambeau*, May 15, 1980, 4.

indicated that many of them were adopting a more 1980s kind of preppy style. As someone who came from the 1960s and 1970s, he was shocked at some of the things students asked him for. “I pick up the paper and see that they’re asking for quieter dorms and visitation hours—I was part of the generation that fought to let them have those things, as an administrator,” he reflected. “Now they are saying they don’t want that. They don’t know very much about how they got here, they just know they don’t like it.” Leach also felt he saw a change in the residence halls, where the typical student might not have been involved in campus politics, but were involved in religious organizations: “I can’t tell you how many times I go to a residence hall, and the first thing a student professes is, ‘I am a Christian.’”<sup>12</sup> Although the Moral Majority did not go to universities to recruit participants or build support, the national climate that the Moral Majority was part of affected FSU students and contributed to a hostile climate for queer people.

The climate at USF was changing in the early 1980s as well, in large part thanks to the Moral Majority. USF’s campus religious groups reported upticks in their attendance. This was true not just of evangelical Christian groups, but also of liberal Christian organizations and Jewish communities. The Campus Crusade for Christ worked with fraternities and sororities in particular.<sup>13</sup> The Rev. Ray DeHainaut, director of the University Chapel Fellowship (an interdenominational group that considered itself the left-leaning Christian organization on campus) was critical of the Moral Majority. He linked the Moral Majority’s concern over the perceived moral decline of the country with

---

<sup>12</sup> Michael McClellan, “Bob Leach: The Times (And the Students) Are A-Changin’,” *Flambeau*, July 8, 1982, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Donovan, “Campus Religious Groups Report Surge in Attendance,” *Oracle*, February 28, 1980, 3.

its refusal to endorse the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). DeHainaut also criticized the Moral Majority for wanting to increase military power and argued that it went against Christian scriptures. However, he may have underestimated the threat they posed. “I don’t think we need to be too frightened by them,” he said. “The prevailing attitude of the country still seems to be against the mixing of politics and religion.”<sup>14</sup>

However, some students saw reason to fear. USF student Pat Rowantree wrote a column for the *Oracle* exploring the ways the Moral Majority was conducting a holy war. The group not only sought to rid San Francisco of homosexuals, but to tackle sex education, abortion, and the ERA. Rowantree observed that “preventing a communist takeover in America seems to have a lot to do with gays and women.” This had dangerous implications, however, when Rev. Wycoff called for the death penalty for homosexuals. Rowantree was not going to join DeHainaut in his lack of concern. “Feelings of vague disgust at the tactics and issues of these pseudo-religious groups are now giving way to a more deep-seated feeling of horror on the part of non-participants,” Rowantree said. “It is hard to tell which is more frightening, the groups’ tactics, their issues or their thinking.”<sup>15</sup> The *Oracle* noted in 1982 that student attitudes on campus indicated growing conservatism. Student Chris West-Harazda saw this as a decline and worried that the USF religious studies program would become a “state-run seminary for American Christian conservatives, with no future for students such as myself, interested in a well-rounded education.”<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Jim Gouvellis, “USF Clergyman Discusses ‘Christian Right,’” *Oracle*, October 24, 1980, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Pat Rowantree, “The True Anti-Christ?” *Oracle*, March 2, 1981, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Chris West-Harazda, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, December 6, 1982, 7.



While the Moral Majority was of major concern to some students, others found crusades closer to home when *Penthouse* magazine sponsored a carwash on campus with the Interfraternity Council. The incident raised questions concerning sexual harassment policies because the promotional materials stated that “*Penthouse* Pets will be there.” Junior Bill Cagle, a member of the USF Gay Coalition, complained to University Center officials that the advertising was sexist and that the Interfraternity Council was exploiting women. Jim Crouch, University Center Student Affairs Coordinator, said he received other complaints about the posters and had them taken down.<sup>17</sup> Some students protested that the posters were not offensive, but that the Gay Coalition was. These students conflated being out as gay as broadcasting information about one’s sex life, and so saw no distinction between scantily clad women on posters and fliers announcing a Gay Coalition meeting.<sup>18</sup> Cagle clarified that the Gay Coalition had nothing to do with his statement and that he was not speaking for the group. He objected to the classification of Gay Coalition meeting announcements as “sexually offensive.” He accused the USF campus community of harboring sexist attitudes but also said that the presence or absence of posters would not affect the deeper patriarchal currents.<sup>19</sup> The growing conservatism at USF, as at the other two universities, meant that queer students had to attempt to stake out ground for their identities in a climate that legitimized anti-queer rhetoric.

---

<sup>17</sup> Kathy Subko, “Penthouse Carwash Makes Waves in UC,” *Oracle*, April 2, 1981, 1.

<sup>18</sup> DM DeBoise, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, April 3, 1981, 5; G. Stafford Westbrook, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, April 3, 1981, 5; Jack Klein, “It’s All Sexually Offensive,” *Oracle*, April 7, 1981, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Bill Cagle, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, April 8, 1981, 4.

UF experienced a tide of conservatism in early 1981 that would anticipate the legislative battles later in the year. The students there stopped wearing frayed denim and had adopted “coordinated khakis and briefcases,” according to Student Affairs Vice President Art Sandeen. These clothing styles signified an alignment with the establishment as opposed to an attitude of protest associated with the campus liberalism of the 1970s. Michael Gannon, assistant dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, felt that from 1973 on, UF had grown more conservative: “I think it originated out of a sense of failure after 1972, a failure by the activists to achieve certain social goals.” He thought students were more intellectual than activist, and more “establishment” than they once had been. They still wanted to “improve the social and political culture of the country,” but by working through existing channels. UF students fit in with the national trends. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* surveyed 187,000 freshmen in the fall of 1980, and found that many of them held fast to conservative ideals like marriage, family, and career success. For example, 46 percent of responders said that “university administrators had the right to prohibit homosexual relations.” Sixty-five percent felt that being “very well-off financially” was essential to happiness.<sup>20</sup>

The *Alligator* interviewed UF political science professor Richard Scher, who disagreed with Gannon and said apathy was the underlying factor for the change from activism to conservatism. Political consciousness had declined and people did not see “the university as connected to the great social issues of the day.” Students were “more concerned with themselves and having a good time” than with improving society. Indeed, many students said they would not participate in any marches or

---

<sup>20</sup> Tonya Weathersbee, “Conservative Tide Sweeping Campus,” *Alligator*, February 11, 1981, 1.

demonstrations. Donald Lloyd, a senior, said, “That kind of thing wouldn’t go over well nowadays. They were kind of dumb back in the 60s.” Others said demonstrations accomplished nothing and they would rather write their congressmen. Scher said he believed the rightward trend was because “a lot of social programs have started threatening white middle class Americans... and when white middle-class America gets upset, the minorities suffer.”<sup>21</sup>

Chip Halvorsen, who attended UF in the early 1980s, thought the UF campus was fairly hostile to queer students. Student groups, including UFLAGS, would set up tables on the colonnade outside the Reitz Union. “We’d set up our table out there,” Halvorsen recounted, “and we’d get some nasty looks from people. And somehow there was never a table right next to ours unless it was the National Organization for Women or something.”<sup>22</sup> Paul McDonough, who grew up in Tallahassee but attended UF, remembers the UF campus being very restricted in terms of the atmosphere for queer students. “A lot of people were very terrified of identifying themselves with the group in any way, shape, or form,” he said. “Even as an ally of the group.” He was disappointed in the university environment, because “It was much different than I thought it was going to be. I thought a college campus would have done a little bit better of a job before that point than what I saw here.” Visibility for queer people was low: “There was a lot of, when we did these panels, people would all the time, say, ‘You’re the first person I’ve ever talked to that’s gay.’ And I’m like, ‘Probably not.’” He thought it was strange that it was a college campus “but it was that much of an issue and it was that much something

---

<sup>21</sup> Tonya Weathersbee, “Conservative Tide Sweeping Campus,” *Alligator*, February 11, 1981, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Halvorsen interview, 2012.

that people didn't discuss for a long time... And you know, in the '80s, I thought, okay, yeah, we certainly should be a little farther along than that." He thought UF was behind where it should have been because it was the South, and outside the university campus, has always been "a very small town in many ways. It's a very conservative town. That probably plays a huge part of it." This was just a few years after Anita Bryant's campaign, which was the first thing many people had heard of gay activism. Off-campus was not much better: "it was really, really, really closeted. I did not enjoy it."<sup>23</sup>

City Commission candidates in Gainesville had to discuss abortion, homosexuality, and morality at their Moral Majority-sponsored debate in May 1981. Moderator Mike Braun asked the candidates how they would determine the moral standards they were expected to consider in relation to a zoning ordinance, along with health, safety, and general welfare. Some candidates said they would hear the citizens' opinions before making decisions, or that they did not think housing regulations and morals were related. Others, like Aaron Young and Mac McEachern, said they would rely on their Christianity to determine how to vote. The candidates were also split over the appropriateness of funding Planned Parenthood. However, all candidates were "unified in their stance against granting homosexuals in Gainesville minority status under existing civil rights laws." McEachern said, "They're a minority and I'm glad of it," and argued that they did not deserve minority status. Aaron Young argued that "Every man has the right to be a man, every woman has a right to be a woman, and God forbid homosexuality." Arguments like this illustrate how easy it was for anti-gay people to

---

<sup>23</sup> McDonough interview, 2012.

conflate gender identity with sexual orientation. Many people assumed that a woman who appeared masculine or a man who appeared feminine must be gay because they performed their gender differently. Mayor Mark Goldstein said that gays and lesbians had the option of keeping their sexual preferences private.<sup>24</sup> Students Roxana Kopetman and Mark Kuzmaul took exception to the focus of the debate and the candidates' stands on these issues. Kuzmaul said the voters needed to "be aware of the difference between those who stand for equality and those who are bigots." The gay community needed legislation to protect "our inalienable rights" and "our second class citizenship is unacceptable." Gay people needed to be safe in places other than in gay bars and the discrimination from so many corners of society was wrong. All of the candidates were "totally unacceptable to the gay community," and called for the gay and lesbian community to "take action against repressive forces that threaten our civil rights."<sup>25</sup> The Moral Majority was a threat to gay communities everywhere, but at UF they were using the presence of conservatives to point to why they needed legislation to protect them from bigotry.

Discrimination on the UF campus meant that queer students were unable to express themselves freely. One student wrote to the *Alligator* to complain that informational posters advertising the March on Tallahassee for Lesbian and Gay Rights were torn down from the Reitz Union within hours of their being hung. Another student replaced the posters with ones that read, "Faggots don't have any rights on this campus." The students engaged in a heated discussion, the bigoted student left, and

---

<sup>24</sup> Kiki Bechi, "Candidates Discuss City Moral Standards," *Alligator*, May 1, 1981, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Kuzmaul, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 5, 1981, 5.

the letter writer replaced the poster—which was torn down within ten minutes. The letter writer urged the student to seek information to help dispel his fears about gay people.<sup>26</sup>

Student Tim Cavanaugh wrote to the *Alligator* to say that the problem gay people had was their perversion, which led to loneliness. His concern “for the general well being of all” was not “whether gays are ‘discriminated’ against, but whether we as a community will discriminately deal with the homosexual problem so as not to develop an atmosphere of acceptance for their behavior.”<sup>27</sup> Several students responded to Cavanaugh to let him know that he had missed the mark: “May I propose that perhaps it is not any perversion of the homosexual but, rather, the fears of heterosexual society that inhibit the full emotional growth of gay men and women,” wrote one anonymous student. Gay people faced the constant threat of harassment and abuse anywhere they went, which was not conducive to finding “true love,” so “telling a homosexual that it is truly his or her ‘perversion’ which causes all these problems... is only another method of shifting the responsibility from this repression away from straight society, where it rightfully belongs.”<sup>28</sup> Others called Cavanaugh’s ideas inane and dangerous.<sup>29</sup>

A student named Alfred Victoria wrote a letter to the paper as well, stating that it could not be factually true that gay people led happy lives. He cited vague statistics related to alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide. He argued that gay people *did* recruit, as evidenced by their desire to be teachers; that the gay rights movement was

---

<sup>26</sup> Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, April 8, 1980, 6.

<sup>27</sup> Tim Cavanaugh, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, April 24, 1980, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 1, 1980, 9.

<sup>29</sup> J. Mejia, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 1, 1980, 9; Greg Rothenberger, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 1, 1980, 9; Steve Shipman, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 1, 1980, 9.

“aggressively devastating to the moral fiber and self-respect of a nation;” that being gay was as much an alternative lifestyle as having leukemia in that both were sicknesses; and that being gay was a choice. These students’ words and actions are evidence of the hostile environment queer students faced at UF.<sup>30</sup> Hostility toward change on the part of the straight opponents to queer rights had increased their antagonism toward queer students, but this gave the queer people an opportunity to further argue for their cause. Chances like these meant queer people would be able to continue to educate their peers, and with the help of the *Alligator*, create an environment more conducive to students coming out of the closet as well.

Strongly worded letters to the editor of the *Alligator* showed that many queer students were committed to their visibility. Robert Park wrote a letter arguing that it was because of homophobic people that gay people had high rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide. “We’re forced to either wear heterosexual masks during the day or hear ‘Hey, Faggot!’ wherever we go,” he said. “We are shoved into closets where we work for fear of losing our jobs.” He called Victoria a muckraker and cited some statistics on the increase of heterosexual rape and other crimes committed by straight people. Anti-gay people, he maintained, did not know anything about gays: they were not all sick and lonely, they did not recruit, and they did not want to infiltrate the government or disrupt the country.<sup>31</sup> Others wrote letters to point out that most straight people were not happy, either; that gays often communicated well with their partners and had more equal relationships; that they were just average people, some of whom

---

<sup>30</sup> Alfred Victoria, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 7, 1980, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Park, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 14, 1980, 8.

were born-again Christian.<sup>32</sup> Often, one round of letters was enough to make both sides quiet down for a time, but in this case, the queer-rights opponents fired back again, emphasizing their renewed animosity toward the queer students. Given the rise of conservatism, particularly religious conservatism, on a national level in the 1980s, it was no surprise that opposition at UF took on this sensibility as well. The national context was reflected in campus events.

Several letters were published in *The Alligator* from people opposing gay rights. Some of them argued that it was disingenuous to state that one can be a born-again Christian and gay, because Christians should believe the Bible was the word of God, and the Bible said, according to them, that being gay was wrong. Several students made claims along the lines that homosexuality may have been removed from the American Psychological Association's list of "abnormalities," but it was still on God's list. Furthermore, they blamed gay people for the "behavioral degeneration" they perceived in society.<sup>33</sup> Another student, Duane Alphs, took a more secular approach in his letter, saying that homosexuals, like murderers, made moral choices, and condoning homosexuality was the same as condoning murder.<sup>34</sup> His letter was met by numerous responses from gay students.<sup>35</sup> One writer noted that if comparing homosexuality to murder made sense, so did comparing premarital sex to murder, which was also a

---

<sup>32</sup> Deborah Panny, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 14, 1980, 8; Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 14, 1980, 9; Jeffrey Bassett, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 14, 1980, 9; Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 14, 1980, 9; Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 15, 1980, 9; Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 16, 1980, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Carl Ward, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 23, 1980, 7; Antonia Rivera, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 23, 1980, 7.

<sup>34</sup> Duane Alphs, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 27, 1980, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, July 8, 1980, 9.



moral choice.<sup>36</sup> Another argued that murder involved a violation of basic human rights, but homosexuality did not.<sup>37</sup> A third made the point that homosexuality was not a choice.<sup>38</sup> In 1980, anti-queer students still felt free to openly harass queer students. But the queer students were able to react with the support of an institution and straight allies. These relationships became increasingly important as some other student organizations formed around activism faded.

On all three campuses, a rise in fraternity membership coincided with the conservative climate and had direct implications for queer students. By 1984, fraternities averaged about 48 members per chapter—up from 34 in the early 1970s—and the National Interfraternity Conference reported about 250,000 fraternity members in the country. This represented an increase of over 125,000 fraternity members since 1972. Robert Marchesani Jr., the executive director of the Interfraternity Council, attributed the booming fraternity membership to a “return of conservative values.”<sup>39</sup> A *New York Times* piece from 1985 argued that on many college campuses, fraternities dominated student life because those campuses were often steeped in traditions dominated by conservative alumni “for whom fraternities stood for social privilege, sometimes rooted in privilege: a means of keeping Jews, Catholics, blacks and others out of the charmed circles.” Many of the people who most valued fraternities had fought for those barriers in the 1950s and thereafter. During those times, liberal student leaders on some

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, July 8, 1980, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “Frats: High Ideals or Hypocrisy?” *Independent Florida Alligator*, February 17, 1984, 1.

campuses “took the lead in abolishing fraternities.”<sup>40</sup> Contemporary scholarship also sees a correlation between conservatism, a certain desire to exclude, and fraternity membership. In *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus*, Peggy Sanday argues that the 1980s saw a resurgence of fraternities because of the rise of modern conservatism and its prioritizing of money and power over goals like equality of opportunity and intellectual inquiry. As women became an increasingly important part of campus life, fraternities became “the last bastion of male exclusivity and privilege on the campus.”<sup>41</sup>

Nicholas Syrett goes even further in *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities*. Fraternities were not only about excluding women, but about defining masculinity at the expense of women and gay people. Syrett argues first that men gain respect through displaying excessive traits and behaviors indicating their masculinity. His second argument is that American university culture fosters a climate in which the most respected men on campus are perceived as the most masculine. Finally, he claims that some men have had difficulty understanding or accepting the standards that defined masculinity on campus. He shows a connection between the flagrant misbehaviors fraternities are known for and their mistreatment of women and gay people as part of the proof of their own masculinity. As women and gay people gained rights, abusing them became increasingly important to proving one’s masculinity in the context of fraternities. The more overt homosexuality became in the public

---

<sup>40</sup> Fred M. Hechinger, “About Education: The Fraternities Show Signs of New Strength,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1985. <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/05/21/science/about-education-the-fraternities-show-signs-of-new-strength.html>.

<sup>41</sup> Peggy Sanday, *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 31.

sphere, the more aggressively heterosexual fraternity brothers felt they must be, and homoeroticism became the ultimate in degradation. Thus, Syrett concludes, the history of fraternities is the story of men who “have most relied upon their whiteness, their maleness, their class status, and their heterosexuality to assure their continued prestige power.” Furthermore, they grouped together to create and reinforce those categories of privilege.<sup>42</sup> Political conservatism had immediate, and often negative, effects on university campuses for people who were not straight white men. The Moral Majority, even if it did not have direct ties to university campuses, created an environment of fear about who would have to be given “a place at the table,” in the words of gay historian Bruce Bawer.<sup>43</sup> Fraternities were part of this environment of fear, and as the Bill Wade story will show, they did their best to define who was worthy of inclusion on university campuses in the 1980s.

### **Bill Wade, Homecoming Princess**

The rise of conservatism in the US intersected with queerness at FSU in 1980 in very personal ways. An openly gay FSU student named Bill Wade entered the Homecoming Princess contest under the name Billie Dahhling. Wade easily won the election and found his way onto the front page of the *Flambeau* in a story that identified him as “a 17-year-old, 250-pound male junior.” This language was strongly gendered and a comment on his masculinity—how could a *large* man win the Princess election? Would the writer have mentioned his weight if he was 150 pounds, and if so, would the

---

<sup>42</sup> Nicholas Syrett, *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 305.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce Bawer, *A Place at the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

gendered implications have been different? Conservative gender-baiting was a serious problem in the late 1970s and 1980s, as people conflated gender identity with sexual orientation, putting anyone who was not gender-conforming under suspicion.<sup>44</sup> Wade bested his opponent by over 150 votes in an election that drew a record number of students to the polls. Eight of the ten homecoming court members, including Cecil Howard, the “chief,” vowed to boycott activities if Wade attended. The Homecoming Steering Committee was concerned with the indignity the Master of Ceremonies, television star Bob Urich, would have to face if he was going to crown a male princess.

The steering committee also worried about the alumni response. If alumni attending homecoming activities were upset, they might withdraw financial and other support, according to Bob Shackleton, chair of the steering committee. Shackleton said he was concerned for Wade’s physical safety because the parade route went by fraternity and sorority houses, and “trouble could develop.” He hoped Wade would drop out and wanted to know what his intentions were, because he felt it was upsetting to alumni who would “have given the university thousands of dollars.” Wade pledged not to drop out because it would be unfair to those who elected him.<sup>45</sup> The other members of the court did not see it that way. In the meeting in which the election results were disclosed, two princess candidates left in tears when Wade said he would ride in the

---

<sup>44</sup> Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer* (New York: Alyson Books, 2004); It is worth noting that Bart Church, who also wrote sympathetic profiles of Tallahassee’s gay communities in the late 1970s, wrote the front-page article. He was not a traditional homophobe.

<sup>45</sup> Bart Church, “FSU Voters think Billie’s a Dahhling: But Will He Wear the Crown?” *Flambeau*, Friday, October 17, 1980, 1.

parade, appear at the Pow Wow, and accept his crown at the halftime show of the football game.<sup>46</sup>

But the steering committee was not only interested in Wade's safety. In a meeting reporter Bart Church attended, members discussed several plans for stopping Wade's crowning. Their plans included disqualifying the election because some polling places opened late and then appointing an "acceptable court." This plan was vetoed because the student attorney general noted that the student Supreme Court would not invalidate the election. They considered using the FSU police officers to physically restrain Wade from entering the football field, but this was not pursued because FSU police lieutenant Gordon LeMaster said it was not illegal for Wade to go onto the field and the police force would not put themselves in that position. They thought of trying to convince Wade to withdraw, but the student body president and student activities coordinator had already attempted this. Some wanted to disqualify Wade because he had not used his legal name on the ballot or because he had not maintained a 2.0 GPA—both rejected because Wade had used both his legal and assumed name on the ballot and because, according to one committee member, "My dear, he does have over a 2.0; he's brilliant." Shackleton was forced to agree to go along with Wade's crowning unless the entire homecoming court dropped out. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) agreed to represent Wade and would pursue legal action if his crowning was challenged.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> "The Princess is a Man and the Court is Bitter," *The Miami News*, October 17, 1980.

<sup>47</sup> Church, "FSU Voters Think Billie's a Dahhling."

Wade made a statement thanking his supporters and arguing that he owed his constituency “the full rights and responsibilities of the office, including, but not restricted to, participation in the homecoming festivities.” If the administration denied him full participation in the homecoming activities, “it will be discrimination against me on the basis of sex, and a denial of my rights of free expression.” Wade also said that he had “received several threats on his life and reported that a car had tried to run him down Wednesday.”<sup>48</sup> Wade ran for Homecoming Princess because he wanted to prove two points. The first was that Homecoming came down to “a popularity contest, or a beauty contest.” The second was a “personal protest” because “the people that have been elected in the past are sexist stereotypes. Look at their campaign posters—they are not portrayed as people, they are portrayed as faces, as bodies. I don’t think that’s right.”<sup>49</sup>

He made these statements to the rest of the court, dozens of students, the university administration, and reporters in a meeting room. The group had assembled, according to reporter Michael McClelland, “in order to work out a sticky problem—what do we do with a male Princess?” The other court members were reacting badly, and none of the potential winners of the “chief” race said they would be willing to escort Wade to the center of the football stadium to be crowned. The entire court except one member of the Princess’s court said they would boycott all Homecoming activities if Wade was crowned.<sup>50</sup> Entire fraternities threatened to boycott, according to Bill Keezel,

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Michael McClelland, “He Claims He Ran to Make a Point,” *Flambeau*, October 17, 1980, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

vice president of Sigma Chi, who indicated that the fraternities “don’t want him representing us.”<sup>51</sup>

The threats and harassment against Wade escalated. On one occasion, he returned to his dorm to find the words “Faggot go home” carved into his door. At another time, someone had written the words “Fag Death” on his door in shaving cream. When someone tried to run him over with a car for the second time, he moved off-campus. He was always outspoken about his right to be openly gay. His feelings about being out influenced his decision to run for Homecoming Princess. “I felt that I am representing in some way the gay community, as much as the point I was trying to make, although I am sure there are some gay people who would not agree,” he said. “It’s neat that we’re acknowledging that gay people even exist, let alone winning.”<sup>52</sup> In addition to being gay, Wade was exceptional because he was a prodigy who graduated from high school when he was 16. He declined an unconditional scholarship to Harvard and instead chose to attend FSU, where he majored in music composition. His short political career was remarkably successful as well: he spent only \$3.87 on his Homecoming campaign, and was one of only two students not fined for campaign violations.<sup>53</sup>

Wade was not the first person to bend the genders of the Homecoming Court at FSU. In 1972, a man named Ron Shark had been elected to homecoming queen. Shark’s election spurred the change of title from queen to princess and added a ballot slot for “chief.” That response constituted gender policing: if a binary is to be enforced, there has to be a binary in the first place. The gender of the queen or princess is

---

<sup>51</sup> “Greeks Plan Homecoming Boycott,” *Flambeau*, October 17, 1980, 1.

<sup>52</sup> McClelland, “He Claims He Ran to Make a Point.”

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

meaningless without chief (presumably a male role, in this context); just as the gender designation “woman” is meaningless without “man” to compare it to. One cannot exist without the other in this fictional account of gender. Shark did not actually become homecoming queen because “they nullified the election when it seemed pretty certain he would win,” according to Rick Johnson, the *Flambeau* general manager.

Furthermore, “the two previous years there were black women elected Homecoming Queen. People just got tired of the whole thing and then Ron Shark came along and just decided to make a mockery of it.”<sup>54</sup> The point of the Homecoming Princess, therefore, was not just to glorify femininity, but a particular kind of femininity: the sort embodied by a white woman. The emphasis on white on white womanhood was especially interesting considering that the FSU mascot was and remains the Seminole. The femininity in a man or a woman of color was not worthy of the title, even though the title itself referred to a woman of color. Shark’s ability to win was credited to the increased presence of radical leftists on the FSU campus, but by the time of Bill Wade’s victory, that group was no longer a factor, as the campus had become more conservative.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, a white woman had run for Homecoming Chief in 1975. Sandee Coulter won the first round but withdrew before the second round. “The reason I did it was because student government had a law that a woman could not run for chief,” Coulter later explained. “I ran to get the law overturned. After the first elections, they took the law off the books. I lost interest and withdrew before the second race.” She was

---

<sup>54</sup> Michael Moline, “Officials are Afraid Billie May Dampen Homecoming for Alumni,” *Flambeau*, October 17, 1980, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



enthusiastic about Wade's victory.<sup>56</sup> The *Flambeau* noted in an editorial that Wade had struck a nerve when he pointed out that the election judged people on their conformity to strict gender stereotypes: "The Homecoming Chief is always... ultra-macho, and the princess is very passive, very feminine," he said. Those involved in the Greek system objected, but the editorial made it clear that he must have appealed to the wider campus community because he won going away.<sup>57</sup>

The Alumni Affairs Homecoming Steering Committee continued to oppose Wade's election but the threat of a civil rights suit by the ACLU meant they opted not to refuse him his crown. Wade agreed to a compromise when members of the Homecoming Court threatened a boycott. The compromise, worked out between Wade's attorneys and university officials, meant that Wade would not ride in the parade or go onto the field for coronation at halftime. In return, FSU would acknowledge Wade as the legal winner and not crown any other princess in his place. Wade was crowned in an abbreviated ceremony at the Pow Wow concert the night before the game. Three security officers escorted him onto the field, "where he was greeted by loud boos and an occasional cheer, as well as a handful of wadded-up cups thrown from the stands." He blew a few kisses to the crowd and left the field after accepting his crown. He felt good about the results: "I feel that the premises reached have not sacrificed my ethical precepts or the voice of my constituents. I believe that although the resolutions reached are not optimal, they represent considerable strides in the eradication of sexism at

---

<sup>56</sup> "Female Chief Loves Billy," *Flambeau*, October 17, 1980, 1.

<sup>57</sup> "Students decided and Dahhling won," *Flambeau*, October 17, 1980, 4.

FSU.”<sup>58</sup> That Wade divided the student body was evident at the Homecoming game itself. The students were either pro-Greek and anti-Wade, or pro-Wade and anti-Greek, with very few in between. At the game, the students reacted strongly to an announcement that Wade had officially been crowned Homecoming Princess at the previous night’s Pow Wow. The local residents and alumni on the East side of the stadium roared their disapproval, while the students on the West side erupted into a cacophony. The Greek community tended to sit in the northwest stands, and chanted “Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit.”<sup>59</sup>

In an interview with the *Flambeau*, Wade said he did not worry about what people were reading into his statements and actions, but he did not believe the people who needed to hear his message about the sexism inherent in the process and the problems of Greek-dominated popularity contests did hear them. “Basically the university has made me out to be the culprit,” explained Wade. “While examining only the effects of my reign (loss of alumni support, violence, and embarrassment), they have failed to attack the problem at its inception.”<sup>60</sup> If he had made his point on the sexism issue, he believed, the administration and the fraternities would not have had a hard time accepting his reign as princess. He was critical of the people who had reacted badly to him: “I have seen more maturity in play school children on ‘Romper Room’ than in the simplistic and at best sophomoric attitudes of these children who still find it necessary to play games and bully the other school children because of insecurity

---

<sup>58</sup> Michael McClelland, “Compromise Keeps Billie Off the Football Field,” *Flambeau*, October 20, 1980, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Bart Church, “Wade Believes Point Missed by Most at FSU,” *Flambeau*, October 20, 1980, 1.

clonism and fear of acceptance.” He clarified that the “children” included “Alumni, administrators, faculty, student government leaders, and, of course, don’t forget the dear kind generous warm sensitive loving adorable little Greeks.”<sup>61</sup>

The *Flambeau* pointed out in an editorial that the reaction of the administration and the student body threatened democracy, because “plenty of pressure can be applied to disenfranchise students and substitute winners more in favor with the administration and the alumni.”<sup>62</sup> They also noted that pitting a 17-year-old who was already the target of threats and harassment against the high-powered university officials was a situation rife with intimidation. Furthermore, if Shackleton was right that the alumni would withdraw support and that Homecoming was “no more than a private fundraiser thrown for the benefit of the university and the entertainment of the alumni,” then they should not “involve the students by engaging them in a sham election.” Rather, Shackleton could auction off the spots in the Homecoming Court to the children of wealthy graduates. The editorial staff did not limit its irritation to the Alumni Association, noting that the other members of the court insulted their supporters because if Shackleton chose the winner, no one’s vote counted. The Marching Chiefs, who led the halftime show, also threatened to boycott and thus dishonored themselves. Bob Urich and football coach Bobby Bowden were also on their list of “villains,” along with “anyone who heard what students said and didn’t give a damn.” They regretted Wade’s lost chance for halftime crowning, and the students’ loss of Homecoming.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Church, “Wade Believes Point Missed by Most at FSU.”

<sup>62</sup> “Subverting Democracy,” *Flambeau*, October 20, 1980, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

The *Flambeau* ran a second editorial as well as a column on the topic, which noted that his “quasi-serious spoof on stereotyped sex roles” had turned into “an issue of gay pride.”<sup>64</sup> The editorial argued that it was not Wade who made this a gay issue, but the people who left homophobic messages on his dorm room door. Because Wade neither hid his sexuality nor made it an issue, “the question of sexual preference became a problem not for gays but for homophobes.” Wade’s challenge of gender norms was, even to Wade, outlandish. As the editorial pointed out, the idea of a male princess was no more bizarre than a white Seminole maiden. But talking about gender brings up identity questions, and the idea that “anyone who would challenge the sexism that lies behind the homecoming court must be queer could only come from the most narrow-minded segment of the straight community.” The editorial called up the idea of gender as well. It noted that “struggling to fit into an image of masculinity that is in fact inhuman produces a dangerous brew of feelings in those people.” They are insecure, alienated, and jealous of the freedom of those who do not fit in.<sup>65</sup> This piece pointed to the ideas and the gender of the *homophobes* as the problem, and made the case that the answer was not for them to just learn to tolerate or accept gay people, but to deconstruct ideas about heteronormativity.

Bill Wade also wrote a letter to the editor of the *Flambeau* to say that he did not regret that he ran: “I feel that it was necessary for the growth of the university into a non-sexist, non-heterosexist environment, and I feel that personal growth has resulted from the consciousness-raising that has taken place.”<sup>66</sup> He felt his causes were

---

<sup>64</sup> “The Silliness of Homophobia,” *Flambeau*, October 20, 1980, 4.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> William G. Wade, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 20, 1980, 5.

distorted beyond recognition and that others had projected their feelings on him. His intention to run to talk about superficiality, sexism, and Greek domination had turned into questions about whether the democratic process could fall prey to bureaucracy and whether ethics should be sacrificed to pragmatism. He noted that the Greek community's childish reactions were tainting his preconceptions about fraternities. He wanted to assure other people that he respected their First Amendment rights although many people were trying to deny him his, but also that he would not tolerate harassment or violence against him. Wade was a brave man who hoped to help people move "one inch closer in a vast sea of confusion, ignorance, and misunderstanding."<sup>67</sup>

That goal did not seem to be accomplished, if University Faculty Senator Tom Ellicot was any indication. The previous year, he had co-sponsored a bill to abolish the Student Government Homecoming selection committee that screened potential candidates for chief and princess, opening the ballot to all interested students. He was "really embarrassed" that his legislation, which was meant to do something principled by expanding access to the ballot, had been used in this way. He felt that even if the legislation had included a clause saying that only men could run for chief and women for princess, the problem would not be entirely avoided. "If this guy is a homosexual, he could have run for chief as announced, declared homosexual and we'd have, I assume, just as much clamor," Ellicot explained. "He could've run in drag or something."<sup>68</sup> It seems, then, that Ellicot saw Wade's homosexuality as a gender transgression—or, at

---

<sup>67</sup> Wade, letter to the editor.

<sup>68</sup> Curt Fields, "Sponsors now regret opening Homecoming race to Dahhling," *Flambeau*, October 21, 1980, 3.

least, containing the potential for gender transgression. Whether he ran in drag or not, a homosexual homecoming chief was unacceptable.

The threats of violence against Wade were apparent in some of the letters to the editor that the *Flambeau* continued to run for days after Homecoming. A student named Chris Wells wrote a vitriolic letter full of homophobia. He reiterated several times that heterosexuals were both normal and the majority, and that they were angry. Wells thought Wade was smart to stay away from the game and the parade, and to accept his crown at the Pow Wow before most people arrived. "I am sure that out of several thousand enraged demonstrators, at least one accurate arm could have successfully pegged you in the head with a heavy bottle," Wells wrote. He closed with another explicit threat: "May you be subject to the West-Northwest stands [where fraternities sat] at the next game, if you live that long without the police protection you required last weekend!"<sup>69</sup>

Another student, Steve Black, was not so threatening but clearly disapproved because the Greek structure at the school deserved to have the Homecoming it wanted. He argued that they had the most school spirit. Black defended the forced conformity of the Greek system that allowed no room for someone like Wade: "without [conformity], we would have 4.5 billion people right and a whole world wrong."<sup>70</sup> Student Andrea Cousins was angry that the University of Florida students would laugh at FSU. In particular, she dreaded the chant: "FSU, FSU, where the girls are girls, and the boys are too."<sup>71</sup> A student named Wayne Deas wrote a guest column to oppose Wells, Black, and

---

<sup>69</sup> Chris Wells, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 23, 1980, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Steve Black, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 23, 1980, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Andrea Cousins, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, October 23, 1980, 5.

Cousins, noting that they were part of the reason Wade’s “human rights were violently abridged.” A life was “openly threatened and abused.” A resident assistant walking Wade to his room one night slipped and fell in slimy liquid meant for Wade, and a friend who drove him home from the Pow Wow found his car covered in Michelob beer stickers and sitting on flat tires. And yet it was Wade whom Wells accused of causing turmoil, not the students who carried out such violent acts.<sup>72</sup> The students who behaved with violence felt justified in doing so because they saw Wade as a transgressor of gender boundaries—one of the most unacceptable forms of deviance, in their minds. They felt they had the right to defend the traditional practices of gender in ceremonial rituals at FSU and tied their feelings to the status of the university itself.

The debate continued, while people pointed out bigotry and discussing how the students making FSU look bad were not the ones who voted for Wade and his premises, but those who wrote “Death to the Faggot” on his door and otherwise behaved violently.<sup>73</sup> Despite some reasonable people coming to Wade’s defense, by the end of the fall 1980 semester, he had decided to leave FSU and Tallahassee altogether, saying he felt the level of harassment had reached a “human breaking point.” He said he did not regret anything and that it was a great experience, but that the harassment had not gone away. He hoped people would grow and learn to appreciate each other as human beings.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Wayne Deas, “You Get What You Pay For,” *Flambeau*, October 27, 1980, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Mark Loezel, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, November 3, 1980, 6; Sue A. Thrush, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, November 3, 1980, 6; William D. Thrush, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, November 3, 1980, 6; Ollie Lee Taylor, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, November 6, 1980.

<sup>74</sup> “Bill Wade to Leave Florida State Soon,” *Flambeau*, December 8, 1980.

The abuse hurled at Bill Wade at FSU in 1980 was high-profile, but the alienation he experienced, with very few outspoken allies, was not uncommon for queer people at the time. Indeed, heteronormativity was part of the very DNA of the university. Wade, who stood up to the hegemonic ideas of gender embedded in university traditions, found himself in dangerous situations because he tore apart peoples' sacred beliefs about masculinity and femininity. Wade's opponents stood in solidarity to defend a tradition of heterosexism in the university system. Indeed, he left the university, but not until he raised important conversations about gender and privilege that FSU would have to grapple with for decades to come. This was a crucial element of visibility, and part of the struggle that queer student activists in Florida had had to contend with since Hiram Ruiz and Angela Douglas: part of the process of advocating for queer acceptance meant upsetting peoples' ideas of gender. Bill Wade may not have intended to do this at the start of his Homecoming Princess campaign, but this was his achievement. His actions were inescapably political, and so he and his supporters became political activists in their work at FSU in 1980.



CHAPTER 6  
“A PERVERSION OF THE LOWEST ORDER”:  
THE TRASK-BUSH AMENDMENT AND LEGISLATING MORALITY

Having survived Anita Bryant and marshaled the resources necessary to form coalitions, the gay and lesbian student organizations would put their new skills and communities to use in fighting a state law to ban gay groups on university campuses in Florida. The sponsors of the bipartisan amendment used Bryant’s language and the climate she created to promote their legislation, which meant to prevent universities with a gay organization from receiving state funding. As with the people who opposed Bill Wade, the supporters of Trask-Bush felt they were charged with deciding who should occupy which space on campus and under what conditions. The Trask-Bush amendment was a bipartisan effort, which underscores how politically acceptable it was in either major political party to use queer people as fodder. At UF in particular, the Trask-Bush amendment provoked a conflict between queer students and fraternities, the latter of whom made crude arguments that a queer student presence was incompatible with the values of the university. The political, religious, and social opposition to queer people further solidified queer communities and straight support, because queer students used the political capital they amassed and their increasingly insistent presence to form stronger coalitions. Coming out as a political act in the face of institutionalized anti-gay oppression became critical to the formation of these communities, which would prove invaluable in the AIDS-related crises ahead.

**How Two Legislators Made A Whole State Think About Sodomy**

Tormented FSU student Bill Wade’s hope that people would learn to appreciate each other as human beings was stalled thanks to actions in the legislature in 1981. In March of that year, State Senator Alan Trask (D-Winter Haven) introduced a bill to ban

gay organizations from Florida's public universities and community colleges. Trask felt homosexuality was "a perversion of the lowest order" and wanted to keep it away from impressionable college students. He, along with Sen. Curtis Peterson (D-Lakeland) and Sen. Tom Tobiassen (D-Pensacola), introduced the legislation because a federal district court had ordered Polk Community College to charter the gay coalition in recognition of the students' First Amendment rights. Trask allowed that gay people "don't cause any real problems when they are just living their own lives" but "when they try to push themselves on us and get recognition, that's when they run into problems."<sup>1</sup>

Several groups, including the ACLU, the Florida Gay Task Force, FSU's Gay Peer Volunteers, and the Alliance for Gay Awareness all opposed Trask's actions and noted that they were unconstitutional. The Florida state constitution prohibited the addition of substantive legislation to an appropriations bill. Dr. Lucy Kizirian, a psychologist at FSU's Mental Health Center, discussed the importance of gay organizations. "They provide gays with some status in their community, some place to look to get their questions answered," Kizirian explained. "Without them you will see an increase in mental health kinds of problems because gays will have to turn to the other less healthy institutions. They are going to hurt a lot of people if they take away their right to organize." Steve Goldstein, ACLU attorney, argued that "universities and community colleges should encourage a diversity of ideas and viewpoints, and not seek to stifle the expression of these ideas because certain individuals find these ideas offensive." That line of reasoning was not sufficient for Trask, who claimed to believe in free expression until "a stated opinion becomes a stated intention" and said that "never

---

<sup>1</sup> Bart Church, "Alan Trask's View of Homosexuality," *Flambeau*, March 13, 1981, 1.

in good conscience could I sit back and allow this type of intrusion to be forced on my community.”<sup>2</sup> Some speculated that Trask just wanted to “secure his spot on the Moral Majority gift list,” which might have been odd for a Democrat. The *Flambeau* editorial staff said the amendment was unconstitutional but were also alarmed at “the spirit of meanness with which the amendment was offered.”<sup>3</sup>

Trask had particular ire for FSU, as its Center for Peer Education (CPE)—a non-credit accruing community education group—had a catalog that included, in Trask’s words, “lewd and homosexual material.” The CPE had been created in 1970 order to provide an alternative to traditional curriculum for students who wanted to explore ideas often not included in academic studies. Trask so strongly opposed the CPE because he thought ridding the campus of these ideas would be positive for “family unity” and “family strength.” He also disliked the Week of Lesbian and Gay Awareness sponsored by the CPE, the Metropolitan Community Church (a gay church with parishes across the nation), and the FSU Women’s Center. Joseph Gilbert, a pastor at gay-oriented Metropolitan Community Church, encouraged Trask to attend some of the week’s events so he could learn and ask questions. Others in the state legislature, like Senators Pat Frank (D-Tampa) and Jack Gordon (D-Miami) worried that the amendment was substantive legislation and had no place in an appropriations bill.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, the Florida senate passed it on April 27, 1981 in a 24-12 vote. The proviso language read: “No funds... shall be used to finance any state-supported public or private postsecondary educational institution that charters or gives official recognition

---

<sup>2</sup> Church, “Alan Trask’s View of Homosexuality.”

<sup>3</sup> “Mad? Not Sen. Trask,” *Flambeau*, April 28, 1981, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Bart Church, “Senate Aims to Rid Campuses of Immoral Sex,” *Flambeau*, April 27, 1981, 1.

or knowingly gives assistance to or provides meeting facilities for any group or organization that recommends or advocates sexual relations between unmarried persons.” In his argument, Trask brandished a copy of the CPE catalog and shouted about its lewdness. Trask’s opponents raised the constitutionality of substantive amendments on an appropriations bill. The characteristics of the vote were telling, because it was too close to call in voice vote, but passed overwhelmingly in roll call.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that representatives wanted to oppose the bill when anonymous, but lacked the convictions to stand against homophobia when they were being recorded. In Florida in 1981, it was still safer for members of either party to institutionalize anti-gay policies than to publicly oppose them. Trask’s theatrics won the day as Senate President WD Childers (D-Pensacola) ruled the amendment proper.<sup>6</sup>

The student affairs personnel at each university were consistently opposed to the amendment. UF Associate Dean of Student Affairs Phyllis Meek probably remembered the 1960s Johns Committee purge of gay and lesbian faculty and students when she called the Trask Amendment “ridiculous” and asked, “What is it with this homosexual witch hunt?”<sup>7</sup> She felt that the election of President Ronald Reagan meant the country and the university went into a very conservative period, which she felt meant it was “all downhill for civil rights and women’s issues.” Meek had long been involved in women’s activism on campus, but she recognized that tactics had to change in the 1980s. She thought that sexism, racism, and homophobia were all linked on campus, and that it had “always been fair game to be homophobic.” In 1989, she would start a committee on

---

<sup>5</sup> Michael McClelland, “Nabbed by the Morals Police,” *Flambeau*, May 20, 1981, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Church, “Senate Aims to Rid Campuses of Immoral Sex.”

<sup>7</sup> Robert McClure, “Senate: Groups Advocating Pre-Marital Sex Taboo,” *Alligator*, April 27, 1981, 1.

sexism and homophobia to combat these forms of oppression on campus, but in 1981 all she could do was decry the lack of tolerance related to the selfishness she thought was promoted by the Reagan era of fiscal and social conservatism. She acknowledged that the biggest problem for gay and lesbian people was invisibility, so at least the Trask Amendment was bringing these discussions into the light.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, UFLAGS member Chip Halvorsen, who was a UF student during this time, said that the attention the amendment brought to UFLAGS “raised my awareness that there was a gay student group on campus.” Trask-Bush, then, got “at least one more person to join one of those despised gay groups.”<sup>9</sup>

USF Vice President for Student Affairs Dan Walbolt said that he did not believe the legislation would affect his institution. “Our students, as all students, have first amendment rights. As I understand the law, the US Supreme Court said we cannot discriminate against a group unless we show a clear and present danger that it disrupts the educational process,” he said. Walbolt, who was also a lawyer, said he did not believe the withholding of state funds would be constitutional.<sup>10</sup> The *Oracle* editorial staff agreed: “We doubt that the Gay Coalition disrupts the educational process of the University. Of course, there are many students who disagree with the gay lifestyle, but there are also students who disagree with a heterosexual lifestyle. One’s personal beliefs should not interfere with his or her education at a college or university.”<sup>11</sup> The

---

<sup>8</sup> Phyllis Meek, interview with Lisa Heard, Samuel Proctor Oral History Archives, Gainesville, FL, April 13, 1992.

<sup>9</sup> Halvorsen interview.

<sup>10</sup> Diane Daniel, “Proposed Bill to Penalize Sexual Promiscuity,” *Oracle*, May 20, 1981, 3.

<sup>11</sup> “Withholding Funds Unconstitutional,” *Oracle*, May 22, 1981, 4.

*Oracle* would publish more editorials in the coming months. One noted that the Trask-Bush amendment sounded “suspiciously as if it had been co-authored by Jerry Falwell of the Moral Majority” and that it was “reminiscent of the tactics of Florida’s former orange juice queen Anita Bryant as well as a number of other disturbing moralistic do-gooders hard at work here in Florida.”<sup>12</sup> At a student senate meeting, Senate President Richter expressed his disapproval of Trask’s bill, saying it collectively punished the University.<sup>13</sup>

The House joined the Senate in outlawing organizations on college campuses that recommended sexual relations between “persons not married to each other.” Rep. Tom Bush (R-Ft. Lauderdale) introduced the appropriations amendment, which passed 71-13. In doing so, according to Bart Church, he “equated gay people with thieves and rapists and said state money should not ‘promote homosexual activity on our university campus.’” Some representatives opposed to the bill noted that gay and lesbian citizens pay taxes; others objected to his attempting to pass substantive legislation in the appropriations bill. The legislators in support of it were especially outraged by the Center for Participant Education (CPE) for co-sponsoring the gay awareness week.<sup>14</sup>

Some students at FSU agreed. Student John Gant, along with state auditor Greg Marr, wrote a letter to FSU president Bernard Sliger saying that the CPE “exhibits a conspicuous bias towards immoral and authoritarian viewpoints” and expressed their concerns about its contribution “towards the moral decay and mis-education of American youth.” Marr and Gant were working to conduct an independent investigation

---

<sup>12</sup> “Lawmakers Trespass Behind Closed Doors,” *Oracle*, July 8, 1981, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Student Government Senate, May 26, 1981, USF Archive.

<sup>14</sup> Bart Church, “Bush Tacks Anti-Sex Amendment Onto House Bill,” *Flambeau*, May 12, 1981, 1.

of CPE, and planned to take the results of their investigation to the university administration, the Board of Regents, and the state legislature. Marr claimed that he was not working with Trask and Bush, but suspected he would be eventually.<sup>15</sup>

Student and faculty responses at FSU to the Trask-Bush bill were mixed. One FSU student, Bill Casey, wanted to address the issues of “recruitment” and “seduction” that Trask raised. First, he said, no gay men wanted to waste their time on straight men. Second, he objected to Trask’s idea that he was a “protector of our families.” Casey found this offensive: “How will Mr. Trask protect *my* family? How will he protect the millions and millions... of families who have gay sons and daughters? I suggest that Sen. Trask protects nothing except his venomous hatred.”<sup>16</sup> An FSU government professor, Paul Piccard, was almost in awe of Rep. Bush’s “open contempt for the Constitution,” and argued that it was “ludicrous to believe that for a group to have a meeting on campus it must meet someone else’s standards of purity.” Piccard believed that people who agreed with the bill must have had problems with their own sexuality. On the other hand, an anonymous student was pleased to rid the campus of gay people: “If the intent is for getting gay organizations off campus, then I’m all for it. I can’t stand fags.” Tigger Gray, a media communications student, said that gay people brought on their own oppression by pushing for their visibility. English professor Janet Burroway worried that the bill would have far-reaching implications that would “Make virtually every academic activity impossible.” Other students saw the bill as a clear violation of constitutional rights and argued that free exchange of information was

---

<sup>15</sup> Michael McClelland, “CPE Critics Intensify Efforts to Silence Groups,” *Flambeau*, May 12, 1981, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Bill Casey, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, May 13, 1981, 4.

crucial to a democracy, and that the legislature should stop attempting to legislate morality. Furthermore, gay students were not “out to convert or persuade people to adapt that lifestyle. They have a right to their point of view.”<sup>17</sup>

One FSU student linked Trask-Bush to the Moral Majority. Michael McClelland wondered about what the amendment meant by “advocacy,” in terms of groups advocating sex between persons not married to each other, and who would be left to define it. The slippery slope arguments that this might lead to the outlawing of teaching Shakespeare or the closing of the health center for distributing birth control, he said, were both absurd and possible. The bill was entirely unconstitutional and “would not last five minutes in any court,” but McClelland argued that “the real threat” was not “the bill itself, but the mentality behind it.” Trask, Bush, and others like them assumed “that victory in a political election somehow represents a recognition of their moral superiority, and leaves them with a duty to inflict their morals on others.” In fact, Trask and Bush were “so smugly assured of their self-appointed holy crusade that they have deliberately moved to abridge the human rights guarantees of the highest document in this nation.” The legislature in general was no comfort, either. As McClelland noted, the representatives had indulged an “act of legislative cowardice” when their voice votes did not match their roll call votes. In so doing, “our representatives have stamped their seal of approval on the most vicious attack against a human minority since the 1940s.”<sup>18</sup> Student MJ Brown argued that morality was relative and could not be legislated and that

---

<sup>17</sup> Maria Miller, “At FSU anti-gay amendment shocks some, pleases others,” *Flambeau*, May 14, 1981, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Michael McClelland, “Nabbed by the Morals Police,” *Flambeau*, May 20, 1981, 4.



using taxes to “finance the regulation of [the citizens’] personal behavior” was misappropriation because the government had nothing to do with religion.<sup>19</sup>

John Gant continued to support Trask and Bush and thought the CPE should be abolished if it would continue to sponsor Gay Awareness Week and bring “noted revolutionaries, ex-hookers, feminists and gay witches to campus.” Gant thought the CPE must have presumed there were no “anti-feminists, moralists, or conservatives among the student body.” CPE should balance his programs, he said, and students should be able to object to its offerings considering that it received student fees. He argued that the CPE was standing in the way of education because it was a form of indoctrination.<sup>20</sup> Apparently, anything other than heteronormativity was biased or suspicious.

Two students from CPE responded, outlining the broad scope of the program and also arguing that they were not under any obligation to provide “equal time” to opposing points of view—a position endorsed by the ACLU’s policy guideline on academic freedom—and that students had “ample opportunity to hear the mainstream, government-backed and/or conservative viewpoint on TV, the radio and in print media.” Further, the Student Government Executive lecture series had double the budget of the CPE and brought in traditional speakers, including “Nazi sympathizer and convicted felon G. Gordon Liddy of Watergate infamy.” That such a furor arose over “the airing of lesbian/gay and feminist viewpoints” indicated “how badly the public is in need of information on these issues.”<sup>21</sup> Education, once again, was the preferred tool of those

---

<sup>19</sup> MJ Brown, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, May 27, 1981, 5.

<sup>20</sup> John Gant, Jr. letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, May 21, 1981, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Gail Rowland and Geoffrey Smith, “University Indebted to CPE,” *Flambeau*, May 27, 1981, 4.

who wanted to see homophobia reduction at the university. Not all of the students who were involved with the CPE were gay—in fact, the sources do not reveal any gay CPE educators. Thus, the organization gave straight students the opportunity to ally themselves with the cause of queer visibility at FSU.

Governor Bob Graham, a Democrat, wanted to veto the bill, but he could not legally do so without vetoing the entire education budget.<sup>22</sup> However, he said he found the language “constitutionally suspect” and talked with advisors about challenging the provision himself. Regardless, gay rights organizers in Florida, like Florida Task Force Director Pat Land, would challenge the amendment with or without Graham’s support.<sup>23</sup> Education Commissioner Ralph Turlington—who would go on to be president of UF—joined forces with Land to oppose Trask-Bush. They each filed suit in Florida’s Second Circuit Court in June 1981. Turlington’s suit alleged that the bill was unconstitutional because the Florida constitution forbade inclusion of substantive legislation in the state budget, and called it “a threat to the entire education system.” The Task Force suit alleged that Trask and Bush “acted in concert to mislead and defraud the Legislature and citizens of Florida by introducing legislation that they knew or should have known violates the Florida Constitution.”<sup>24</sup> Turlington’s involvement did not go unchallenged, as Comptroller Gerald Lewis said Turlington should pay for his lawsuit because he had no legal standing to bring the suit in his official capacity in the first place. Lewis was a

---

<sup>22</sup> Bart Church, “Some Good and Bad News from Graham’s Office,” *Flambeau*, July 2, 1981, 1.

<sup>23</sup> “Graham May Join Gay Advocates to Challenge ‘Suspect’ Provision,” *Gainesville Sun*, June 2, 1981.

<sup>24</sup> Bart Church, “Turlington Hurls Court Action Against Bush/Trask Proviso,” *Flambeau*, July 9, 1981, 2; “Education Chief, Gays Sue on Budget Warning,” *Ocala Star-Banner*, July 7, 1981; Patty Shillington, “Gays, State Officials Challenge Anti-Gay Group Amendment,” *Alligator*, July 7, 1981, 3.

defendant in the suit because he distributed state dollars.<sup>25</sup> Turlington was clear that his lawsuit did not indicate that he supported gay people: “I stand for the practice of every Christian virtue, I do not condone homosexual behavior, and I have the courage to carry out my duties according to my beliefs,” he said to members of Gainesville’s Evangelical Coalition. He filed the suit to receive “judicial clarification” of the amendment’s wording, which was “so vague as to make it impossible to enforce the law.”<sup>26</sup>

After Gov. Graham signed Trask-Bush into law, UF administrators said they had no plans to take action against UFLAGS. If they did, UFLAGS Director Bruce McCoy said, “They will have to physically remove us. I have no intention of ceasing any action at the Reitz Union or anywhere at the university until we are forced to.” Bill Cross, Reitz Union assistant activities director, said, “As far as I’m concerned, it has never been proven that the group (UFLAGS) is in violation of the law. Until someone tells me they’re in violation, I don’t plan to do anything.”<sup>27</sup> UF Academic Affairs Vice President Robert Bryan called the law “a great mistake” and said his “layman’s understanding of the constitution” indicated that the law was unconstitutional.<sup>28</sup> The UF student senate passed a resolution in response to Trask-Bush: “The student senate of the University of Florida recognizes, respects, and advocates the right of students, faculty, staff and all citizens of the state of Florida to freely use their right of privacy... by choosing to engage in pre-marital sexual relations.” Jack Gordon, head of the Senate Appropriations

---

<sup>25</sup> “Comptroller Wants Turlington to Pay for Suit Challenging Trask-Bush Proposal,” *Flambeau*, August 6, 1981, 6; “Turlington Criticized, State Urged to End Gay Suit,” *The Palm Beach Post*, August 7, 1981.

<sup>26</sup> Nanette Holland, “Turlington says Law Suit not Meant to Favor Gays,” *Alligator*, September 18, 1981, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Robert McClure, “Gay Challenge to Follow Graham Budget Action,” *Alligator*, July 2, 1981, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “Bryan Says Sex Law ‘A Mistake,’” *Alligator*, August 28, 1981, 1.

committee, felt it was unlikely that the state legislature would defund UF. Vice President of Student Affairs Art Sandeen supported the students, saying the student senate was “free to take any stand on any political or social issue they want to. I never make a practice to use my office to restrict their freedom of expression.”<sup>29</sup>

Administrators at FSU were, at first, willing to cave to the Trask-Bush pressure and demanded that instructors of five CPE classes sign forms promising their classes did not “recommend or advocate sexual relations between persons not married to each other.” The five classes were “Lesbian and Gay Rap Group,” “Future Sex,” “Women’s Relationship Group,” “Straight, White Male!—Like Me” and “Gay Peer Volunteer Training.” Geoff Smith, CPE director, argued that signing the form was a kind of censorship “comparable to the loyalty oaths demanded during the McCarthy Era” and a violation of academic freedom. Trask was disappointed that the administration did not follow through on its intention to censor the students. Dean of Students Jim Hayes said the university chose to withdraw its request after reviewing the courses and receiving a memo from Smith stating that the instructors would not “engage in any conduct that is not permitted by statutory or local law or the Constitution.” A CPE spokesperson said that CPE would comply with the request if all other student organizations were also required to sign forms. The ACLU advised the CPE to sue the university for selective enforcement of the law if the CPE counter-request was denied.

The administration backed down. No one knew how to enforce the law without a First Amendment violation. At the time the university administration made this decision, there were at least four lawsuits challenging the amendment in the Leon County

---

<sup>29</sup> Michael McClelland, “UF Student Senate Protests Trask/Bush,” *Flambeau*, May 29, 1981, 1.

Court.<sup>30</sup> The *Flambeau* continued its assault on Trask-Bush. They argued that this was about everyone's freedom, not just that of gay people: "Unless everyone has the right to free intellectual inquiry, no one does... Unless you support everyone's right to go wherever his or her thoughts lead, you might as well end the sham and close the universities, as Trask and Bush would do."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, they believed that Trask was seeking publicity to further his political career by tapping into the New Right in Florida via "declaring a holy war against homosexuality." The amendment needed to be seen for what it was: "A shamelessly cynical and costly act meant to boost the political career of an intolerant, feeble-minded demagogue."<sup>32</sup>

Circuit Court Judge John Rudd ruled the Trask-Bush amendment constitutional in a suit brought by Turlington in September 1981. "There is a valid governmental interest in provision of a forum for unrelated speech. In the present case, the Legislature has not prohibited speech," his opinion said. "It has come to a decision that educational funds are to be used to educate students, not to provide recognition for, assistance to, or meeting facilities for groups to advocate sexual relations."<sup>33</sup> In the second suit against the amendment, brought by the Florida Task Force, an organization meant to legally support gay and lesbian people, Rudd ruled that individual legislators could not be held liable for activities as lawmakers. The suit alleged that Trask and Bush had acted unconstitutionally in adding substantive legislation to an appropriations bill. Rudd

---

<sup>30</sup> Maria Miller and Bart Church, "Another Chapter Written in Trask-Bush Saga," *Flambeau*, August 31, 1981, 1.

<sup>31</sup> "Academic Freedom?" *Flambeau*, September 14, 1981, 4.

<sup>32</sup> "Seeking Publicity," *Flambeau*, September 14, 1981, 4.

<sup>33</sup> "Trask-Bush Clears First Legal Hurdle," *Flambeau*, September 21, 1981, 1.

disagreed: “This would mean every senator and representative would have to get a judicial or legal opinion on the constitutionality of a law before he could propose it.”

Rudd dismissed Trask, Bush, and Attorney General Jim Smith as defendants. In doing so, he failed to rule on the constitutionality of the amendment itself.

Florida Task Force lawyer Anthony Lavoti insisted the court take up that part of the suit, against Secretary of State George Firestone, at a later date. That lawsuit would be virtually identical to the one brought by Turlington. After the hearing, Lavoti charged that Rudd had dealt Florida’s judicial system a significant blow. “This doesn’t give Florida’s citizens the opportunity to redress their elected officials through the judicial process if their actions are seen as unconstitutional,” he noted. Further, he argued that Trask and Bush had “made a concerted effort to defraud the people and other legislators, by proposing what was an unconstitutional amendment without giving the opportunity for citizen input.” Lavoti believed that a campus organization should test the law by disobeying it, which was underway at USF: The Student Senate passed a resolution that “recognized, respected, and advocated sex between unmarried persons.” USF officials had threatened to cut off the student activities funds administered by the senate, which would likely lead to a suit by the senate and a legal test of Trask-Bush.<sup>34</sup>

The USF Student Body president, Ken Richter, went one step further and helped organize a student group called Sigma Epsilon Chi (SEX), formed for the purpose of advocating premarital sex. They asked the university to recognize the new organization. USF Vice President for Student Affairs Daniel Walbolt said that it was possible that USF

---

<sup>34</sup> Perry Chang, “Trask-Bush Opponents Dealt Another Setback,” *Flambeau*, September 23, 1981, 1; “Gay Group’s Suit Suffers Setback in Fight to Overturn Trask-Bush,” *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, September 25, 1981.

would disown the Senate. “If our lawyers determine that they have violated the law,” he said, “we may have to decide we cannot give them space, funding, or any form of assistance.” However, the gay organization on campus could continue to operate, as Walbolt said the university had looked at their constitution and decided they did not violate the law. He noted that it was “kind of ironic that the kind of group the law was trying to get stays on campus, while the Senate is the one to challenge it.”<sup>35</sup> The USF Student Senate passed a resolution on September 24, 1981, reading:

Whereas: The proviso language for the (1981/82 Florida State Budget) involves a section that would allow no group advocating or recommending sexual relations between unmarried persons to exist on any state University, And —

Whereas: This is a clear violation of the Rights of Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Association, and Freedom of Assembly as set forth in the US Constitution, And —

Whereas: We feel this language is a Travesty upon the rights of personal choice and privacy,

Let it hereby be resolved; that we the Student Senate of the University of South Florida support the rights of consenting adults to engage in sexual relations if they so desire.

Let it further be resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Florida Legislature, the Governor and the State Attorney General’s Office.

Submitted by Kevin Brown<sup>36</sup>

The editors of the *Oracle* approved: “Student Government is finally living up to its name and responsibilities.” The passive student government with followers instead of leaders, they hoped, was a thing of the past, because this action was quite bold. There was more at stake than space University Center, including “\$70 million and the

---

<sup>35</sup> Perry Chang, “Judge Rudd’s Hospitalization Could Affect Trask-Bush Cases,” *Flambeau*, September 28, 1981, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Student Senate Draft Resolution, 1981 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

immediate future of USF, should the senate decide to withhold university funds.” The Student Government (SG) had decided to push the law to its limit.<sup>37</sup> Student Jack Klein thought this move would secure the Student Government’s legacy.<sup>38</sup> John C. Lucio also felt that SG was not quite on the right track, and that it should focus on “more important” issues, like parking, textbook prices, and crowded dorms.<sup>39</sup> The students who thought the SG was wasting time and resources did not value the Gay Coalition or consider how it might be fundamentally important to the health of the campus community. Gay people and their rights to safety and visibility were less important than the prices of textbooks or the library hours.

Others were supportive. Frank J. Frey argued that Trask-Bush was something everyone should be afraid of, not just gay people, because its implications for restricting freedom would affect everyone.<sup>40</sup> Mike Copeland thought the SG was heroic in its “confuse the enemy” tactic.<sup>41</sup> Shaune Einbinder felt the SG members had taken a heroic stand for the first amendment and deserved admiration.<sup>42</sup> Frey wrote about this issue again, arguing that if the law was meant to only benefit “Calvinists,” then only those people should pay taxes: “The state of Florida could feel safe in taking these folks’ hard-earned dollars knowing that it would not be tainted by sin and corruption.” And since

---

<sup>37</sup> “Student Government Lives Up to its Name,” *Oracle*, September 25, 1981, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Jack Klein, “Student Senate Protest Too Little, Too Late,” *Oracle*, September 25, 1981, 4.

<sup>39</sup> John C. Lucio, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, September 28, 1981, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Frank J. Frey III, “Caveman Laws Regulate Sex,” *Oracle*, September 29, 1981, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Mike Copeland, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, September 29, 1981, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Shaune Einbinder, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, September 30, 1981, 4.



churches and the Moral Majority were promoting laws like Trask-Bush, perhaps they should pay taxes.<sup>43</sup>

Turlington appealed the Trask-Bush ruling in October 1981. His attorneys charged that the amendment was “an unconstitutional restraint upon academic freedom and free speech” and was “an attempt by the legislature to prohibit the advocacy of unpopular ideas.” The appeal also noted that the amendment could affect hundreds of millions of dollars in public funds and placed every college under constant threat of a lawsuit by an individual who might feel his or her rights were abridged by the amendment. Finally, the appeal charged that “strict enforcement of the amendment could result in the cancellation of state financial aid to students, thereby denying them their right to an education.”<sup>44</sup> The State Supreme Court agreed to hear the Turlington suit. Furthermore, a federal judge in Tampa ruled that Comptroller Gerald Lewis could not enforce the amendment by withholding funds to USF until the State Supreme Court had ruled on the amendment’s constitutionality.

Walbolt said USF officials were sympathetic to the student organizations and did not want to violate its “historic relationship” with student government.<sup>45</sup> USF joined Turlington’s case, although UF and FSU opted not to. USF had to file a brief because of the students’ direct protest of Trask-Bush. FSU General Counsel Gerald Jaski said FSU did not file an *amicus curae* (friend of the court) brief because “The people already involved are extremely competent, and the position they have taken are adequately framed to represent any legal concerns we have.” He was concerned that FSU officials

---

<sup>43</sup> Frank J. Frey III, “If the State doesn’t Give Money, It Shouldn’t Take It,” *Oracle*, October 1, 1981, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Michael McClelland, “Turlington Appeals Trask-Bush Ruling,” *Flambeau*, October 2, 1981, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Perry Chang, “Federal Judge: Trask-Bush is Unconstitutional,” *Flambeau*, October 9, 1981, 1.

might slow down the resolution of the issue if they were to join the suit. UF Information Director Hugh Cunningham indicated that UF officials had no plans to add their names to the suit, but did not disclose why to *Flambeau* reporter Perry Chang.<sup>46</sup>

FSU student Perry Chang wrote an analysis of the Trask-Bush debacle, in which he predicted that it would near an end on November 2, when the State Supreme Court considered its constitutionality. The amendment had cost the state a great deal of money and seemed pretty clearly unconstitutional. Why, then, did Trask and Bush propose it? Chang proposed the motivation was clear: “What better way might there be to tie into the country’s political swing to the right than to sound the call for a holy crusade against homosexuals and other immoral groups?” Trask was on his way toward campaigning for secretary of state, so he needed to be in the news. But in proposing this ill-considered law, he was also draining “thousands of dollars from the state treasury unnecessarily” and contributing to “the spread of prejudice and moral hysteria and the general disregard for civil and constitutional rights already gripping the country.” Chang argued that even if the amendment was ruled unconstitutional, it would still have a negative effect on Florida.

That said, Chang believed the people of Florida would support the amendment. “While the presence of sanctioned homosexual groups on state university campuses probably disgusts most people in Florida,” Chang noted, “even those who are more tolerant would often object to their tax dollars going to support such groups.” Chang proposed two possible explanations for why Floridians and Americans could “harbor fear and hatred of nonconforming groups like homosexuals.” First, he thought it could

---

<sup>46</sup> Perry Chang, “USF Joins the Fight, FSU, UF Opt Out of Trask-Bush Lawsuit,” *Flambeau*, October 13, 1981, 1.

be a distraction of the financial elite to “keep the rest of the populace from attacking their economic and political position,” so instead they would “senselessly attack each other.” The Trask-Bush affair gave the elite several alternative conflicts, including evoking the urban-rural battle and the generation gap. Second, he said, “those who rule this country have also sought to maintain their control by drowning their subjects in hatred, prejudice, and religious moralism.” This labeling of gay people as the enemy meant that the poor people would focus on attacking them instead of on changing their economic system.<sup>47</sup>

In the Supreme Court hearing, Turlington’s attorney argued that it was an attempt to censor thought, and that the amendment “imposes the morality of the temporary majority on the minority... But sometimes the minority is right. If you give people enough time to think about something, they might change their minds.” Assistant Attorney General Mitchell Franks argued that it was not a prior restraint of freedom of speech because “before state universities and scholarships are funded, the Legislature can put reasonable restrictions on the appropriations.” Franks had to take extreme positions on two issues. First, he reiterated his narrowing construction of the amendment. “Based on existing constitutional law,” he argued, “in enforcing the amendment, state officials would have to analyze whether activities would be likely to cause individuals to promptly engage in fornication, adultery, homosexual sex or other illegal sexual acts.” Turlington’s lawyers countered that this interpretation would be substantially altering the intent of the amendment: “If the court did what was suggested by Mr. Franks, they would be acting as a legislature, modifying the law as they saw fit in order to make it

---

<sup>47</sup> Perry Chang, “Trask-Bush Amendment: Whose Interest is Served?” *Flambeau*, October 30, 1981.

constitutional.” Second, Franks argued that the amendment’s provisions superseded the Legislature’s constitutional requirement to maintain the state’s university system. Tom Julin, an attorney well known in the state for his career tackling issues of free speech, argued that there was more than free speech at issue, because the bill implicated “the future of colleges and universities in Florida” as “the Florida constitution specifically states that the Legislature must make adequate provisions for a system of higher education.” Furthermore, “This amendment threatens to eliminate the institutions of higher education prescribed by law, and is in clear contravention with the constitution.”<sup>48</sup>

The Supreme Court hearing elicited additional debate on the university campuses. Several USF students thought that Trask and Bush were on the right track, although their laws should not have been necessary because the state should not have been paying for “sex clubs” to begin with.<sup>49</sup> FSU student Thomas Sallee argued that homosexuality was an aberration rather than a right. He urged the “sickos” to “get under the rocks where you belong!”<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, Ellen Friedman and Maureen Dauby both opposed the amendment. Dauby called the amendment “childish and inappropriate.”<sup>51</sup> Kenneth J. Mylott wrote a satirical letter to the editor about Christianity. “Jesus said we must love one another and be merciful. We Christians interpret this to mean we must do everything in our power to drive homosexuals to suicide,” he reminded his readers. “With the Trask Amendment, we have an opportunity to do our

---

<sup>48</sup> Perry Chang, “State Supreme Court Hears Trask-Bush Case,” November 3, 1981, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Letters to the editor, *Oracle*, October 27, 1981, 4-5.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Sallee, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, December 3, 1981, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Ellen Friedman, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, December 9, 1981, 4; Maureen Daby, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, December 10, 1981, 4.

Christian duty to make life miserable for them.”<sup>52</sup> An anonymous student argued in response to Sallee that people needed to consider how hard it was for gay people to come out of the closet and find some compassion, and that it was time “for a lot of straight people to come out from under *their* rocks so they can see some very beautiful people out there.”<sup>53</sup>

In the midst of all of this, Tom Bush made two television appearances, both alongside USF students. The first was a local Tallahassee news program on which Bush and USF Student Senator Kevin Brown appeared together. Bush did not mince words on the program, as he disclosed that the law was aimed at gay people but was broadly worded so the courts would have trouble striking it down, expressed his disappointment that challengers to the amendment were not the people at whom the law was aimed, and called homosexuality “a perverted lifestyle.” Of the USF lawsuit, he said, “Universities owe their loyalty not to gays but to the hand that feeds them.” People called in to say that they did not want their tax dollars to go to a group they found unacceptable. USF student Kevin Brown argued that the majority of the population should not be able to silence the minority and that the issue was about free speech.

Bush appeared on television again as a guest on the nationally broadcast *Phil Donahue Show*, along with Turlington, the USF Gay-Lesbian Coalition founder John Grannan, and USF Student Government President Doug Currier. On this television appearance, Bush said, in reference to whether gay people could convert straight people, “If you lie down with dogs long enough, you’ll rise up with fleas.”<sup>54</sup> As a result of

---

<sup>52</sup> Kenneth J. Mylott, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, April 8, 1982, 6.

<sup>53</sup> Letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, December 14, 1981, 5.

<sup>54</sup> Martha Smith, “Sex Law Opponents on Donahue Show,” *Oracle*, November 24, 1981, 2.

this, Halvorsen recalls that Bruce McCoy and other UF students led a campaign to decorate flea collars and mail them to Bush's office.<sup>55</sup> The television appearance was positive for Currier and Grannan, as the audience booed Trask and asked questions that blew holes in his logic.<sup>56</sup>

The *Oracle* responded to Bush's fleas comment in an editorial: "While the audience was divided on the issue, it was undoubtedly Bush's closing statement about sleeping with dogs that best spoke against the law, and we would like to thank Bush for doing that great disservice to his own cause." The editorial called for legislators to "step back and look at the danger they have created" with the law that was "a severe constitutional threat."<sup>57</sup> One discerning student, Peter Mouton, wrote to the *Oracle* to note that Bush was appalling on *Donahue*, and tied Bush's mission to Joseph McCarthy and Anita Bryant. Mouton noted that McCarthy, Nixon, and Bryant had all become irrelevant by 1981 because of their extreme positions, and Bush would soon find himself in obscurity also.<sup>58</sup>

As many people expected, the State Supreme Court unanimously ruled Trask-Bush unconstitutional in February of 1982. The court called the amendment an unconstitutional abridgement of free speech and also noted that it was unconstitutional because it was "logrolling"—substantive legislation placed unconstitutionally in an appropriations measure. Bush and Trask said they would appeal the ruling. Bush criticized the Supreme Court justices on the free speech issue, calling them

---

<sup>55</sup> Halvorsen interview.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, "Sex Law Opponents on Donahue Show."

<sup>57</sup> "Trask-Bush Law Goes to the Dogs," *Oracle*, December 3, 1981, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Peter R. Mouton, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, December 11, 1981, 4.

“bureaucrats who are appointed for life and don’t have to answer to the people.” Trask said he did not take issue with the logrolling charge, and had prepared a version of the bill to introduce to the Senate on its own.

Nonetheless, the court did not accept the argument that the state could withdraw financial support of the expression of “immoral” views, stating that “students and teachers may not be required to shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”<sup>59</sup> Further, “while a state might choose not to establish any state-supported institutions of higher learning, it may not make the privilege of attending contingent upon the surrender of constitutional rights.” This angered Tom Bush, who said, “I cannot fathom how the First Amendment can be perverted into an allowance for gay organizations, or to require the expenditures of taxpayer dollars to promote their activities.” Justice Joe Boyd seemed to lecture state lawmakers in his ruling opinion. “The history of the interpretation of the First Amendment shows a steady movement toward protecting the free speech rights of persons of all political and moral views,” he said. Furthermore, “The right of persons to express themselves freely is not limited to statements of views that are acceptable to the majority of people. The real purpose of the First Amendment is to protect also the expression of sentiments that the majority finds unacceptable or even unthinkable.”<sup>60</sup> The Florida Task Force argued that Trask and Bush should be held civilly liable for violating their oaths of office, given that they introduced legislation all seven justices of the State Supreme Court felt was unconstitutional. Florida Task Force executive director

---

<sup>59</sup> Perry Chang, “Supreme Court Rules Trask-Bush Unconstitutional,” *Flambeau*, February 5, 1982, 1.

<sup>60</sup> Ron Cunningham, “Court Rules Against Anti-Gay Amendment,” *Ocala Star-Banner*, February 5, 1982.

Ronnie Sanlo said that Trask and Bush—but particularly the latter after compared homosexuality to fleas on national television—had “publicly declared war on the gay and lesbian community of Florida,” and they were “ready to meet the challenge.” She believed that all Florida citizens should have been outraged, “because he’s spending their money to do what is basically queer-baiting.”<sup>61</sup>

FSU students involved with the CPE were happy to hear of the Supreme Court’s decision. Vice President for Student Affairs Bob Leach said the decision was “in the best interest of higher education.” USF Student Body President Ken Richter was also relieved: “I think this took the wind out of the sails of the proponents of the ‘moral majority’ type legislators.”<sup>62</sup> USF officials felt relief and gratitude, according to Walbolt, who was happy to be out of a complicated legal situation and pleased that his students had won a victory in seeing the rights of minorities affirmed by the court.<sup>63</sup> However, quite a few interviewed by the *Oracle* maintained that citizens should not be paying for a gay group on campus.<sup>64</sup> The *Oracle* editorial on the matter noted that “the welcome news elicited a sigh of relief from university officials but only a general nod of indifference from many university students” and wondered what students’ reactions would have been had the court decision gone the other way.<sup>65</sup>

Student Kurt Moser felt good about the ruling as an act of justice and about the whole ordeal as a rallying point for gay activists. He thought that when people looked

---

<sup>61</sup> Perry Chang, “Florida Task Force Wants Trask and Bush to Pay,” *Flambeau*, February 8, 1982, 2.

<sup>62</sup> John Holecek, “Students Welcome News of Trask-Bush Demise,” *Flambeau*, February 5, 1982, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Perry Chang, “Florida Task Force Wants Trask and Bush to Pay,” *Flambeau*, February 8, 1982, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Bob Port, “Students Pleased by Court Decision,” *Oracle*, February 5, 1982, 1.

<sup>65</sup> “Justice Reigns Supreme... This Time,” *Oracle*, February 9, 1982, 2.



back on “this wasteful diversion,” one may find that like Anita Bryant, Bush and Trask, “in this spineless attempt to proliferate homophobia,” achieved the contrary effect, “that of unifying an effective opposition to such attempts at injecting homophobia into our democratic legislative process.” Furthermore, like Bryant, they “increased the ‘straight’ population’s awareness of the gay community and of the gay community’s dedicated commitment to the defense and preservation of its basic human rights, rights which, by the way, shall never be subject to denial depending on one’s emotional makeup or sexual orientation.”<sup>66</sup> Joseph Vigliatura noted that the outrage over taxpayers supporting the gay groups missed the point that gay people were also taxpayers.<sup>67</sup>

The Trask-Bush episode marked a dangerous time for queer visibility on university campuses in Florida, but it also provided students another point around which to rally. These challenges to their legitimacy were damaging in that they contributed to students’ feelings of alienation and isolation and created space for hostility to thrive. However, in fighting for their place on campus, they had to make their presence known. Although the future would not be easy, students at UF, FSU, and USF benefited from Trask-Bush in some ways. They had an opportunity to argue for their presence and to garner support from straight students. And their triumph over the state legislature was a significant moral victory that would help bolster students in the struggles ahead.

### **UFLAGS Loses an Office and a Fraternity Loses its Pants**

The University of Florida chose this moment after the resolution of Trask-Bush to remove the UFLAGS from its office in the Student Union because it “did not serve the

---

<sup>66</sup> Kurt C. Moser, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, February 9, 1982, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Vigliatura, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, February 9, 1982, 5.

general campus community.”<sup>68</sup> Reitz Union offices were reassigned each year, and space was hotly contested. The perceived lack of representation served as the Union Board of Managers’ justification for revoking the office space, according to Board member Betsy Howard. She went on to explain that, although other small groups were able to retain office space, UFLAGS had a relatively small membership and did not perform enough public services.<sup>69</sup> This decision would bring about more clashes between gay people and fraternities on the UF campus. Halvorsen believed that Trask-Bush made it safer for fraternities to show hostility to queer students on campus, as one fraternity in particular would do at UF.<sup>70</sup> Sigma Epsilon Phi in particular made a demonstrative case that, in the words of student Craig Lowe (who would go on to be mayor of Gainesville from 2010-2013), “a gay male or a lesbian or a transgender person is not someone who is able to contribute as much to society as others, and is also not entitled to the same range of things that people take for granted in everyday life, such as having a job or going to school.”<sup>71</sup> The fraternities at all three campuses, but especially at UF, were opposed to queer organizing. In the case of UF, this opposition could be extraordinarily violent. As discussed in Chapter 4, fraternities were and often remain bastions of gender essentialism and hegemonic masculinity, so their opposition to queer people is no surprise.

---

<sup>68</sup> “Gainesville Gays May be Kicked off Campus,” *Flambeau*, February 10, 1981, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Lisa Backman and Broward Liston, “Gay Advocacy Group to Support UFLAGS’s Fight for Union Office,” *Alligator*, February 10, 1982, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Halvorsen interview.

<sup>71</sup> Lowe interview.

After the UF administration decided to banish UFLAGS, just as the group had survived the Trask-Bush assault, The Florida Task Force said in a press release that the group served the general campus community as well as the Black Student Union or the Inter-fraternity Council. The university student policy committee had indicated that it would change its policy manual “to say that sexual orientation will be primary criteria to exclude a group from using free space on campus.”<sup>72</sup> Ronni Sanlo issued a statement on behalf of the Florida Task Force reading, “We will support (UFLAGS) in their efforts to retain their office space. We will no longer tolerate discrimination in Florida.” UFLAGS filed an appeal with Vice President for Student Affairs Art Sandeen.<sup>73</sup>

The *Alligator* editorial staff found this threatened eviction repugnant. They noted that “disciples of Trask and Bush remain here at UF” and their mission was “to stamp out and expunge the lesbians, homosexuals, and other so-called deviants who are dangerously spouting off campus-wide.” The editorial argued that the first step toward “picking up where Bush and Trask left off” was to “deprive local gays of a place to organize.” They criticized Reitz Union Board chair Janet Davis for “mumbling something about UFLAGS not contributing to the university as a whole” because “UFLAGS was a social organization.” Indeed, they pointed out that the Board of Managers had recently discussed barring organizations from the Union on the basis of sexual preference, although Davis claimed that it was never a factor in the UFLAGS expulsion. Whether she herself was behind the ouster is unclear, but she did not publicly argue with the

---

<sup>72</sup> “Gainesville Gays May be Kicked off Campus,” *Flambeau*, February 10, 1981, 2; “Group to Fight Ouster by UF,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, March 9, 1982; “Gay Group Asked to Leave UF Offices,” *Oracle*, February 9, 1982.

<sup>73</sup> Lisa Backman and Broward Liston, “Gay Advocacy Group to Support UFLAGS’s Fight of Union Office,” *Alligator*, February 10, 1982, 1.

Board's decision. The editorial listed a group of organizations that held office space, like the Black Student Union (BSU), the National Organization of Women (NOW), and "an assorted crop of honor societies." However, UFLAGS's contributions were "trivial" and provided "no real service to the university," according to Davis and her colleagues. They never invited McCoy to justify the use of the office; he did not learn of the group's decision until he saw a space list posted in the Union. The editorial staff hoped Sandeen would "look past the petty concerns of the Board of Managers and realize that the question here is not space. The issue is whether UF officials will recognize and allow on campus a group based on values they may not share."<sup>74</sup>

The Board reaffirmed its decision to take away the UFLAGS office space after a meeting called by Sandeen to discuss the matter. The group then had to appeal directly to Sandeen, who said he was unlikely to substitute his judgment for that of the Board. McCoy said that if the appeal failed, the group would probably sue. He noted that this was the first time in five years that the Board had overruled the Space Committee (who had voted unanimously to approve the UFLAGS office space). He claimed the Board was homophobic and did not want UFLAGS to be associated with UF. At the February 3 board meeting, member Raymond Rummell, an engineering professor, said that UFLAGS did not bring "pride" to the university. Board member Tricia Royal said she did not believe the group was representative of the student body and that it was "setting itself apart from the rest of campus."<sup>75</sup> This argument did not consider that in asking for office space, UFLAGS was trying to be *more* part of campus.

---

<sup>74</sup> "Back in the Closet?" *Alligator*, February 11, 1982, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Broward Liston, "Union Again Nixes UFLAGS Office," *Alligator*, February 18, 1982, 9.

Sandeen agreed with the decision to deny UFLAGS office space, citing the reason that the organization did not serve a broad enough range of the UF community. McCoy said he planned to appeal to Sandeen's boss, Executive Vice President John Nattress. Five years before, the Black Student Union had gone through the same issue, and Nattress had granted their appeal after Sandeen denied it. Sandeen said he found "nothing wrong with the way the Board handled the UFLAGS decision." Space Committee member Thomas Bowman wrote that board members discussed a criterion change that would exclude organizations on the basis of sexual preference, which may have contributed to the board's decision.<sup>76</sup> Nattress said that if the group appealed to him, he would just send them up to the Board of Regents. McCoy pointed out that UFLAGS served about 3,000 students (despite having only 40 dues-paying members, because students feared reprisals from being found out) and that the group sponsored the annual Gay Awareness Week, set up regular softball and football games, weekly business and social meetings where gay students could meet outside of a bar setting, and a gay counseling service. All of this was to no avail with Nattress, however.<sup>77</sup>

UFLAGS was critically important to its members. Chip Halvorsen went to his first UFLAGS meeting on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, in 1981. He had known he was attracted to men since he was 14 or 15 years old, but as he said, "I figured when I was 21, I was old enough to identify myself any way I wanted to." He had "kind of read up and studied everything methodically along the way." He knew what UFLAGS was and where it met because it advertised in the *Alligator* and had fliers posted on campus. He made his

---

<sup>76</sup> Lisa Backman, "Sandeen Affirms Decision to Deny UFLAGS Office," *Alligator*, March 8, 1982, 1.

<sup>77</sup> Janet Braunstein, "UFLAGS to Appeal Office Loss; UF Official Say He Won't Budge," *Alligator*, March 9, 1982, 2.

introduction to the group slowly. For a few meetings before he “actually stepped in the room,” he “walked through the hallway and kind of peeked and kind of checked out what was going on and what the people looked like, and what they were, stuff like that. Just for a second.” After he started attending meetings, he noticed other people would do the same thing. This was sometimes alarming to meeting members, because “we never knew if there were people curious who might have been in the coming out process or if it was somebody on the other end of the political spectrum who wanted to see what we were doing.” Halvorsen said that his goals for UFLAGS were to learn more about himself and make social connections with other gay people: “The first thing on my mind wasn’t dating or anything like that... it was mainly to find out what was going on.”<sup>78</sup>

Halvorsen described UFLAGS as vital to his development because it provided a safe space and camaraderie. The group had flag football games and everyone would play in a field by Lake Alice “and the guys who wanted to be cheerleaders would be cheerleaders... And it felt like real camaraderie. It was a mixed group and anyway, there were moments like the moments you see in movies, where people are shoulder to shoulder singing, ‘We Are Family.’” These social meetings were important because “the feeling of being supported and being able to socialize with people who were like you.” Reflecting back, he says, “They kind of got me off to a healthy start. And if they hadn’t been there, I don’t know what direction my life would have gone, if I would have gotten married and felt like I was living a lie after awhile— married to a heterosexual partner. There’s no telling. I’m so glad they were there, and I’m so glad I’ve had the life I’ve had

---

<sup>78</sup> Halvorsen interview.

and the experiences I've had."<sup>79</sup> This is the kind of activism that Halvorsen and others might not have seen as such at the time. They created affirming and safe spaces for people who might not have had that otherwise.

Paul McDonough recalls that the focus of UFLAGS when he was there was mostly education and outreach: "First, just keeping an active gay and lesbian group in the University of Florida so that people had some kind of resource to go to when they came to UF. Where do I go if I want to go out at night, you know, who do I talk to if I need help with the roommate situation, things like that." He also thought these social aspects were important. McDonough also spoke about "a second aspect which was doing panels for classes, human sexuality classes at the time, and whoever else requested them could call up the office and say, 'Can you have a class come and tell this about their experiences being gay in Gainesville' or, you know, whatever." The core group when he was there was about six women and four men, with several other people who showed up regularly, though there were more men than women. However, according to McDonough, "There was a very big core group of lesbians who were in there and doing things all the time. A lot of them graduated and some of them stayed in Gainesville, and any activism in Gainesville, quite frankly, was due to some of these women." He could not remember any people of color coming to UFLAGS, probably in part because of the student population at UF but also because of the societal factors in communities of color that would have made participation in UFLAGS difficult. Perhaps UFLAGS had not done the work of making itself an environment for people of color, so they had no reason to expect that people of color would join. Eventually he moved on

---

<sup>79</sup> Halvorsen interview.

and worked more with the campus chapter of NOW (of which he was vice president for awhile) and anti-apartheid groups. He did learn important skills from UFLAGS, like how to organize things better and “how to do simple things like chairing a meeting and not have it go to hell in about five minutes. It taught me a lot about saying things very bluntly. It helped me with that, yes, absolutely.”<sup>80</sup> Halvorsen and McDonough both underscored the importance of UFLAGS to their lives, both in the immediate sense and in the long term. A campus without UFLAGS would have been an unsafe place for them and they would not have experienced the close ties of friendship that they needed.

Bruce McCoy wanted to defend UFLAGS because he understood how important it was to his friends and his own experience as a UF student. He wrote a letter to Barbara Newell, Chancellor of Education for the state of Florida. He described UFLAGS’s proven record of service to the university community. The group had set up a counseling program with the counseling center; sponsored Gay Awareness weeks every year; provided a central place for dissemination of gay-related news, events and literature for all UF students and faculty; hosted panel and discussion workshops on homosexuality for dormitory staff, UF classes and other requesting groups, in addition to other activities. He argued that the group was “a positive service group at the University of Florida and we are having our meager office space cut because of personal prejudice on the part of the Board of Managers.” Further, there was plenty of space and no group was slated to take over the UFLAGS space. UFLAGS did not have an “open and fair hearing.” He wrote about how Board members said that UFLAGS did not bring pride to

---

<sup>80</sup> McDonough interview.



the university or contribute anything positive to the community, as shown in the minutes.<sup>81</sup>

One fraternity on campus demonstrated its alliance with the idea of eliminating UFLAGS on campus. On March 19, 1982, the *Alligator* published a photograph for which the chapter was charged with “action unbecoming a fraternity.” In the photo, several Sigma Epsilon Phi fraternity brothers held a large sign that said “U FAGS Have no Reitz! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!” Six of the brothers had dropped their pants and were mooning the camera. They posed for this photo in response to the UFLAGS eviction. UF Assistant Student Affairs Dean Tom Dougan and UF Student Conduct Officer Mike Rollo hoped the fraternity would discipline the students, in which case the student affairs office would stay out of it. If the issue did end up in Rollo’s hands, the students could be expelled and the fraternity as a whole could be disciplined on the grounds that the group violated UF codes involving intimidating or harassing students or groups and took action that could cause personal harm. In this case, personal harm was to individuals who were “psychologically offended” by the photo, according to Rollo.<sup>82</sup> UF officials did file a complaint against the fraternity, who had come before the IFC Judicial Council at least twice, once for anti-Semitic actions against a Jewish fraternity in 1978, and when a student was injured in a drinking game. The national office of the fraternity would not revoke the charter,<sup>83</sup> but it decided to remove the members of the chapter who were

---

<sup>81</sup> Bruce DK McCoy, Letter to Barbara Newell, March 15, 1982. Marston Files, Special Collections, University of Florida, Gainesville.

<sup>82</sup> Diana McElroy, “Stirred by ‘Offensive Picture,’ UF calls for Investigation by Frat,” *Alligator*, March 22, 1982, 10.

<sup>83</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “UF Plans to File Complaint for Frat Pictures,” *Alligator*, March 25, 1982, 1.

pictured in the photograph.<sup>84</sup> This fraternity's actions were consistent with the tradition of excluding and harassing queer people and other out-groups as a way of defending their status as heterosexual masculine men.

Paul McDonough not only remembers the episode, but he dated someone in the photograph: "He was a member of the fraternity and he was trying desperately not to let anybody know so he participated in this, and a few years after it happened, we met, and we dated until he told me that, and I really just had trouble after I stopped laughing, taking him seriously, so." McDonough recalls that the fraternities at UF were hostile not only to UFLAGS but also to NOW and lots of other groups. Furthermore, "It was just naked hostility at that point, and there was a lot of it. But I said, it wasn't just gays and lesbians, it was feminists, it was anybody else who was different."<sup>85</sup> Halvorsen argues that all fraternities had at least a couple of gay members, including someone he dated and with whom he shared an apartment. However, the guy broke up with Halvorsen "because he wanted to get into this fraternity his straight friend was kind of setting him up to pledge and everything, so he couldn't be living with a gay guy if he was going to be getting in a fraternity."<sup>86</sup> Fraternities made no secret of their anti-gay hostilities. The investment in "masculinity" precluded the participation of gay men in many peoples' minds—never mind that masculinity can be expressed in many ways and that one's gender expression and sexuality are not necessarily linked.

The UF students had mostly negative reactions to Sig Ep, if the letters to the editor are a reliable bellwether. One student called them "frighteningly bigoted" and

---

<sup>84</sup> Dana McElroy, "National Sig Ep Official: 'Members will be Removed,'" *Alligator*, March 31, 1982, 3.

<sup>85</sup> McDonough interview.

<sup>86</sup> Halvorsen interview.

called for gay and lesbian people to “be allowed to walk in equality with heterosexuals.”<sup>87</sup> Another noted that the Sig Ep brothers must have been insecure in their own sexual identity, and linked the UFLAGS eviction to “the wave of oppression in the name of morality and patriotism that is sweeping this country.”<sup>88</sup> While some students thought the *Alligator* should apologize for publishing something so offensive,<sup>89</sup> others believed the newspaper should be applauded for exposing “the bigotry and repression that exists on the UF campus.” This “shocking portrayal” would “send an effective message to people who believe in justice and yet are unaware of gross violations of it around them.” Furthermore, the university’s denial of office space to UFLAGS “served as a catalyst to such a vulgar display of bigotry” because the Sig Ep participants “acted on the premise that the university supported their actions.” UFLAGS was clearly trying to counter intolerance through education and information, but the university had not acknowledged that it was intolerance that kept UFLAGS below “requirements” for office space.<sup>90</sup>

Some community members experienced outrage as well. M.K. Erickson, a radio journalist, wrote in to express his fury as “a Republican whose taxes go toward supporting your institution of higher learning.” He was shocked that the administration failed to show “the courage and leadership demanded of academicians in a changing society” and instead “chose the easy path of turning your backs on your responsibilities to minorities.” This lack of courage “established precepts which, in the minds of the

---

<sup>87</sup> Greg von Moring, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, March 23, 1982, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Jill D. Menadier, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, March 23, 1982, 4.

<sup>89</sup> Lora Downs, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, March 26, 1982, 9.

<sup>90</sup> Ramiro Cruz and Alejandro Alvarez, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, March 26, 1982, 9.

students portrayed in the published photograph, condone bigotry.” The administration’s “gutless actions generated the situation” and the students “merely followed the examples set for them.” The university had not lived up to its function of teaching “universal compassion and human understanding.” UF must believe the opposite, as it “have made objects of hatred out of the weak and friendless.” Erickson was “ashamed of [the university’s] behavior and how it will be interpreted abroad.”<sup>91</sup>

University President Robert Q. Marston missed the point, and responded that the university had “sternly disciplined” the members of the fraternity who posed for the picture.<sup>92</sup> Erickson’s letter, however, had not been about a lack of punishment after the fact. Rather, he spoke of a climate that created the situation in the first place, one for which Marston was in large part responsible. Daniel H. Menzay, Jr. wrote to Marston also, about how he could not believe that “at an institution of higher learning, such prejudice, narrow-mindedness, lack of awareness and short-sightedness can occur.” That this could occur said “something quite negative about your institution.” Menzay identified himself as a homosexual in his letter.<sup>93</sup> Marston responded that most of the university community found “the picture, the sign, and what it implied were disgraceful and obscene.”<sup>94</sup> Still, he did not understand his role in the creation of an environment in which this kind of behavior could thrive.

---

<sup>91</sup> M.K. Erickson, letter to President and Chancellor, University of Florida, May 27, 1982. President Marston Files, Special Collections, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

<sup>92</sup> Robert Q. Marston, letter to MK Erickson, June 15, 1982. President Marston Files, Special Collections, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

<sup>93</sup> Daniel H. Menzay, letter to President Marston, University of Florida, April 28, 1982, President Marston Files, Special Collections, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Q. Marston, letter to Daniel H. Menzay, May 18, 1982, President Marston Files, Special Collections, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

UFLAGS was forced out of its office on March 23, 1982. The UFLAGS members had exhausted all of their appeal options and looked to the Florida Task Force for help. McCoy felt certain the Task Force would find evidence of discrimination. Jean Chance, a journalism professor and board member, said, “There is no question the majority of the board had the intent to deny UFLAGS space.” Tom Bowman, board member and math professor, said “inappropriate comments” concerning homosexuality were made during the meeting and felt the board made a mistake in its handling of the issue.<sup>95</sup>

Students would also make inappropriate comments regarding homosexuality. Between the office space debacle and the Sig Ep horror show, as well as the Gay Blue Jeans day and Pride Awareness Week, some students got tired of hearing about gay people. Curt O’Rourke, Mike Mullholland, and Harry Rozelle wrote a letter to the *Alligator* calling for everyone to stop talking about the issue because the *Alligator* and UFLAGS had embarrassed UF quite enough: “Let’s face it, UFLAGS, the majority of us have become more conservative and no longer want to put up with this. Hell, we’ve elected Ronald Reagan as our president.” They felt “supporters of gay civil rights” should “please wear your pink tights and white dresses and end this bullshit once and for all.”<sup>96</sup> These students linked both conservatism and specific gender performances to the justification for oppressing queer people and removing their presence from campus.

UF’s Gay Week brought some violence—bisexual freshman Cliff Schwartz’s door was axed in the middle of the night. His assailants cried, “You disgust me!” and “Faggot, I’m going to kill you!” but were not able to break in. UF Housing officials would not

---

<sup>95</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “UFLAGS Moves from Office to File Cabinet,” *Alligator*, March 24, 1982, 6.

<sup>96</sup> Curt O’Rourke, Mike Mullholland, and Harry Rozelle, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, April 1, 1982, 10.

comment on any disciplinary actions they were taking. Schwartz returned to his dorm room to find a note calling him a faggot. He said that did not bother him much, but the lack of support from other residents on his floor did: “They don’t care. Nobody does. I’m not scared anymore, just disgusted that there are people who go overboard when they drink.”<sup>97</sup> Schwartz ultimately decided to leave UF. His parents read about the incident in the *St. Petersburg Times* and decided to stop supporting him, so he needed to take time off school, go on food stamps, and work during the summer to support himself. He also decided to drop the charges because he faced too many physical threats.<sup>98</sup> The hostility expressed by students such as O’Rourke, Mulholland, and Rouzelle, as well as by the university itself, created a climate in which students felt empowered to break down a student’s door and threaten him off campus. Schwartz’s experiences were not just about him as an individual, but about the way the campus community neglected to care for its queer members and let them suffer.

In the midst of this violence and upheaval, in April 1982, UFLAGS filed a civil rights lawsuit against UF President Robert Marston and the state Board of Regents, accusing them of discrimination.<sup>99</sup> They charged Marston and the Regents with denying the rights of free speech, free association, and equal protection under the law. They also noted that it was not a matter of how many members the group had, but the principle of the equal protection. UFLAGS attorney Jere Fishback, a St. Petersburg

---

<sup>97</sup> Ian Johnson, “Student Axes Bisexual’s Door,” *Alligator*, May 14, 1981, 2.

<sup>98</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “Harassed Bisexual Leaves UF to ‘Build a Nest Egg,’” *Alligator*, June 3, 1981.

<sup>99</sup> “Gays Sue UF, Charging Bias,” *The Miami News*, April 3, 1982.

lawyer, said the UF officials chose the litigation route when they denied every attempt at an appeal.<sup>100</sup>

Halvorsen was a member of UFLAGS when it sued the university. At that point, UFLAGS shared office space with NOW, and they had people doing shifts in the office to answer phones and be there in case any students came in who needed to talk: “It was a really great place, a safe space.” They had also gotten a gay peer counseling group together, “so that if somebody came to the group who was having trouble with coming out or trouble with a roommate or something like that, there were students, people who were able to talk with them and help them through a rough time.” As soon as these programs began running smoothly, the space allocation committee decided it should not have an office, “based on us not reflecting well on the university or something like that. And when word started getting out about that, it started having a chilling effect almost immediately.” The UFLAGS meetings went from having 25 or 30 attendees to just the core 5 or 6 members. “People kind of scattered. It made people really nervous, calling attention and being afraid,” he said. “Now that we’re on the radar, there might be people who would harass you after the meeting, before or after.” He believed that Trask-Bush also empowered people who worked in the Union to be unpleasant to UFLAGS members. Before Trask-Bush, they could get thirty copies of their fliers without issue, but after, “they didn’t seem to be as eager to please as they were before, and they didn’t seem to want to deal with us.” They also were forced to condense their whole office down to a file cabinet drawer. “I can remember some tense times,” Halvorsen remembers. The group called a news conference that was at once

---

<sup>100</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “UFLAGS Files Suit Against Marston,” *Alligator*, April 5, 1982, 1.

“very exciting, getting news people to come and interview us” and also “a little bit intimidating and frightening.”<sup>101</sup>

The suit reached federal court, where Judge Lynn Highy denied their complaint because Fishback was not a member of the district of Florida federal bar.<sup>102</sup> However, before the suit could go further, the Board of Regents ordered UF administrators to reverse their decision and give the office space back to UFLAGS. The Regents’ General Counsel, Caesar Naples, said that the criteria used in allocating office space to student organizations “were not specific enough to satisfy the requirements of the state’s Administrative Procedures Act.” This act allowed individuals or groups who thought they had been treated unfairly to request a public hearing. Naples maintained that no discrimination was involved in the decision to deny UFLAGS continued use of the office, but Fishback felt sure that the Regents were not confident about winning the hearing. McCoy expressed satisfaction: “They should realize that we’re not going to be kicked around anymore. Gay people have rights too—that’s R-e-i-t-z as well as r-i-g-h-t-s.”<sup>103</sup>

The queer students’ visibility was critical to their political agency during the Trask-Bush debacle. Just as had happened when Anita stormed through, they used the Trask-Bush Amendment to further their agenda of visibility and education. Trask and Bush, like Bryant, seemed affronted by the very idea of queer visibility. The CPE courses were only “lewd” because they were related to queer people. The state legislature concurred that queer visibility was not important, or even that it was

---

<sup>101</sup> Halvorsen interview.

<sup>102</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “UFLAGS Suit Continues Despite Setback,” *Alligator*, April 16, 1982, 2.

<sup>103</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “Regents Restore UFLAGS’ Reitz,” *Alligator*, May 11, 1982, 1.



undesirable. It was encouraging that Student Affairs personnel tended to support students' constitutional rights, even if they never specifically discussed the importance of queer students to the university. An alarming number of students agreed that gay people should be legislated into invisibility. However, the actions of the student government at USF in particular demonstrated the importance of the previous decade's efforts for queer inclusion. Because queer students had shown themselves to be part of the student body, other students realized the need and opportunity to come to their defense.

The campus groups survived the assault for the most part, although UFLAGS saw its attendance markedly diminish. The UF administration's decision to revoke the UFLAGS office space in the wake of Trask-Bush was disheartening. That action did, however, give its members a chance to publicly defend UFLAGS and its importance to the university. The students demonstrated that their abilities to organize politically could defeat those who would use institutional measures to silence them and remove them from campus. Their willingness to take courageous stands for their rights in the face of their universities and the state government was empowering for students whom few straight people with influence were willing to stand. The perversion of the Trask-Bush amendment and the UFLAGS removal crumbled in the face of queer student activism.

CHAPTER 7  
DEATH AND DISEASE, RESILIENCE AND COMMUNITY:  
THE COMPLEXITIES OF QUEER LIFE IN FLORIDA IN THE MID-1980S

Resilience marked queer struggles; endurance characterized queer lives.

— John Howard  
*Men Like That*

The mid-1980s were a time of crisis for queer communities in Tallahassee, Tampa, and especially, Gainesville. They were also devastating years for queer people nationwide, as AIDS swept the nation, leaving millions of people dead and gay men in particular stigmatized as disease carriers. In Gainesville, two gay men, both one-time University of Florida (UF) faculty members, were murdered. The gay and lesbian student groups on each campus were struggling to support people during these times because their universities were refusing to fund them. At UF especially, the student senate hoped to move gay people back into invisibility. However, by this time, gay and lesbian people were part of their university communities and were a source of strength for their universities, whether the administrations recognized this or not. They had spent over a decade working to establish themselves on campus, and with the AIDS crisis, they educated themselves and their campus communities about the realities of the disease and worked to separate myth from fact. Were it not for queer student activism in a time of the rise of a right-wing political conservatism in an increasingly powerful Republican Party, the communities in each town may have lost more members to AIDS than they did, and the ongoing AIDS support groups would surely not have been established.

## Howard Appledorf and the Price of Silence

Dr. Howard Appledorf was a food sciences professor at the University of Florida in the early 1980s. He had been at UF since 1969. He was known around the country as the “fast food professor” because he claimed that a burger, French fries, and a milkshake was not an unbalanced meal. He appeared on talk shows like *Dinah Shore* and in publications like *Good Housekeeping*, and Burger King sponsored his appearances around the country. In this way, he generated light controversy but was otherwise well-liked by his colleagues and students. He lived what appeared to be an ordinary academic life until September 1982, when he was tortured and murdered in his home. Appledorf was not openly gay in Gainesville, but it did not take long for investigators to hypothesize that there may have been “gay involvement” in the murder.<sup>1</sup> The three killers, all men, had tried to cash a check of his that they had forged, and when Appledorf brought charges against them, they threatened to out him, so he dropped the charges. They said they forged the check in the first place because he owed them money for sexual services.<sup>2</sup> The murder was grisly, and Gainesville Police Captain Richard Ward compared it to the horror film *The Shining*.<sup>3</sup>

Appledorf’s car was found in New York City, leading investigations there.<sup>4</sup> Police suspected three men of his murder, and New York City detective John McConville said he found them leaving a “rough” gay bar called The Haymaker in Manhattan. All three had previous arrests for male prostitution and one was described as a “known

---

<sup>1</sup> Michelle Fowler, “Three Sought in Appledorf Slaying: Gruesome Murder Prompts Nationwide Search,” *Alligator*, September 7, 1982, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Broward Liston, “The Murder of Florida’s Fast-Food Professor,” *Alligator*, April 19, 1983, 1.

<sup>3</sup> “Grisly Murder Prompted By Revenge,” *Gainesville Sun*, September 6, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> “UF Professor’s Car Found in New York After Chase,” *Gainesville Sun*, September 7, 1982.

transvestite.”<sup>5</sup> The three suspects were caught with the help of New York’s gay community—patrons of a bar overheard them talking about killing a professor in Florida.<sup>6</sup>

After Appledorf’s death, his colleagues spoke to the *Alligator* and described him as “a super guy with a heart of gold” and as someone good at cracking jokes. Students said they took his class because of him more than the subject matter; they viewed Appledorf as a great teacher. His neighbors, however, tended not to want to talk about him, and some slammed the door in the reporters’ faces. One woman noted that she heard boys, but never girls, showing up at his house at all hours.<sup>7</sup> It seems that the circumstances of Appledorf’s death brought his mother some shame, as she declined to have him buried in a traditional Jewish cemetery.<sup>8</sup> In the days before his memorial service at the Hillel House just off campus, his body was cremated and his ashes would be scattered over the lake next to his condominium.<sup>9</sup>

Friends of Appledorf’s said that he was not gay and that the press saying so was part of a smear campaign.<sup>10</sup> Student Gary Blandina had a different perspective, saying it made no difference whether Appledorf was gay and that the public was too interested in getting the “dirt” on people. Appledorf, he argued, should be remembered as someone

---

<sup>5</sup> Michael Szymanski, “Three Charged in Murder to be Flown Here Today,” *Alligator*, September 9, 1982; “Florida Gets Suspects in Food Expert’s Murder,” *Star-News*, September 10, 1982.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Szymanski, “Suspects Arrive; Appear in Court at 9,” *Alligator*, September 10, 1982, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Donna Wares, “Death of ‘Great Teacher’ Shocks Acquaintances,” *Alligator*, September 7, 1981, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Szymanski, “Three Charged in Murder to be Flown Here Today,” *Alligator*, September 9, 1982; “Florida Gets Suspects in Food Expert’s Murder,” *Star-News*, September 10, 1982.

<sup>9</sup> “Memorial Service Held for Appledorf,” *Gainesville Sun*, September 11, 1982.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Szymanski, “Suspects Arrive; Appear in Court at 9,” *Alligator*, September 10, 1982, 1.

who made a positive contribution to society.<sup>11</sup> However, WKGR sportscaster Bob D'Alessio, who had known Appledorf for years, said, "Doc was no faggot. He was an honest man." Another friend said that because the suspects were gay, that Appledorf was "guilty by association." A former student, John Custer, thought it did make a difference: "Is he a faggot? We all hate faggots."<sup>12</sup> Student Teresa Agrillo found all of this horrifying, arguing that people were blaming the victim in making it seem as though his homosexuality was responsible for his murder.<sup>13</sup> For whatever it was worth, the items the police collected in his house included several "homosexually oriented publications" and other objects that led investigators to conclude that he probably was gay, and that his sexual orientation was part of the reason he was murdered.<sup>14</sup>

Appledorf's murder points to one of the crises in the straight community as well. The desire to frame his murder as something that happened to him because he was gay is a classic "blame the victim" strategy that people use to assure themselves that they will not meet a grisly end or a home invasion or whatever specter they fear. On the other hand, those who insist he was not gay were worried not only for the integrity of his memory, but perhaps also for their own self-image: they did not want to appear to be friends with a gay man. In many ways, it does not matter if Appledorf was gay or not. And as it turns out, what the Gainesville community stood to learn from Appledorf was, in the words of historian John Howard, that "men like that were *not* always easy to see."

---

<sup>11</sup> Gary Blandina, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, September 16, 1982, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Szymanski, "Appledorf's Death Brings Anger, Pain, and Some Hard Questions," *Alligator*, September 16, 1982, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Teresa Agrillo, letter to the editor, September 20, 1982, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Phil Kuntz and Michael Szymanski, "Evidence Ordered Held in Appledorf Murder Case," *Alligator*, October 15, 1982, 3.

They included “subtle, sometimes illegible differences of various types, reflected in the ambiguity of the phrase itself... All too frequently, men like that appeared decidedly normative in their habits and life choices.”<sup>15</sup> The assumption that people like Appledorf were straight until proven otherwise was a component of heteronormativity, and Appledorf suffered from this assumption, because his “friends” who insisted that he was “no faggot” were not doing him any favors if their affection for him was predicated on his straightness. And if they had been accepting of his identity as a gay man, perhaps he would not have had to live in such secrecy.

In July 1983, two of the three suspects were found guilty of first-degree murder and one was re-indicted.<sup>16</sup> The third was a minor and pleaded guilty to robbery, burglary, and grand theft in exchange for the state attorney dropping the first-degree murder charge. Several witnesses said the minor—who was assigned male at birth but who appeared to be genderqueer or trans because they wore women’s clothing and self-described as feminine—had not participated in the murder.<sup>17</sup> Had Appledorf not been so terrified of their outing him as gay, they would have remained in jail after they forged the check, and not been free to murder him. Appledorf must have feared for his job, his home, his safety, his family—perhaps all of these—should the knowledge about his identity come to light. Even before the AIDS crisis hit his community, being out did not feel safe for him, but his own visibility could have saved his life.

---

<sup>15</sup> John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 186.

<sup>16</sup> Tom Butler, “Two Appledorf Suspects Guilty,” *Alligator*, July 21, 1983, 1. Tom Butler, “Third Appledorf Suspect is Re-Indicted,” *Alligator*, July 26, 1983, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Cory Jo Lancaster, “Appledorf Case Ends with a Bargain,” *Alligator*, October 13, 1983, 1.

As John Howard argues, the lengthy and prominent news accounts of notorious crimes and trials like these “produced and reproduced insidious notions of homosexuality in the American imagination.” Gay men were among the elite but led shadowy double lives, so the imaginings went, and engaged in risky behaviors for which they ultimately paid the price when they encountered a “younger, fully debased, homicidal queer underclass.” Thus, before AIDS, many people perceived being queer as deadly.<sup>18</sup> The way queer people were treated on each of the three campuses before AIDS hit the public radar showed that in the increasingly right-wing political climate of the mid-1980s, gay people did not need to have a terrible disease to be scorned. But having become accustomed to the struggle, they would not cease their work for space and visibility.

### **The Perpetual Fight for Space**

Gay people on the UF campus faced blatant discrimination in 1983. In many ways, the group would continue to fight for space—in newspapers, on campus, in churches, and in the community. USF also dealt with religious discrimination against queer people, which led to wider conversations about the effects of homophobia. At both institutions, queer students engaged in significant fights for space. These struggles were not new, and the students had gained the self-confidence to insist on better treatment. They also looked to the university administration for support—something that Julius Johnson had tried in 1970 to no avail. Although they did not always get it, their indignation came with the knowledge that they deserved to be fully part of the campus communities.

---

<sup>18</sup> Howard, *Men Like That*, 229.

In 1983, The *Collegiate Dispatch*, an on-campus newspaper at UF, declined to offer free classifieds to UFLAGS for their roommate referral service, even though they provided this service to other non-profit groups. Managing Editor Tim Cavanaugh said his newspaper would not “print any advertisements promoting homosexual lifestyles.” M. Thompson, the UFLAGS coordinator, asked UF to discontinue the distribution of the *Collegiate Dispatch* on campus in the face of such blatant discrimination.<sup>19</sup> This request was not heeded, and the publication felt no ill effects from its decision. This light skirmish was but a warm-up round for the struggles to come.

In a game with which UFLAGS had grown familiar, the student government placed a temporary restraining order preventing UFLAGS from receiving \$833 of student funds. The ban was put in place upon request by Brian Ballard, a business administration student who felt the money had been allocated improperly. The money was intended to fund the 1983 Gay Awareness Week.<sup>20</sup> The struggle continued well into the summer. UFLAGS wrote a letter to the editor estimating that 2,400 gay and lesbian students were enrolled for 12 credits in the fall and spring, and that \$4 per credit hour was available for student activities. This meant that lesbian and gay students contributed \$230,400 to student activities. Even considering that, hypothetically, these gay and lesbian students only considered their sexuality to represent 10 percent of their interests, that was still \$23,040 that these students would like to see available for activities related to queerness each year. UFLAGS, however, received less than \$600 for operating expenses and had to rely on special requests for student activities. These

---

<sup>19</sup> M. Thompson, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, February 2, 1983, 7.

<sup>20</sup> “SG Court Lifts Ban on Bucks for Gay Awareness Week,” *Alligator*, March 16, 1983.



requests were always wrapped up in infighting and bureaucracy. UFLAGS members felt the group was being treated like a political football. For instance, the group's request for a speaker fee was not even placed on the student council's agenda. None of the campus leaders were willing to take a stand on gay-related issues, even though gay and lesbian students had organized in the last student government election.<sup>21</sup> Some students felt the student government should not spend money on UFLAGS that could be used better elsewhere or that it was unjustified for one reason or another.<sup>22</sup>

UFLAGS was important to the UF community. For instance, they offered a roommate referral service to help gay people find gay roommates, and to help gay and straight roommates get along better.<sup>23</sup> UFLAGS made sure that someone on campus was considering the needs of gay students, which most other groups did not in planning their events and activities.<sup>24</sup> Student senator Fred Morales, however, took the approach that UFLAGS did not have the fundamental right to funding, and that the UF community could not support a group that "promoted faggotry."<sup>25</sup> This sort of "destructive prejudice" was why student Phillip Cobb thought UFLAGS desperately needed to exist and receive UF funding.<sup>26</sup> As if to prove his point, two people wrote to the editor to say that letters like Morales's were why they would never come out of the closet.<sup>27</sup> However, the student senate refused to give UFLAGS money to bring in a speaker at its October

---

<sup>21</sup> UFLAGS, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, July 5, 1983, 6.

<sup>22</sup> "Should the Student Government Fund UFLAGS?" *Alligator*, September 23, 1983, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Susanne Tara, "Roommate Service Reduces Housing Hassles for Gays," September 20, 1983, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Joanna M. Weinberger, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, September 23, 1983, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Fred Morales, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, September 23, 1983, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Phillip Cobb, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, September 29, 1983, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Letters to the editor, *Alligator*, September 29, 1983, 7.

1983 meeting. In the meeting, Morales called UFLAGS a “chicken-shit organization” and said that anyone who voted for funding it would be “committing political delinquency.”

Several UFLAGS members left the meeting in distress about the open display of prejudice they had seen. The senators approved several requests from other groups; for instance, one fraternity received \$28,705 for a weeklong celebration. The Honor Court got a very expensive new typewriter.<sup>28</sup> An *Alligator* editorial expressed disapproval of the Senate’s actions, calling their reasons for refusing to fund the UFLAGS speaker unconvincing. The Senate said it had given UFLAGS too much money already and that their constituents would “rail against such deviant misuse of SG funds.” However, given that the senate voted for some other very expensive activities for other organizations, the *Alligator* proposed that it could have found \$500 to meet UFLAGS’s modest request. That they did not, in the opinion of the *Alligator* editorial staff, was discrimination, and UF students needed to stand up to the narrow-minded senators.<sup>29</sup> The senators were issuing a direct challenge to the rights of gay and lesbian students to be visible on campus, and to the legitimacy of their identities.

While fighting for the right of UFLAGS to stay on campus, many of its members—along with other campus activists—took their struggle to the national level. More than 250,000 people gathered on August 27, 1983, in a march on Washington for jobs, peace, and freedom. The march included civil rights activists, women’s organizations, and lesbian and gay groups. These coalitions found solidarity in their status as oppressed people and in their fight for fair representation. Several Gainesville-area

---

<sup>28</sup> Joshua L. Weinstein, “Senators Refuse Money for UFLAGS,” *Alligator*, October 27, 1983, 2.

<sup>29</sup> “Homophobia,” *Alligator*, November 1, 1983, 6.

groups were represented at the march. Gus Kein, a UFLAGS member, thought that other groups glossed over the oppression of gay and lesbian people and that the march was counter-productive. Sharon Britton, the legislative coordinator for the Gainesville area NOW chapter, said her group was vocally in support of the march's ideals but that the march had to support the group's goals and not sideline women. Both Kein and Britton were concerned that straight men would take over the event and leave women and queer people to the side, as had long been a problem in various struggles for rights in the US. Britton was happy to see a strong coalition between black freedom, women, and labor, but even she did not mention the value of bringing queer groups into the mix. UFLAGS member Ken Key said that the black freedom movement and the women's movements showed them how to "make people pay attention" and that they were "taking pointers from the tactics that they have tried," but that they were not riding on their achievements—an accusation often leveled against gay and lesbian groups by other coalitions of oppressed people.<sup>30</sup> It was clear that in their evolution as political actors advocating for their own visibility, queer university students in Florida were seeking the strategies of other, larger movements, and learning from them.

A Jacksonville psychiatrist also made an attempt to widen queer presence and visibility at UF. Dr. Robert B. Ragland offered a \$500 scholarship to the UF College of Medicine for a gay male medical student. He said the scholarship would benefit others more than the scholarship recipient, because it would encourage people to come out. Each gay man who came out made it easier for the next to do so. Ragland wanted the scholarship to start a conversation. He specified that the money was to go to a man

---

<sup>30</sup> Ava Parker, "Marchers Fight for 'Fair' Representation," *Gainesville Sun*, September 2, 1983, 14A.

because lesbians were “more acceptable in society”—a highly disputable and destructive point, as dividing gay men and lesbians has never worked well for the political and social equality movements of LGBTQ people. UFLAGS president Joanna Weinberger liked the scholarship but disagreed that it should only be available to gay men, and personally urged Ragland to offer it to lesbians, too. UF President Robert Marston was also a physician—in fact, he and Ragland had both attended Virginia Medical College.<sup>31</sup> In Ragland’s letter to Marston, he wrote about how gay doctors would be able to relate to gay patients in a way straight physicians could not. This would help everyone in society regardless of gender or orientation, he argued, because coerced secrecy was destructive to everyone.<sup>32</sup>

The UF College of Medicine Dean William Deal rejected the scholarship after UF Attorney Judith Waldman declared it illegal because of sex bias. State Equal Opportunity Programs Assistant Director Peter DeHaan said the decision was not within his purview because it was not covered under race, creed, color, or religious persuasion.<sup>33</sup> Sexual orientation and gender identity were not part of Florida’s non-discrimination laws in the 1980s.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Marston did reject the scholarship, urging Ragland to consider other ways to support the College of Medicine. Marston suggested that perhaps Ragland give the money to gay counseling groups, but Ragland insisted that gay people did not need counseling because there was nothing wrong with them. It

---

<sup>31</sup> Joshua L. Weinstein, “Doctor Offers Gay Scholarship,” *Alligator*, August 23, 1983, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Dr. Robert E. Ragland, Letter to President Marston, as printed in *The Alligator*, August 24, 1983, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Joshua L. Weinstein, “Sex Bias May Kill Gay Scholarship,” *Alligator*, August 25, 1983, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Sexual orientation and gender identity are not part of Florida’s non-discrimination laws in the 2010s, either.

was the secrecy that was the problem—Ragland thought that Howard Appledorf might still be alive if he had not had to hide his homosexuality to keep his job at UF.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, his scholarship was rejected, and with it, the idea of the importance of gay doctors.

Also under scrutiny was the value of having religious organizations specifically for gay people. A student named John Williams expressed his concern that the St. Augustine Catholic Student Center sponsored a group called Dignity, an organization for gay Catholics and other Christians. He did not believe that it was possible to be both Catholic and gay. He was fine with gay people being out, but not with them being in church.<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Key explained that Dignity was crucial because of the history of oppression within the church, which was sometimes expressed as open hostility. Dignity, then, was meant to be a “corrective force.” It allowed gay people to be open and benefit from the church.<sup>37</sup> The pastor of St. Augustine Catholic Student Center and the chaplain for the Dignity group also wrote to the *Alligator*, saying that God created gay people, and that it was not Catholic and gay that did not go together, but “Christian and disdain.”<sup>38</sup> Gay students at UF continued to push for their right to be present in spaces that traditionally excluded them in the face of overt hostility.

The Moral Majority and Religious Right were still going strong nationwide in 1983. Fundamentalist Christians were forming their own fraternities on public university campuses across the country, and the Campus Crusade for Christ was beginning to

---

<sup>35</sup> Joshua L. Weinstein, “Marston Rejects Gay Scholarship,” *Alligator*, September 7, 1983, 1.

<sup>36</sup> John Williams, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, November 13, 1983, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Kenneth J. Key, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, November 23, 1983, 7.

<sup>38</sup> John D. Gillespie, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, November 23, 1983, 7.

attract student members.<sup>39</sup> Some FSU students were concerned about issues brought about by the increased fundamentalism on campus, like the compromise of intellectual freedom.<sup>40</sup> Michael McClelland, the managing editor of the *Flambeau*, conducted an interview with Jerry Falwell in which Falwell railed against Marxism and called for a return to “traditional morality.”<sup>41</sup> While in Tallahassee in March 1983, Falwell also gave a lecture to the Capital City Tiger Bay Club and drew his biggest laugh from the crowd when he condemned homosexuality: “There are no diverse family forms. God gave us the example when he put Adam and Eve here. It wasn’t Adam and Steve, it was Adam and Eve.”<sup>42</sup> At the national level, the religious climate continued to be one opposed to queer people.

USF had its share of religious disdain for gay people. In March 1983, a student named Doug Conwell complained that the *Oracle* did not carry enough announcements promoting Christian activities, but that there was a Bible study “in support of homosexual Christians.” He called homosexuality “a sin of excessive hatred and disgust to God.”<sup>43</sup> Mike Copeland, a student who had been an active voice for queer people at USF for a year or two by this point, wrote a letter to the editor to invite Conwell to attend a meeting about gay and lesbian people and religion. He called for a more humane and compassionate reaction to the problems confronting gay men and lesbians.<sup>44</sup> Conwell

---

<sup>39</sup> Rasa Gustaitis, “Fundamentalist Christianity Goes to College,” *Flambeau*, January 27, 1983, 1.

<sup>40</sup> David Vassar, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, February 2, 1983, 4; Laura Ganus, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, February 24, 1983, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Michael McClelland, “Messiah of the New Right,” *Flambeau*, March 14, 1983, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Michael McClelland, “Falwell: America Needs Spiritual Revival,” *Flambeau*, March 14, 1983, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Doug Conwell, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, March 2, 1983, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Mike Copeland, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, March 3, 1983, 9.

wrote again to clarify that he meant to suggest that if only queer people prayed, they could be changed.<sup>45</sup> Conwell tapped in to the larger national climate that related sexual orientation to religious and moral values and added to a discourse that served to further marginalize queer people.

At USF in 1983, three ministers gave a joint lecture to talk about how religion and homosexuality could be in accord. The Rev. Ray DeHainaut said that people interpreted the Bible too literally, and did not take context into account. Because not all facts about sexual orientation were in the Bible, people should not make “absolutistic assumptions because truth is always evolving.” Rev. Mike Young of the Unitarian Universalist Church said that American culture felt “uptight about unleashing the passion of human existence.” Americans were too fearful when someone did something out of the ordinary. The Rev. Larry Whitshell of the Metropolitan Community Church said people needed to remember that the two moral imperatives in the Bible were to love God and love thy neighbor, and that there was nothing in homosexuality that contradicted those two statements.<sup>46</sup> Whitshell also addressed Conwell directly in a letter to the editor in which he criticized Conwell for calling acceptance of homosexuality a “doctrinal error.” He noted that there were many churches and many doctrines, and that hatred for any group was not part of the Christian idea of love.<sup>47</sup>

All of this led *Oracle* reporter Terrence Tomlin to look further into homophobia and its causes. In his column, he called it a social disease—the same words that would

---

<sup>45</sup> Doug Conwell, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, March 16, 1983, 8.

<sup>46</sup> Tania Chang, “Three Ministers Say Religion and Homosexuality Can be in Accord,” *Oracle*, March 18, 1983, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Rev. Larry D. Whitshell, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, March 18, 1983, 8.

come to be used about AIDS later in the decade. Sociology professor Carolyn Ellis said that “homophobics” were more likely to be status conscious and authoritarian and less accepting of others. They may even have been “sexually inflexible and more nervous and undecided about their own sexuality.” Ellis believed that many people were too quick to decide that something outside their traditional categories was wrong. Homophobia might not affect straight people much, but for gay people, the effects ranged from job discrimination to beatings.<sup>48</sup> This column landed the deficit squarely on homophobic people and did not blame queer people for their oppression at all, nor did it hand-hold straight people. The *Oracle* also gave editorial space to promoting the Gay-Lesbian Coalition on campus, who were there to face down homophobia and support gay and lesbian people.<sup>49</sup> The Coalition existed to dispel myths and help straight people see queer people in a positive way. The group also provided weekly meetings to help support gay people.<sup>50</sup> These discussions of queerness as positive and of gay organizations as healthy for the campus community, while seeing homophobia as problematic—entirely avoiding the “neutral” spin that some people seemed to want—were very important to the idea of the legitimacy of queer spaces at USF. These spaces would not exist without the activist work of students who may or may not have conceived of themselves as political agents, but who were doing the work to foster a less hostile campus climate nonetheless.

---

<sup>48</sup> Terrence Tomalin, “Homophobia: The Undiagnosed Disease,” *Oracle*, March 25, 1983, 1.

<sup>49</sup> “Call Them People,” *Oracle*, March 20, 1983, 12.

<sup>50</sup> Alan Kravitz, “Gay Coalition Seeks Positive Image,” *Oracle*, August 29, 1983, 15B.



## Gay Awareness and Gay Republicans

UFLAGS and FSU's Gay/Lesbian Support Services (GLSS) had different degrees of success holding Gay Awareness Week events in 1984. FSU, historically the more conservative institution with less queer visibility, had a much easier time promoting the events without repercussions. The group had the support of Dr. Lucy Kizirian, a member of the counseling services at FSU, who made an articulate case for the welfare of the gay students at the university and their need for support. She helped provide space for the students to help each other and improve the FSU campus as a whole. UFLAGS, by contrast, lacked such a visible advocate and faced overt hostility from the student senate and many other groups on campus.

Kizirian spoke to the *Flambeau* about how homophobia was still rampant at FSU and why the university needed the GLSS. She believed that gay people were constantly facing "rejection by people around them" and public ridicule—living with that took "a very strong ego." Gay people might internalize stereotypes about themselves, which was why the GLSS was important. It helped guide people through the coming out process, taught about gay issues to social work students, and fostered a social structure for gay people to meet. FSU also had a "gay rap group," which was the oldest continuing peer counseling program in the state.<sup>51</sup> The group sent a memo to the chair of each department on campus to spread the word about the services it offered. It wanted to be sure the departments knew they could request speakers for their classes, because increasing students' understanding of gay people would improve the lives of gay people

---

<sup>51</sup> Michael Moline, "Gay Awareness Week," *Flambeau*, April 6, 1984, 1.

on campus.<sup>52</sup> In this way, they continued the approach of the CPE just a couple of years before, when it drew fire from Alan Trask (D-Winter Haven) because it held classes that helped people reach a better understanding of gay people.

This is not to say that the GLSS had no difficulties getting money. The group's funding had always been erratic, and recently they had requested \$1800 and received \$67—perhaps worse than receiving no money at all. By this time the GLSS also served Florida A&M and Tallahassee Community College, and brought in its money from things like car washes and bake sales. The group struggled to keep its crisis management services running with no support from the universities it helped. Dick Burns of the National Gay Task Force said his organization contacted 67 gay campus groups, and of those, administrators recognized 64 and 56 received funding.<sup>53</sup>

FSU held another Gay Awareness Week in 1984, and used the occasion to celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the GLSS founding. The group asked people who were gay or lesbian or allies to wear lavender on Wednesday, April 11, 1984. A *Flambeau* editorial posited that this should be quite a large number of people and noted that many potential supporters of gay rights were unaware of the natural alliance between themselves and gay people, especially women and black people: “The gay movement is part of a wider struggle for liberation from the suffocating social roles imposed on everyone... by the wealthy white men who run this country politically and economically.” The laws against homosexuality and the lack of protections for gay people in Florida were overwhelming, and gay people also had to deal with “the

---

<sup>52</sup> Memo from Gay/Lesbian Support Services to Department Chairs, July 10, 1984. FSU Special Collections.

<sup>53</sup> Lee E. White, “Many Colleges Reject Gays: Groups Face Hostility Nationwide,” *Gainesville Sun*, April 18, 1984.

perpetuation of vicious stereotypes and the myth of depravity,” including the lie that gay men were child molesters. Liberation for everyone had to include supporting gay people.<sup>54</sup> This editorial met with quite a bit of negative feedback from the *Flambeau* readership, some of whom insisted that homosexuality was a sin and that gay people were “perverted, immoral, and definitely unnatural.”<sup>55</sup> These homophobic reactions once again demonstrated why the GLSS was critical to the health and well-being of the queer members of the FSU community.

While FSU students were planning their 1984 Gay Awareness Week, at the University of Florida, UFLAGS was denied its own celebration. In a 37 to 7 vote, the “giggling senators” killed the UFLAGS request for \$1,886 to sponsor their Gay Awareness Week, because the occasion did not “really represent the students”—the same justification the university had given UFLAGS for removing their office space just a couple of years before. Sen. Tom Boyer diminished the importance of queer visibility when he said the university might as well sponsor punk awareness week. The opposition grew as Sen. Mike Doss said he believed the UFLAGS request was counterproductive, and “just because there are homosexuals, that’s an illegitimate reason for funding this event.” However, some student senators disagreed. Sen. Barbara Backus reasoned that “the attitude in this room is enough reason to show a need for education on gay awareness.” Sen. Randy Gonzalez, on the other hand, said that he felt that students already knew what homosexuality was and that the event

---

<sup>54</sup> “Solidarity,” *Flambeau*, April 11, 1984, 4.

<sup>55</sup> L. Hayne, K. Bender, and M. Genigan, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, April 17, 1984, 4; Mark Griffis, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, April 17, 1984, 4.

would “only serve to further escalate tensions where there should be none.”<sup>56</sup> This argument, reduced to its essence, means that tensions between gay and straight people would go away if gay people would just disappear, when in fact it was straight people oppressing gay people that created the tension.

The *Alligator* was incensed and accused the senators of not being fair or open-minded, and noted that the senate gave itself \$20,000 for new computers and \$4,950 to clean out files—items that did not represent the students or provide a cultural experience. The *Alligator* editors felt the senators were “showing their prejudiced reptile stripes all too clearly.”<sup>57</sup> The UFLAGS members and friends planned a “non-aggressive sit-in” at the next Student Government senate meeting. The group called itself Students for Fair Funding. They argued that UFLAGS did serve the entire campus when it did things like go to classes on the requests of professors to speak about gay issues. These actions demonstrated that many people felt the campus did need more education about homosexuality, especially because the mistreatment of gay people was rooted in a lack of understanding.<sup>58</sup> The student senate decided to make room for a debate about the UFLAGS budget at its next meeting thanks to the pressure from Students for Fair Funding.<sup>59</sup> The group—about 25 students—stood outside the senate meeting. Protestors and senators screamed at each other in the ten minutes allotted for debate, and continued their argument outside the meeting.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Susan Purtie, “SG Divvies Money, UFLAGS Denied,” *Alligator*, March 22, 1984, 1.

<sup>57</sup> “Chameleons,” *Alligator*, March 22, 1984, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Susan Puritic, “Gays Protest for Fair Funding,” *Alligator*, March 26, 1984, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Susan Puritic, “Senators May Alter Agenda for UFLAGS Debate,” *Alligator*, March 27, 1984, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Susan Puritic, “Senators Carry on Despite Protests,” *Alligator*, March 28, 1984, 9.

UFLAGS director Ken Key believed that the senate was discriminating against UFLAGS because they were not being treated like any other student organization. In the meeting, he stood before the senate surrounded by a group of people wearing t-shirts that read “Fags Suck” and “Nuke the Gay Baby Whales.” The senate responded to him with loud laughs and stifled giggles. Key did not get angry—this display of homophobia, he said, was why UFLAGS needed the money for Gay Awareness Week. There were many people in the room who desperately needed a Gay Awareness Week so “they can learn a little bit about what it is they are so definitely scared of.” Key had encountered discrimination before. He grew up in New Port Richey and knew he was gay since junior high school. He kept it to himself and joined the Air Force, although it made him unhappy. While stationed in Colorado Springs, he came out to another cadet, who sent the information up the chain of command, and Key received an honorable discharge.<sup>61</sup> As with students in the early 1970s who participated in black freedom and women’s rights struggles, Key’s experiences with having been rejected for his homophobia strengthened his resolve to end this discrimination for those who would follow him. People like Key were critical to the queer rights movements on and off university campuses.

Student Crystal Senterfitt said that she also saw the way the senate treated UFLAGS as discrimination, because the university took money from gay students but gave money to activities that were often anti-gay, like Gator Growl (the Homecoming pep rally where homophobic slurs shouted over microphones were *de rigeur*). While making jokes about gay people was easy, Senterfitt encouraged her fellow students to

---

<sup>61</sup> Claudio Carlos Casademont, “UFLAGS Director Assails Gay Bias,” *Alligator*, March 29, 1984, 5.

take the harder and more courageous route of looking at gay students as peers and “see that we are promised the same rights as any student on campus.”<sup>62</sup> Dr. Art Hanson, professor in the Department of Anthropology, wrote that UFLAGS was important to education on the university campus through its speaker panel and for being a publicly recognized place for students to go with their questions about sexual identity.<sup>63</sup> One student senator claimed that the zero-funding move was not about being gay or not, it was that the proposal was written ambiguously. But the experiences Key had in the room would indicate otherwise, not to mention that several senators said they could not fund UFLAGS because of a “moral objection.”<sup>64</sup>

The difficult times for UFLAGS students on campus were not invisible to the larger community. The *Gainesville Sun* covered the funding issues and other instances of homophobia in action. Reporter Laura Patterson wrote about how Bruce McCoy dealt with harassment, beatings, and other forms of abuse when he was at UF in 1980, and noted that times had not changed much. One unnamed history professor said that some people disliked gay people because they “wasted sexual activity” such that the Christian population would not grow. However, UF Psychology Counseling Center director Jim Archer argued that the services UFLAGS offered to the campus were important for educating the public and helping everyone grow.<sup>65</sup> UFLAGS members and other gay students worked to convince the administration to intervene because they were facing

---

<sup>62</sup> Crystal Senterfitt, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, March 29, 1984, 7.

<sup>63</sup> Art Hanson, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, March 29, 1984, 7.

<sup>64</sup> Ron Lambson, “UFLAGS Request is Ambiguous,” *Alligator*, March 30, 1984, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Laura Patterson, “Gay Harassment at UF is Blamed on ‘Homophobia,’” *Gainesville Sun*, April 4, 1984.

harassment from the antics of the senate. Vice President of Student Affairs Art Sandeen said he felt the administration could not help because the student senate was not under the administration's control. UFLAGS faculty advisor Linda Wolfe said the administration could be more helpful if it chose to be.<sup>66</sup>

The *Gainesville Sun* continued to work for queer inclusion in dedicating its entire April 18, 1984 issue to covering gay rights. In a story about the denial of funds to UFLAG, reporter Stacy Parker interviewed Student Senate President Greg Ott, who said that UFLAGS should not request additional money and that they should do what other groups do when their requests are denied and go quietly into the good night. Ott also said that the senate should not support “an alternative lifestyle that totally goes against the grain of nature.” Although the previous year's senate had funded Gay Awareness Week, the 1984-85 senate was almost a complete turnover from the year before, and was a more conservative group. The previous year, Ott said, the Senate had been worried about “bad press” from denying the group its funding. Budget and Finance Committee member Betty Avgherino said that the group did things like bring speakers to campus who might talk about how Eleanor Roosevelt was gay, when instead it should bring medical authorities to talk about environmental causes of homosexuality. She also criticized the group for planning to put together Gay Awareness Week from “their point of view,” and they should instead take on a “neutral point of view.”<sup>67</sup> This absurd notion—that gay people should foster opportunities for

---

<sup>66</sup> Mark Harrison, “Group Leaders Call for Administration to Condemn ‘Sexual Harassment,’” *Gainesville Sun*, April 18, 1984.

<sup>67</sup> Stacy Parker, “University's Gay Society Fights for Student Government Funds,” *Gainesville Sun*, April 18, 1984.

people to share their homophobic opinions—is one that often seems to arise when people wish to hide their own prejudices.

In the midst of all of this, the UF College Republicans worked to oust their own president, Gus Kein, because he was gay.<sup>68</sup> He had been elected in January 1984, and in March some members asked him to resign. He refused, and they attempted to impeach him. That effort failed, and so the conservative students voted to hold elections and vote him out of office. Maria Gonzalez thought he was “detrimental to the organization.” The typical member was “more traditional” and would not “go for that” so they might not join. Further, Vice President Chuck Martinez said the group felt that his “lifestyle” was “not acceptable to this community.” Martinez also said that the College Republicans wanted to get money from the Student Government, so they needed to distance themselves from gay people. All of this opposition was in spite of the fact that Kein was doing a good job and that group membership was growing. Some members left because they found Kein offensive, but he had always been honest about his identity.<sup>69</sup>

The group did indeed vote him out of office because “Republicans support family values and his lifestyle doesn’t agree with that,” according to Gonzalez. Martinez argued that “it was not bigotry, it was the result of the feelings people have.” She did not clarify what those feelings were if they were not actually bigotry. Member George Held said he thought Kein made the group look bad, and another objected to Kein’s presence because people might call the whole group gay; they would be gay by association.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> “UF Republicans Oust Gay Campus Leader,” *Gainesville Sun*, April 9, 1984.

<sup>69</sup> Lori Rozsa, “Gay GOP Club Chief says Ouster Move is Afoot,” *Alligator*, April 3, 1984, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Lori Rozsa, “UF College Republicans Remove Gay President,” *Alligator*, April 5, 1984, 1.



The *Alligator*, as always, took strong objection to the whole ordeal. The editors wrote that McCarthyism was returning, only this time, it was gay people and not communists whom the Republicans were hunting—not realizing that in the case of the Red Scare, the homosexuals were actually the typical targets.<sup>71</sup> The editorial also argued that the College Republicans were embarrassing everyone else because they were making UF look “intolerant and ignorant through blind bias.” Campus administrators needed to speak up, but they ignored the issue. However, it was important that “student senators and other campus politicians” learn that they could not use “homosexuals as scapegoats for their sanctimonious crusades.”<sup>72</sup> Many students wrote letters to the editor to decry Kein’s removal because it was inherently discriminatory. Several made the point that bigotry towards anyone in society was bad for everyone.<sup>73</sup> One anonymous student pointed out that the group’s plan to expel Kein in order to avoid bad press backfired spectacularly.<sup>74</sup>

The national party was also having its issues with gay people. During the 1984 Republican National Convention, President Ronald Reagan and the GOP attempted to make outreach efforts to “special interest groups.” However, the Moral Majority blocked gay people from working with the Republican Party. There were gay people in the delegation who feared ostracism. This created a minor rift in the party, but the lack of

---

<sup>71</sup> David K. Johnson, *Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

<sup>72</sup> “Blind Bias,” *Alligator*, April 9, 1984, 6.

<sup>73</sup> Gerald and Shirley Kein, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, April 12, 1984, 7; Scott Katz, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, April 12, 1984, 7; Darren Katz, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, April 12, 1984, 7; Paul Beard, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, April 12, 1984, 7; Knan Lee, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 8, 1984, 7; Clinton B. Hatcher, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 8, 1984, 7; The T.O. Johnsons, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 8, 1984, 7

<sup>74</sup> Letter to the editor, *Alligator*, May 8, 1984, 7.

queer visibility within the GOP meant the Moral Majority won out.<sup>75</sup> The UF College Republicans were clearly influenced by the Moral Majority and the anti-gay ethos of the Republican Party at large.

Stephanie Schwartz, a UFLAGS member and out lesbian, wrote a column for the *Alligator* on the topic of Republicans and gay people. The 1984 presidential election was the first one in which gay people were even a topic of conversation. In her column, Schwartz discussed how Reagan and the Republicans had “continuously demonstrated a lack of concern for the rights of all gay people, and by their neglect have in fact encouraged a renewed oppression of lesbians and gay men.” Vice President George Bush said that the Republican Party did “not believe in codification of laws relating to homosexuals.” Reagan discounted the seriousness of AIDS and opposed funding additional AIDS research. He also supported various bills to block gay peoples’ access to federal services and benefits, including immigration into the United States. The Democratic Party, however, was much more supportive. Schwartz acknowledged that voting for Democrats might not be easy for all gay people because there might be other points on which they disagreed with the Democrats, but that the issue of equal rights deserved serious consideration.<sup>76</sup> Schwartz encouraged people to think about how their own personal struggles as queer people and the way they saw people like Kein being treated mattered to the larger political sphere, and how they should connect their lives to politics. In other words, she wanted people to understand that “the personal is

---

<sup>75</sup> Greg Lamm, “Reagan’s Outreach Mission Misses Homosexuals,” *Alligator*, May 8, 1984, 14.

<sup>76</sup> Stephanie Schwartz, “Gay Rights, Mondale or Reagan,” *Alligator*, October 1, 1984, 6.

political.” Her column marked the first time that anyone used the *Alligator* to prompt people to vote in certain ways because they were queer.

The student senate’s rejection of UFLAGS as a legitimate student group and the College Republicans’ feelings about Kein as a valid leader converged in several students’ estimations of the UF campus climate in 1984. Student Mark Dempsey did not feel that gay people deserved rights, because the movement was rife with “petty hocus pocus” and lies. He wished for gay people to follow three rules: “If you differ from the norm do not expect to be treated normally,” employers should take “alternative lifestyles” into consideration because they might not want a gay person to represent them; and that gay people discriminated against straight people and “two wrongs do not make a right.” Dempsey’s ideas were full of stereotypes and deficit perspectives of gay people. For instance, he insisted that gay people were sexual deviants who should not be proud of who they were and that all gay people projected an image that made them unacceptable in “straight” society. Dempsey claimed to have the best interests of gay people in mind when he insisted that they assimilate or suffer ostracization forever.<sup>77</sup> He did not state explicitly who he thought was “normal” and, more importantly, who he thought should decide what “normal” was, but it seems apparent that as a straight white man, Dempsey felt qualified to make these decisions himself.

Other students promoted queer visibility to various degrees. Adam Schiff responded by noting that gay people wanted the right to live as others lived—free of fear on the streets and unconcerned that their employer might find out who they loved. Further, gay people came from all corners of society, and were not all effeminate men.

---

<sup>77</sup> Mark Dempsey, “Gays Should Not Expect Equal Treatment,” *Alligator*, October 3, 1984, 6.

Schiff did verge into playing into the hands of conservatives by rejecting effeminate men in his letter.<sup>78</sup> Lynn Dunnington urged gay people to come out because “our time has come.” She applauded those who were flamboyant and “flaunted it” because “we will not get our rights until people notice us.” Like the black freedom movement and the women’s movement, she believed gay people needed to parade their banners, go to gay bars, and be open.<sup>79</sup> Schiff and Dunnington each outlined plans for queer activism, though their approaches were different.

The *Alligator* profiled Schwartz in 1984. This gave her the opportunity to voice her thoughts about the recent debates at UF. She felt that the bad attitude of the student senate was thanks to the rising tide of conservatism, and that things would get worse before they got better. Her dorm mates treated her badly—harassing her, vandalizing her property, leaving her hostile notes. Others reported similarly negative experiences. Linda Wolfe, UFLAGS faculty adviser, said the presence of the gay rights group may have contributed to homophobia on campus. This attitude from the adviser was unfortunate, because it is another instance of citing the idea that gay people would not face tensions if they simply were not visible, instead of placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of the straight people who harassed them. Nonetheless, the harassment was real. The fair funding advocates whose names had appeared in the press got harassing and sometimes threatening phone calls in the middle of the night. One student observed that violence directed towards gay people at the local gay bars had increased—there were more muggings in the parking lots, and outside of Spectrum,

---

<sup>78</sup> Adam L. Schiff, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, October 10, 1984, 7.

<sup>79</sup> Lynn Dunnington, letter to the editor, *Alligator*, October 10, 1984, 7.

a gay club, a gay man was chased by four men with baseball bats who screamed “fucking faggot” as they chased him. Joanna Weinberger, past UFLAGS president, thought the university was the perfect environment for UFLAGS because of all the homophobia. She wanted UFLAGS to be a good influence on potential future leaders.<sup>80</sup>

Brian Jones, who had been the first openly-gay editor of the *Alligator* in 1976, wrote a guest column for the newspaper upon witnessing all the events UFLAGS and queer UF students had faced in the previous year or two. He derided the College Republicans for their hypocrisy, but he was not interested in preaching to bigots because they knew no better and were “compelled to practice cruelty.” Instead, he wanted to speak to the gay and lesbian students at UF and let them know that their struggles were not “the first for our people on campus” and would not be the last. He reminded them that he and his friends had fought for five years, from 1970-1975, to attain official recognition for their group. He was happy to see the gay Gators “putting it in their face again.” This was “fabulous” and “warmed the hearts of lesbian and gay alumni everywhere.” This fight was the good fight, and Jones argued that it would make them “strong and wise, whether you win, lose, or draw.” He encouraged them to “go forward with your arms around each other, love in your hearts, and a lawsuit in your jacket pocket, and sue the bastards.”<sup>81</sup> This level of empowerment may have been impossible in 1976, but the students had worked to gain visibility and legitimacy on campus, just as gay people were working at the national level to be active participants in each of the two major political parties. That people had found a voice would help

---

<sup>80</sup> Katharine Sumner, “Coming Out,” *Alligator*, April 6, 1984, 1.

<sup>81</sup> Brian Jones, “Gays Gain Strength Through Struggles,” *Alligator*, May 8, 1984, 6.

them when AIDS struck, even if the state and federal governments did little to help. Their agency in these visibility struggles was an important component of their political agency. They made space for themselves and their voices on campus, in spite of considerable opposition.

## AIDS

Queer student struggles reached a critical level with AIDS, which started out as an invisible or remote issue in many people's minds. Thanks to a lack of federal research and an absence of political will to learn about AIDS, years went by before people got good information about the disease, and even then, the stigmas surrounding the people primarily inflicted prevented many from taking it seriously.

The *Alligator* began discussing AIDS in 1983. The early articles described AIDS as a disease that mainly afflicted gay men, but also Haitians, hemophiliacs, and intravenous drug users. Several blood banks stopped accepting gay donors, but the Civitan Regional Blood Center and Gainesville Plasma Corp did not want to eliminate good donors when not much was known about the illness. They did not ask donors if they were gay. They did ban drug addicts because they were risks for hepatitis, and Haitians who were at risk for malaria. However, if AIDS cases were reported in Gainesville, the group might change its mind. Former UFLAGS director Bruce McCoy said potential donors should be screened according to medical fitness, not sexual preference, which further stigmatized gay people.<sup>82</sup>

The *Alligator* reported that AIDS was creeping into Gainesville in July 1983. UF history graduate Melanie Meyers learned that a friend had AIDS and so she formed a

---

<sup>82</sup> Beth Markett, "Affliction of Gays, Haitians a Puzzle to Researchers," *Alligator*, January 31, 1983, 11.

fundraising organization to help other AIDS victims. She and a few other people formed the Gainesville Health Project. The group worked to inform people about AIDS and raise money to help cure the disease. The article also talked about how the disease was first spotted about two years before and was considered a “gay plague,” but that recently other groups were contracting AIDS as well. This point raises suspicions about the *Alligator’s* timing. It had not covered AIDS when it was considered “just” a disease among gay men. Shands Teaching Hospital had a few AIDS patients, but most of them had been infected elsewhere and sought treatment at Shands because they had family in Alachua County. The Civitan Regional Blood Center did ask high-risk groups from refraining from donating blood at that moment, because there was no means of detection so they could not identify who might actually have AIDS. By then, at least one person in the nation had contracted AIDS through a blood transfusion. Joanna Weinberger said AIDS had taken on significant social and political implications because it cast gay people as diseased, which many gay people saw as a bigger threat than AIDS. Bruce McCoy, UFLAGS member and past president, thought Americans should have more empathy for AIDS patients. He also thought gay men should be more careful about who they had sex with and avoid promiscuity. Meyers wanted people to see AIDS as a serious disease and not a moral judgment.<sup>83</sup> Within months, her group raised \$4,000 for AIDS patients at Shands Teaching Hospital. She held a week of fundraising in July 1983, including a performance by a drag queen from Miami, as well as parties at area bars. The group also donated another \$1000 to an AIDS talk group and hotline.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Cheryl Henderson, “AIDS: Local Health Officials, Gays Adjust as Killer Creeps In,” *Alligator*, July 14, 1983, 1.

<sup>84</sup> Jeannine Loiacono, “Shands AIDS Victims Get \$4000 Donation,” *Alligator*, August 24, 1983, 3.

The presence of AIDS in the community also got the attention of the *Gainesville Sun* in 1983. Reporter Larry R. Humes wrote a story called “Homosexual Life in Gainesville,” in which he noted that if the statistic was true that ten percent of the population was gay, then there were at least 16,000 “homosexuals” in Alachua County. A Gainesville resident Humes interviewed, who went only by the name Richard, said that the number was probably much larger, because that did not include people who had had gay experiences but might not self-identify that way, and also did not include bisexuals. The article touched on the experiences of people who went to the University of Florida and discovered there that they were not straight. Meyers speculated that people got involved in the AIDS movement and other political interests and learned that they were gay. Richard added that college was a time when students broke away from their parents and were free to do things that they otherwise would not be able to. The Gainesville community itself was “an excellent place to drift in and out of roles” because it was “a more intellectual community and a younger community” and thus had “greater acceptance.”

Gainesville was home to several groups that helped gay people thrive, including the Group for Gay Awareness (which operated a hotline and hosted weekly panel discussions on gay life), Dignity (a group out of the Catholic Church), the Metropolitan Community Church (part of a nationwide organization of churches for gay people), and the Gay Alcoholics Anonymous. Thirty minutes out of town, not only did gay people not have any of these resources, but they were in a dangerously homophobic environment. AIDS threw into relief the importance of these resources. Richard told Humes that the disease meant a change in gay lifestyles, in that people who may never have



considered getting into long-term relationships started to find them. Meyers and Richard both told Humes that gay people were the same as straight people in that some people wanted long-term relationships and others did not, but a community crisis could change one's outlook. Furthermore, gay people were being more health conscious and selective of their sexual partners, and many were electing to stay closeted because they were afraid they would get AIDS and die.<sup>85</sup>

The first mention of AIDS in the *Flambeau* was June 27, 1983. It was a UPI article about the New York City Pride Parade, which called attention to AIDS. The article described AIDS as “the disease contracted mainly by homosexuals and intravenous drug users.” It claimed that 71% of AIDS cases had affected homosexuals and that over half the people who had contracted AIDS had died.<sup>86</sup> The next discussion of AIDS in the *Flambeau* was shortly thereafter, on July 7, 1983, about an AIDS rally in San Francisco, written by wire reporter Dianne Gregory. Gregory wrote that the disease primarily affected “gay men, hemophiliacs, needle-using drug addicts, and Haitian refugees.” From the beginning, AIDS carried stigma by being identified with groups who were considered to be doing something “wrong”—gay people, drug addicts, and immigrants of color. Hemophiliacs may have been judged less harshly.

The article identified some of the issues surrounding stigma, as it opened with a discussion of Andrew Small, a man with AIDS who was thrown off a Leon County jury because the other jurors did not want to catch AIDS from being in the same room with him. Other people were asked to leave bars, refused treatment by nurses at hospitals,

---

<sup>85</sup> Larry R. Humes, “Homosexual Life in Gainesville,” *Gainesville Sun*, August 12, 1983.

<sup>86</sup> “100,000 March for Gay Rights in New York,” *Flambeau*, June 27, 1983, 7.

and kicked out of housing by roommates and landlords. Two San Francisco police officers wrote to the Democratic National Committee to warn the group against holding its convention in the city because its delegates would be in danger of contracting AIDS. San Francisco was second only to New York in reported cases. In mid-1983, the Center for Disease Control did not know which infectious agent caused AIDS. The chairs of the San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day called the AIDS crisis “the greatest threat the gay and lesbian community has ever encountered.”<sup>87</sup> The disease itself was threatening, to be sure, but so was the stigma attached to the disease that justified mistreatment of gay people.

Indeed, the next discussion of AIDS in the *Flambeau* appeared in the following month. This article covered the male prostitutes in San Francisco (and, again, was a wire service article). The *Flambeau* did not entirely avoid covering AIDS, but it was not willing to look at the disease in its own back yard. The male prostitutes—to whom the article refers as “hustlers”—were described as living outside of mainstream gay culture and as having little or no information about AIDS. The fear of AIDS depressed the sex work industry in San Francisco. The author revealed some bias about who “deserved” AIDS in her discussion about how many of the men engaged in sex work did not identify as gay, and how the men who used their services did not necessarily identify as gay either, and came from all walks of life. Thus, the article concluded, it was not unusual for “a hustler who describes himself as ‘straight’ to provide sexual services for a man who also describes himself as ‘straight’—raising the alarming possibility that hustlers could introduce the disease to unaffected individuals and places.” Many of the men she

---

<sup>87</sup> Dianne Gregory, “Strengthen the Ties, Break the Chains,” *Flambeau*, July 7, 1983, 9.

interviewed were frighteningly ignorant of the disease. They thought they could identify who had AIDS by how they looked or what kind of car they drove. The CDC and the health department did not know much more than the men did. Almost everything about AIDS was unknown, including “the cause and cure, the incubation period, when it is contagious. It is thought that the disease is transmitted either by blood or semen.” Further, no one really knew if hustlers were getting AIDS at higher rates than other high-risk groups, because no one studied them.<sup>88</sup> The stigma attached to AIDS and sex work relegated sex workers to a class of people who “deserved” AIDS, or to a population whose illness and death was not worth investigating.

Gay people looked to the 1984 Democratic Party convention in San Francisco as an opportunity to “come into their own.” The party had voted unanimously to create a Gay and Lesbian Caucus in February 1983. Activists wanted a prime-time televised debate on gay rights at the July convention, including specific language on AIDS research and equal rights for gays in the military. Democratic Party Chair Charles Manatt was anxious about “the specter of flamboyant homosexual protestors parading outside the convention site” which was named after George Moscone, the former mayor of San Francisco who was assassinated alongside Harvey Milk because of his support for gay rights. A possible compromise involved guaranteeing certain platform language “in exchange for a modern gay presence at the convention.”<sup>89</sup> That the party was in discussion with gay activists meant that gay people were at least somewhat part of the Democratic coalition.

---

<sup>88</sup> Anne Hurley, “AIDS’ Highest Risk Group Ignorant of Diseases,” *Flambeau*, August 22, 1983, 84.

<sup>89</sup> Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer, “Gays Look to Democrats for Change,” *Flambeau*, January 12, 1984, 9.

At USF, the *Oracle* also began discussing AIDS in 1983 when a columnist noted that the existing facilities and awareness were not enough to handle the Tampa area AIDS victims. As the other papers noted, not much was known about AIDS at the time, and there was no diagnostic test yet. Tampa had thirty AIDS victims (Tallahassee and Gainesville were thought to have none at the time) but predicted 500 by 1985. Dr. George Lockey of the USF Medical School said the hospital's Immunology Center treated all local AIDS cases. However, members of the AIDS Task Force were dissatisfied, because they believed public health care should not begin and end with treatment of individual symptoms. There was no local center for the diagnosis of AIDS, and public health officials were doing too little to disseminate information about AIDS to the communities and individuals most likely to contract it. The columnist argued that Tampa needed its own diagnostic center and better health education to allay public fears and ensure the fair treatment of those suffering was necessary and anything less was "to deny adequate health care."<sup>90</sup> Two USF professors delivered a lecture at the university to educate people about AIDS. They talked about how most of the victims were male homosexuals who "took a passive role" in sex. They also noted that an AIDS diagnosis often meant the loss of friends, jobs, and homes.<sup>91</sup> Their attempts to educate may have been commendable, but they nonetheless contributed to a further stigmatization of gay men in their comments.

As the AIDS crisis continued, people found new ways to try to separate gay people and people of color from the straight white population. Tampa resident Murray

---

<sup>90</sup> Lynda Whitehead, "Existing Facilities and Awareness Not Enough to Care for Area AIDS Victims," *Oracle*, September 23, 1983, 10.

<sup>91</sup> Suzanne Foster, "AIDS Nearing Epidemic Proportions," *Oracle*, September 19, 1983, 5.

Norris of the Christian Family Renewal sent a form letter to Tampa residents calling for a quarantine of all gay men, because they, according to him, were responsible for spreading AIDS and no one else had the courage to try to stop them. An *Oracle* columnist reprinted Norris's letter in the newspaper to mock him and his clear attempt to profit on everyone's fears by asking people to send him money so he could strengthen his case to "health authorities" to keep gay men locked away.<sup>92</sup>

In 1984, Florida State Rep. Tom Woodruff (R-St. Petersburg) proposed a bill to prevent gay people, drug users, Haitians, and other "high risk" groups from donating blood. He argued that it had nothing to do with lifestyle, national origin, or personal habits, but there was no test for AIDS and those groups were, he said, more likely to have the disease. The bill would require all potential donors to sign a form stating that they did not belong to any of the groups deemed high risk. Lying on the statement would be a second-degree misdemeanor. However, the ACLU said the law would violate the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution. UFLAGS director Ken Key said that the legislation only gave people "additional ammunition and justification in other campaigns against gays."<sup>93</sup> Tallahassee resident Judith Phipps was so concerned about AIDS that she filed suit in the Florida Supreme Court against the State Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services to identify and quarantine everyone with AIDS in Florida. She—correctly, as it happens—called AIDS the "deadliest disease in recorded history" but lacked all compassion for people with AIDS. If the state legislature shared her urgency, they may have been more likely to take some kind of

---

<sup>92</sup> Sharon Carroll, "AIDS: It's Out There, so Run and Hide," *Oracle*, March 27, 1984, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Jennifer Sandy, "Bill: Potential AIDS Carriers Can't Give Blood," *Alligator*, February 17, 1983, 10; "Legislator Wants to Ban Gay Blood Donors," *Gainesville Sun*, January 31, 1984.

preventive measures, though quarantining all AIDS patients was clearly not the humane or sensible approach. Phipps thought this quarantine would protect gay people and was not homophobic at all, but of course, she was working within a framework that people with AIDS should be removed from society, not that society should adapt to the presence of the disease.

State Epidemiologist Jeffrey Sacks did not think this plan would work, because by the time AIDS was diagnosed, the person was probably already quite sick, and likely to be hospitalized or bedridden. People spreading the virus probably did not know they had it. The Florida Task Force was concerned that if a quarantine were instituted, people would be afraid to go in for testing.<sup>94</sup> In a more immediate attempt at isolation, Fort Lauderdale resident Todd Shuttleworth, fled his Florida home when he was run out of town because he had AIDS. He was fired from his job, although his boss thought he was a good worker.<sup>95</sup>

In 1985, some people speculated that the discrimination against people with AIDS might help gay rights advocates make their case more strongly. Cases of discrimination were legion: people were ejected from hospitals, postal carriers refused to pick up their mail. In Texas, there was not a single extended care facility that would accept AIDS patients. Rumors that most gay men carried AIDS were rampant, employment for people with AIDS became nearly impossible, AIDS patients' names and addresses were listed in the newspaper, and people were beaten up on the street. Gay activists believed that the outspoken fear of AIDS justified anti-gay feelings, just when

---

<sup>94</sup> Nancy Wonder, "Fearing 'AIDS Contamination,' Woman Sues for Quarantine," *Flambeau*, May 28, 1985, 1.

<sup>95</sup> "AIDS Victim Says he was Run Out of Town," *Flambeau*, October 29, 1984, 2.

expressing those feelings had started to become less socially acceptable. However, according to New York Human Rights Commissioner Kate Taylor, the noticeable rise in discrimination led to “an increased awareness especially among gay men and lesbians that they can seek assistance for discrimination in ways they didn’t before.” It also helped “the community to draw together more closely.”<sup>96</sup>

Florida AIDS cases were doubling rapidly, every 11 months, and there was only a small statewide network of groups providing information and support for patients. Most of the state’s cases were in South Florida, which had the nation’s third-largest cluster of people with the disease—only New York and San Francisco had more. San Francisco had spent \$13 million educating people about the disease and how it was most likely to be transmitted, and New York had appropriated \$3.6 million to the cause, but Florida had nothing of the sort.<sup>97</sup> Much of the problem centered on silence: it was difficult for health professionals to convince federal and state governments to fund research and to get people to tell their stories about it. AIDS had reached epidemic status by 1985, with 8,597 cases reported across the nation, over half of which resulted in death. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) assumed that there were a large number of unreported or undiagnosed cases because diagnosis was not perfected yet. State Epidemiologist Jeffrey Sacks thought that for every case of AIDS diagnosed in Florida (610 at that point), there were probably 300 more unreported. Chuck Fallife, public affairs specialist for the CDC, said that he was not alarmed about the epidemic because only 1% of cases occurred in heterosexuals. Sacks disagreed, however, and argued that “people

---

<sup>96</sup> William O. Beeman, “AIDS Discrimination May Prove Healthy for Gay Rights,” *Flambeau*, January 17, 1985, 5.

<sup>97</sup> “Florida’s AIDS Cases Doubling Rapidly,” *Oracle*, February 4, 1985, 2.

who say that AIDS is largely confined to a few risk groups that are outgroups in our society and not important enough to spend money on don't realize that controlling the disease has direct implications for heterosexuals as well." Indeed, letting "outgroups" die has implications for the popular morality, regardless of whether the "good" people could get AIDS.

The Reagan administration was not known for its generosity to public health concerns, and the budget the president had given Congress in February 1985 had proposed cutting AIDS funding by \$10 million. Alan O'Hara of the AIDS Education Project, a private organization in Key West, felt the federal response was too little, too late, and that the country needed more money spent on education about AIDS and its prevention. Sacks agreed that the government would be wise to invest now, because it could prevent spending money on future cases of the disease. Florida in particular was not doing well with handling AIDS—unlike New York and California, it did not have any organized system to deal with AIDS patients. In the other two states, people could receive emergency funding, a buddy to help with shopping and other daily tasks, membership in AIDS support groups, and visits with a counselor. In Florida, however, Governor Bob Graham vetoed a \$250,000 grant to AIDS research to the University of Miami because he thought the federal funding was adequate, despite federal cutbacks to university AIDS research. Many people around the state at hospitals and gay rights organizations agreed that Florida AIDS patients needed more help than they could get and that the state legislature needed a sense of urgency in dealing with the issue. Gay people in Tallahassee worked to prepare themselves before the crisis hit the city hard, which was the best approach given that the state government was not interested in



helping. Nationally, gay organizations had done more to disseminate preventive information about AIDS than any federal or state agency.<sup>98</sup>

Members of the Gay/Lesbian Support Service group on the FSU campus knew they had their work cut out for them. In addition to helping people deal with adjusting to the idea of being gay and coming out to people, they also had to deal with the AIDS crisis, a topic “filled with fear, ignorance, and a real lack of understanding in the gay and non-gay community.” The group first gave AIDS real attention in the spring semester but a great deal of educating remained to be done.<sup>99</sup> One FSU graduate, Amy Shoemaker, wanted to talk to the *Flambeau* about her best friend who had AIDS. Her friend, “Alan,” who lived in New York, had cared for another man who had died of AIDS, and then he was hospitalized himself. He was not treated well in the hospital—placed in a dark room, with restricted visitation. He was alive at the time of the writing, and back home with his partner, who was spending all of his savings to take care of Alan. The stigma he faced prevented him from getting more help.<sup>100</sup> Another FSU student, DL Erickson, wrote about how his friend, Charlie, died of AIDS, and the death had been miserable. He knew that most people would just see Charlie as “another faggot” and that the Religious Right saw AIDS as God’s judgment against homosexuals, but if they could have seen Charlie’s horrible death, they might be less inclined to attribute such cruelty to God. Erickson was confident that the nation could handle the crisis, but it had to

---

<sup>98</sup> Nancy Wonder, “AIDS: Not a Threat to Ignore,” *Flambeau*, April 12, 1985, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Gay/Lesbian Support Service, “On Being Gay in Today’s World,” *Flambeau*, August 26, 1985, 7.

<sup>100</sup> Wonder, “AIDS: Not a Threat to Ignore.”

“decide that the people dying are somehow worth saving.” In the meantime, the gay community had to care for each other, even if that meant too many burials.<sup>101</sup>

The *Flambeau* published an editorial in September 1985 about AIDS, calling AIDS patients “the lepers of the ‘80s” and condemning the discrimination they faced. In particular, it focused on the Defense Department’s attempts to exclude people with AIDS from military service. The editorial staff feared that the Defense Department’s move would encourage other employers to require testing, which was not perfected at that point. Furthermore, the testing program would cost quite a bit of money that could better be spent on research and prevention.<sup>102</sup> The Defense Department did decide to discharge anyone who admitted to engaging in homosexual acts or drug use, though they made sure to note that the discharges would be honorable and would include medical care and counseling. Homosexual activity and drug use had always been reasons for discharge, but not necessarily enforced, and for some time the Pentagon spokespeople had said that they would not discharge men for having AIDS. The *Flambeau* speculated that those statements were used to calm the fears of gay servicemen so they would admit to being gay and then could be discharged.<sup>103</sup>

These editorials brought varied reactions from FSU students. FK Anderson believed that the military had the right to discharge homosexuals and drug users, as people enlisted knowing that these activities were forbidden. Anderson was not interested in the equality for gay people, because “the effect of allowing admitted homosexuals... to remain on active duty would devastate the good order, discipline, and

---

<sup>101</sup> DL Erickson, “AIDS Story Cuts Across Prejudice,” *Flambeau*, April 16, 1985, 4.

<sup>102</sup> “Out of the Lazzarette,” *Flambeau*, September 3, 1985, 4.

<sup>103</sup> “Military Manure,” *Flambeau*, October 30, 1985, 4.

morale of the entire military.” Military men would be likely to react with violence to learning that a fellow serviceperson was gay, so “military life and homosexuality are incompatible.” Anderson argued that the military was *not* discharging people for just having AIDS; they were discharging people for being gay, which he found much more justifiable.<sup>104</sup> Michael Loomis countered that gay people had long been trained in how to lie about who they were, sometimes even to themselves, and some might not realize they were gay until they enlisted. Loomis noted that the same arguments about disorder and morality in the military were used against racially integrating the armed forces, and that event had not resulted in the devastation of morale. He wrote that he found it bizarre that any group of people would be labeled morally unfit to “join an organization whose sole purpose is to kill people.”<sup>105</sup>

While people in Tallahassee argued about the legitimacy of AIDS funding and which bodies belonged in which spaces, USF actively participated in AIDS research. About 5,000 new cases had appeared in Florida in the month of May 1985. The USF Medical School had a clinic for AIDS patients that primarily engaged in studies to find a drug to boost immunity in AIDS patients.<sup>106</sup> The USF Gay/Lesbian Coalition held two weeks of special events to raise awareness of issues relating to gay men and lesbians. Among the events was an AIDS seminar and a screening of *The Word is Out*, a documentary film about 26 gay men and lesbians.<sup>107</sup> Medical student Jeff King spoke on the subject and said that he thought AIDS was being blown out of proportion and

---

<sup>104</sup> FK Anderson, letter to the editor, *Flambeau*, November 5, 1985, 4.

<sup>105</sup> Michael Lomis, letter to the editor, November 26, 1985, 5.

<sup>106</sup> Elaine Wilson, “USF a Part of Ongoing AIDS Research,” *Oracle*, May 30, 1985, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Elaine Wilson, “Gay Coalition Conducts Series,” *Oracle*, August 29, 1985, 3.

causing the gay community to panic. The only way to reduce the “possible” epidemic was to have safe sex, according to King. In addition to the many symptoms and complications of AIDS, King noted that the disease was emotionally upsetting, that AIDS patients’ insurance rates increased, banks often turned them away, and they were frequently isolated from the general public.<sup>108</sup>

Not all on the USF campus were free from bigotry relating to AIDS. Student Linda Taylor had something to say of the people who thought that “the good thing to come from the AIDS scare” was that “homosexuality [was] going to get a lot less popular.” She thought it was odd that some people thought homosexuality might be some sort of fad. She was not entirely kind to gay people: she assumed that some people just wanted something different and forbidden, and “this is when I consider homosexuality to be perverted.” For some men who were just “incapable of desiring a woman,” however, the issue was one of biological urges. She wanted to call off the witch-hunt for gay people and chastise those who thought AIDS might “cure” homosexuality. Taylor also noted that a girl who wanted to play Little League might be thought of as a tomboy and indulged, but a boy who wanted to play with dolls had something “definitely wrong” and had “lowered himself to the level of femininity.”<sup>109</sup> This insight was important. It is often easier to assume the trappings of the more powerful, such as when girls do things considered to be “boy” activities, than it is to assume the trappings of the less powerful, such as when boys want to wear girls’ clothes. The former is regularly treated with respect, as though the girl is doing something right by “not wanting to be a girl,” but the

---

<sup>108</sup> Joelle Latine, “Seminar Provides AIDS Information,” *Oracle*, September 12, 1985, 13.

<sup>109</sup> Linda Taylor, “AIDS—Not God’s Cure,” *Oracle*, October 18, 1985, 4.

latter is pathologized and seen as deviant. Her observation was trenchant, even if embedded in a deeply problematic piece in which she positions herself as the person who gets to decide what kinds of sexuality are acceptable and which are not. Despite her less than stellar feelings about homosexuality, she placed homophobic people in the role of the ones with problems and argued that to think that AIDS would “cure” homosexuality was what was truly sick.<sup>110</sup>

Taylor’s piece invited even more harsh commentary from the student body. Michael F. Cernak wrote a letter to the editor of the *Oracle* to discuss why homosexuality was wrong—not homosexual tendencies, he was sure to point out, but homosexual behavior, because it “perverts the intention of the sexual act.” Sexual activity outside of marriage was immoral, and because gay people could not marry each other, they could not have sex inside the bounds of morality.<sup>111</sup> Angela Pippin agreed that homosexuality was an abomination and that society was harmed by the presence of homosexuals, who should repent.<sup>112</sup> However, several wrote that Cernak was wrong. Nadine Prester felt that Cernak was too arrogant in his pronouncements of God’s will.<sup>113</sup> Jonathan Sabin was offended by the hatred coming from Cernak’s letter and pointed out that even Jerry Falwell stopped “spewing that kind of trash” when it became apparent that AIDS affected such a wide segment of the population. He was angry, he said, whenever “people insinuate that certain diseases are prevalent in certain people for just

---

<sup>110</sup> Taylor, “AIDS—Not God’s Cure.”

<sup>111</sup> Michael F. Cernak, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, October 28, 1985, 5.

<sup>112</sup> Angela Pippin, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, October 28, 1985, 5.

<sup>113</sup> Nadine Priester, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, October 30, 1985, 16.

purposes.”<sup>114</sup> JC Woodward also objected to his presumptuousness in deciding what was acceptable in terms of sexuality. He added that not everyone who had AIDS was gay, so Cernak’s attitude was misdirected.<sup>115</sup> The conversation continued for weeks as people argued back and forth about whether being gay was spiritually and socially acceptable and whether AIDS was God’s condemnation.

Gainesville got an AIDS support group in August 1985 when Larry Varela, a local registered nurse, founded the Gainesville AIDS Community Network because of “ignorance in the general population” about the disease. He got interested when he wrote a paper about it for nursing school. He worked with UFLAGs and several local physicians to get the group started, and hoped for government funding. He believed that Hollywood star Rock Hudson’s case raised consciousness about the disease but he wanted more awareness and criticized the government for being slow to act, “probably because most people who have contracted the disease are homosexuals.”<sup>116</sup> UF itself had no plan in place, even in 1985, should a student contract AIDS.<sup>117</sup> In the state with the third highest incidence of AIDS, the failure to form a plan was foolhardy.

An ACT UP chapter—a group meant to fight the stigma against AIDS, whose acronym stood for AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power—also formed in Gainesville, and while it was short-lived, it made a larger public impression. The group showed up at a conference that was spreading misinformation about AIDS and asked the presenters tough questions and pointed out their inaccurate information. Paul McDonough, who

---

<sup>114</sup> Jonathan Sabin, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, October 30, 1985, 16.

<sup>115</sup> JC Woodward, letter to the editor, *Oracle*, October 31, 1985, 6.

<sup>116</sup> T. Hurst Simmons, “AIDS Support Group Educates Public,” *Alligator*, August 8, 1985, 2.

<sup>117</sup> Margie Olster, “Plans Sketchy in Case of AIDS Outbreaks at UF,” *Alligator*, September 19, 1985, 7.

was involved with UFLAGS and ACT UP, said he felt UFLAGS was not threatened by AIDS. In fact, he thought it made them “more aware that what we were doing had a bit more importance than we original thought.” McDonough also remembers that many people who got involved with GAAP and ACT UP branched out into other areas of activism in Gainesville.<sup>118</sup>

Chip Halvorsen made an inverse point. Even though he was out of college when he got involved in AIDS activism, he found that his start at UFLAGS primed him to be ready to participate in a campaign to educate the public. He worked for the Health Crisis Network in Miami Dade in the late 1980s, and attributed his drive to get involved in part to his time with UFLAGS. He also wanted the opportunity to learn more about the disease himself, so that he could stay on top of the latest information and better protect himself from it.<sup>119</sup>

Craig Lowe remembers AIDS as devastating to the community, because many people involved with activism were lost. In addition, AIDS fueled “a lot of anti-gay bigotry and hysteria.” Many people assumed that all gay men carried the disease and that it could be transmitted through casual contact, and so they avoided gay men.<sup>120</sup> Jerry Notaro also thought that AIDS hurt the movement. He often thinks to himself, “Oh my god, how far we would have been if it wasn’t for AIDS.” AIDS did more than stall the movement. It made gay people themselves question their own worth, as they internalized stigma and homophobia. People who were there one week were gone the

---

<sup>118</sup> McDonough interview.

<sup>119</sup> Halvorsen interview.

<sup>120</sup> Lowe interview.

next and no one understood what was going on. Drag queens stopped kissing people when they took tips during performances. The whole culture changed.<sup>121</sup>

AIDS made being gay seem deadly, but not for the first time. As the letters to the editor over the preceding 15 years show, large segments of the population on each of the three campuses saw being gay as dangerous to individuals, to societies, to morality itself. AIDS may have given them more vocabulary, but rather than turning previously non-bigoted people into bigots, it simply reinforced the ideas of those who already sought to marginalize gay people. It also gave the queer students at UF, FSU, and USF, and the people living in those towns, a point around which to build communities. The Gainesville Area AIDS Project continues to this day, and some who found their activist footing combating the silence around AIDS remain active in queer politics.

The crises in these communities stemming from AIDS and the stigma and discrimination it wrought solidified queer support networks in important ways, even as the groups were losing membership to the disease. Although the queer student groups were not necessarily a permanent part of campus life, they represented a facet of the student body that would always be visible. The presence of queer visibility and student activists strengthened the universities and surrounding communities, as they learned from the students how to protect them from an epidemic few people understood. Without the students advocating for themselves, the university administrators might not have acknowledged the presence of the disease on the campus at all.

---

<sup>121</sup> Notaro interview.



## Councille Blye

AIDS was not the only tragedy Gainesville had to deal with in the mid-1980s. Councille Blye, a black gay rights activist and former UF professor, disappeared from his home in January 1983. He was reported missing on January 23, and had not been seen in town since January 10. His friends described him as a quiet man who would not leave town on a whim, and police suspected foul play. Blye was a 51-year-old bachelor.<sup>122</sup>

Councille Blye was an institution in Gainesville. He was born and raised in Gainesville, and was the first black person to seek admission to UF, in 1949, and was denied. He was one of the four charter members of the Gainesville branch of the NAACP, an original member of the ACLU, and sat on the Human Rights Advisory Board (HRAB) and the Florida Council on Human Relations. He was admitted to do graduate work at UF in 1969, and in 1971, he became assistant professor of English at UF. This was his lifelong dream, but it lasted less than a year, because he was accused by three students of verbally propositioning them at his home. He was fired not because he was black, but because his accusers were male. They had no real evidence against him, but the punishment was swift and permanent. As *Gainesville Sun* reporter Ron Cunningham argued, it was illegal to discriminate against Blye for being black, but “Councille Blye the gay man was invisible in the eyes of the law.” Other faculty members advocated for him. They said that propositioning students did not sound at all like something he would do, but the administration did not budge, even when the ACLU and the AAUP took up the

---

<sup>122</sup> Joshua L. Weinstein, “Blye Vanished Later than Thought,” *Alligator*, February 1, 1983, 2; Joshua L. Weinstein, “Blye Investigation Continues as Clues Hint at Later Disappearance,” *Alligator*, February 3, 1983, 2.

cause.<sup>123</sup> The Women’s Political Caucus wrote a letter to the editor of the *Gainesville Sun* to note that the university would not suspend visiting professor Ezra Mishan after he molested 20 women who came to his home in response to an ad he posted, but that the same people who chose not to punish Mishan were instrumental in firing Blye.<sup>124</sup> Blye had never intended to be a gay rights activist, but when he was outed, he took up the fight: “I refuse to allow society to place its collective fears on me. If a person doesn’t like homosexuals, it’s not the homosexuals’ problem, it’s the person’s problem.” Blye loved Gainesville and never wanted to live anywhere else, but it was not always kind to him.<sup>125</sup>

Blye’s body was found in early April 1983, badly decomposed and stuffed into an abandoned refrigerator in a heavily wooded area outside of town. The Sheriff’s office handled the investigation as a homicide. His disappearance was mysterious from the start. Blye lived as a fearful man, despite having been active in the community for decades—or perhaps, because he had been. Many people who knew Blye were shocked and upset, and worried that because he was so outspoken about unpopular issues, that he had created enemies for himself. His sister said that his spirit was killed after his dismissal from UF.<sup>126</sup>

Blye’s memorial service brought people from different areas of his life. Some remembered him as a pioneer of gay rights in Gainesville, and others thought of him as

---

<sup>123</sup> Ron Cunningham, “Councille’s Gainesville,” *Gainesville Sun*, December 21, 2008.

<sup>124</sup> Sallie Ann Harrison, President, Alachua County Women’s Political Caucus, letter to the editor, *Gainesville Sun*, June 2, 1978.

<sup>125</sup> Ron Cunningham, “Councille’s Gainesville,” *Gainesville Sun*, December 21, 2008.

<sup>126</sup> Erik Lesser, “Ex-UF Prof Blye Found Dead; Police Suspect Murder,” *Alligator*, April 4, 1983, 1.

a fine writer and person, or a courageous civic leader. He was openly gay, though his sister, Vivian Gant, denied it. Gant talked about how the atmosphere at UF was never good for black people: “The alumni at the University of Florida are professional under-the-carpet brushers. Give me Alabama, give me Mississippi, but don’t give me Florida with their subtle variety of racism.” People at Blye’s memorial remembered him as a fellow activist with courage and devotion to his causes.<sup>127</sup>

By the end of 1983, the police had a suspect who was held in Texas until Governor Bob Graham issued an extradition order. The police had no known motive for the suspect, but he had served prison sentences in Texas, Florida, and California for rape, robbery, and murder.<sup>128</sup> The next year went by without much word on the murder, but Blye’s killer went on trial in July 1985. Police learned that Blye and the murderer knew each other because Blye occasionally smoked marijuana to calm his anxiety, and his dealer was his killer. The killer confessed to the murder, saying it resulted from a soured drug deal. He was convicted on July 29, 1985 of second-degree murder because the jury could not find the premeditation required for a first-degree murder charge.<sup>129</sup> Blye lived a fearful life. The UF climate and larger political landscape in Gainesville and Florida were hostile to him. UF denied him his Fourteenth Amendment right to due process when they fired him for being gay. He gave a great deal to the community but because he was black and gay, he suffered endless discrimination.

Queer students at UF, FSU, and USF were not strangers to hardship and tragedy by the mid-1980s. Their communities had suffered and grown together for over 15

---

<sup>127</sup> “Friends, Family Remember Blye at Memorial Service,” *Alligator*, May 17, 1983, 5.

<sup>128</sup> Scott LePoint, “Suspect to Return, Face Charges in Blye Murder,” *Alligator*, November 28, 1983, 1.

<sup>129</sup> “Prof’s Slayer is Convicted,” *Gainesville Sun*, July 29, 1985.

years. AIDS was devastating, but each community rallied its resources and did its best to make the lawmakers and those who held the purse strings pay attention. Where the institutions like universities and governments failed, students and other citizens filled in the gaps to the best of their ability. The threats of death hung heavy over Florida, between AIDS and the murders of two prominent faculty members. It became increasingly clear that visibility could be a political act, but even more important, it could save lives. Visibility was not enough—straight people, including those in the government, needed to overcome their homophobia and find ways to improve the quality of life for their fellow citizens. The queer people at UF, FSU, and USF worked hard to make space for themselves in spite of the largest crisis to hit their communities in history.

## CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

Queer university students in Florida were political agents who changed the course of the state's educational and legislative history through the simple—though rarely easy—act of insisting on their own visibility. This dissertation has examined three sets of questions about the emergence of this crucial visibility at Florida State University, the University of Florida, and the University of South Florida. What specific characteristics of the Florida higher education campuses in the 1970s and 1980s helped and hindered the struggle for queer visibility on these campuses? How were the larger political and social contexts in which the universities existed significant to queer emergence? How did queer students position themselves as activists?

Queer university students have not been studied in the history of education or in United States history. There are, in fact, only a handful of books on queer people in education history. This work has been done under fire, and the risks that other scholars have taken to do queer work must be noted. Without their efforts, it would be difficult or impossible to do this work in relative safety now. Jackie Blount has shared with me that she could not write *Fit to Teach* until she had gained tenure, although she began work in preparation for the book long before she had tenure. It helped her to have published a piece in a special issue of the *Harvard Educational Review* on LGBT issues in education the year before she submitted her tenure materials.<sup>1</sup> Blount reports that there was a sense on the tenure committee that although her article was about “lesbians” and “homosexuality,” because it was in the *Harvard Educational Review*, critics were, for the

---

<sup>1</sup> Jackie Blount, “Manly Men and Womanly Women: Deviance, Gender Role Polarization and the Shift in Women’s Educational Employment, 1900-1976,” *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 318-338.

most part, assuaged. She was promoted to associate professor and tenured. Later, *Fit to Teach* was in press when she was under review for full professor. Some of her colleagues at Iowa State University were concerned that the book may not have been “in press” enough to count. Ultimately, enough people supported her that she was promoted to full professor. She had trouble with the publisher, though. When the book moved into production at State University of New York Press, the publishers asked her to emphasize gender and eliminate “same-sex desire” from the title. Instead, she kept the title as intended, but SUNY declined to publish the book in paperback until two years after the release of the hardcover version—in spite of publishing almost all of their hundreds of other titles that year in paperback and hardback simultaneously, and even though Blount requested paperback version several times.<sup>2</sup> She is now Senior Associate Dean of the College of Education and Human Ecology at the Ohio State University.

Catherine Lugg took risks to legitimize queer theory as a tool in her analysis of education policy.<sup>3</sup> She told me that the work generated a huge fight over tenure, particularly her 1998 piece, “The Religious Right and Public Education: The Paranoid Politics of Homophobia.”<sup>4</sup> This piece was published while she was up for promotion and tenure and a protracted tenure fight ensued. The whole matter took two years to

---

<sup>2</sup> Jackie Blount shared this story with me in personal communication and gave me permission to share it here. She also said that SUNY is now much more supportive of work in queer studies.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine A. Lugg, “Thinking about Sodomy: Public Schools, Legal Panopticons, and Queers.” *Educational Policy* 20, no. 1 (2006): 35-58; “Our Straight-laced Administrators: LGBT School Administrators, the Law, and the Assimilationist Imperative.” *Journal of School Leadership* 13, no. 1 (2003): 51-85; “Sissies, Faggots, Lezzies, and Dykes: Gender, Sexual Orientation, and a New Politics of Education?” *Educational Administration Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2003): 95-134; “The Religious Right and Public Education: The Paranoid Politics of Homophobia.” *Educational Policy* 12, no. 3 (1998): 267-283.

<sup>4</sup> Lugg, “The Paranoid Politics of Homophobia.”

resolve. The grievance committee eventually ruled that she had been denied tenure on the strength of one biased external letter, although the committee declined to call it homophobia. Lugg's two publications from 2003 were written in the midst of this struggle. She is now full professor at Rutgers University.<sup>5</sup>

Queer academics have been brave. Lugg, Blount, Roland Sintos Coloma, Karen Graves, John D'Emilio, and others had to not just be out about themselves, but out about their work, which was and to some extent remains marginalized in the community of scholars. Eventually a critical mass of scholarship on queer education history will mean that it is no longer considered irrelevant, as it becomes increasingly clear to non-queer scholars that this is important to a collective understanding of the field. The only way to help the field of education history reach the point that it is clear that queer people matter to history, education, and the rest of the political economy, is to write about it.

The first question posed in the introduction asks what characteristics of the climate at each university helped or hindered the struggle for queer visibility. Overall, as this dissertation shows, the relationship between higher education institutions and queer students in Florida in the 1970s and 1980s was characterized largely by silence, marginalizing queer students, and a lack of proactive leadership in creating safer spaces. The early 1970s saw hostility towards queer students from the larger non-queer student body. This hostility was not conducive to queer visibility. Despite the social climate, the newspapers at each university were unfailingly in favor of gay rights, even from the very beginnings of the student movement. The students who ran the newspapers at each university were accustomed to positioning themselves and their

---

<sup>5</sup> Catherine Lugg shared this story with me in personal communication and gave me permission to include it here.

newspapers against the university establishment and the state legislature. When university administrators or state politicians sought to oppress people, the newspapers advocated for marginalized groups and opposed any who wanted to support the straight white status quo. This was a significant asset in the visibility project, though the newspapers were also an outlet for homophobic students to write letters and columns about their disgust for queer people. The newspapers laid bare both the support and the opposition. That queer students were able to carve out space for themselves is all the more impressive and speaks to their resilience.

The Offices of Student Affairs were in part meant to foster and encourage diversity amongst the student body. Their presence meant queer students had a natural place to go in the administration to address grievances. However, Student Affairs personnel did not always consider queer students as part of the mission of diversity on their campus. These offices existed to serve the students—all of the students, not just straight white men. Even so, that privileged group remained central to the universities. Students who reacted with hostility and violence towards queer students—like Bill Wade’s tormenters or the Kappa Alpha students at UF who called for the public execution of queers—did not find themselves facing significant punishment from the university, if any. This lack of disciplinary action marginalized queer students. University administrators had not done the work of questioning the foundational assumptions of the university in terms of gender, race, or sexuality. It was clear who remained privileged on campus by the actions the administrators took when students behaved badly. Students, left to doing this work from the ground up, used their own spaces and cultural products to create features of the university landscapes in which they could



function. Drag shows and gay bars were prominent in this effort in the mid-1970s and early 1980s. However, bigoted straight people, who resented the existence of queer spaces and specifically drag, often breached these safe spaces.

The Trask-Bush amendment of 1981 somewhat complicates the story of silent and unsupportive universities. The Student Affairs officers at each university openly opposed the bill. Although UF and FSU did not go as far as USF did in filing suit against the state, this group of administrators understood that the amendment put them in an impossible situation. Although they may not have made the overtures to the gay student groups to make them feel welcome (quite the contrary, in the case of UF), people like FSU Vice President for Student Affairs Daniel Walbolt were at least willing to be on the record in opposition to the amendment. However, it can never be a simple story of heroism, since the University of Florida still sought to remove UFLAGS from its office after the Trask-Bush amendment was ruled unconstitutional. Just when students thought it was safe to go back in the student union, the university environment empowered the Sigma Epsilon Phi students to remind them that, “U FAGS have no Reitz.”

In some crucial moments, the universities remained silent or showed a lack of leadership. This is important to understanding the campus climate. None of the three universities studied here advocated for queer students during Anita Bryant’s campaign in the late 1970s. They had that option, but instead remained quiet during the ordeal. Students within each university community often felt free to vocalize their feelings about what was happening in the state and nation but university administrators remained silent. In Florida, the religious and conservative groups who supported Bryant may have

been tied to the power structures of the universities and the Board of Regents. After all, Bryant was championing the status quo. This administrative silence was also evident during the Bill Wade debacle. In the early 1980s, Florida universities were so beholden to their alumni and “tradition” that the thought of having a gender-bending Homecoming Princess sent many people into a panic. Florida State University—including the Student Affairs division—did not support Wade when he won the election. In fact, they further oppressed him when they allowed other students to harass him to the point that Wade left the university for his own safety.

Finally, the university administrations lacked leadership during the AIDS crisis, even though, by the mid-1980s, Florida had the third highest infection rate in the country. Because they had not done the work of proactive queer inclusion (including rejecting a scholarship for an out gay medical student), when their student community faced an enormous and deadly health crisis, they were not prepared to respond adequately. The University of Florida teaching hospital went so far as to relocate one AIDS patient to San Francisco, rather than caring for him themselves. It was community organizing that created health networks for queer people, not university administrators.

Silence at the institutional level increases the need to understand the larger context of the state and national political scene to understand the forces working with and against queer students. The second question asks how the political and social contexts in which each university functioned were significant to queer emergence. It is important to remember that these universities were in the South: all three were situated in towns with strong religious communities unafraid to voice their disapproval of queer visibility. The South is not often considered socially progressive, and while it was not

truly safe to be out nearly anywhere in the United States in the 1970s, there is truth behind the stereotype. That students could create anything approaching a safe space in this context is remarkable.

Climates evolve, however. The demedicalization of homosexuality by the American Psychological Association in 1973 meant that campus psychologists were able to be helpful to queer students rather than treat them as diseased. This helped legitimize queer student space on campuses, but two barriers remained: the perception that official campus recognition of queer student groups might result in those groups being used as covers for seducing younger students, and the legal argument that recognizing queer student organizations would defy state laws against homosexuality. Queer students worked to disrupt or eliminate those concerns, but campus recognition came only reluctantly and intermittently.

Anita Bryant's rise to notoriety in 1977 threw this need for visibility into stark relief. Bryant tied religion to political conservatism, thus requiring queer students to confront opposition from two increasingly unified directions. They had to justify their existence in both religious and political terms. The Florida universities operated in the context of considerable right-wing pressure to push queer people into hiding. They did not always advocate for their queer students, but the queer students advocated for themselves, even as Bryant gave people language to use against them. Fraternities coopted this language, and they ruled these Southern schools in the 1980s. They ran roughshod over queer students, and not a single fraternity spoke up for their queer brethren. As conservatism expanded on a national level, so did the privilege of straight white Protestant students on university campuses. The national conversation about who

was legitimate and who was not—a calculus that always devalued queer people—empowered those students who saw themselves as the gatekeepers of a bigoted tradition. Homophobic harassment increased in the early 1980s, on and off campus, despite the work that queer students did to retain their presence on university campuses.

Furthermore, Florida universities were situated in a landscape in the early 1980s in which an amendment to remove gay students from campus received bipartisan support from the state legislature and passed. The universities did more to support their students during the Trask-Bush assault than they had during the Bryant debacle, probably because their financial survival was on the line. If they enforced Trask-Bush, they would have been in clear violation of the students' First Amendment rights. But defiance risked losing all state funding, without which the universities would have been unable to function. Thus, to varying degrees, the universities worked to oppose Trask-Bush. USF went so far as to join Education Commissioner Ralph Turlington in a lawsuit. Although the state climate was hostile to queer people, the students at these universities had become enough of a presence that the universities went against the legislature to varying degrees.

AIDS was a national health crisis of unprecedented proportions. Just as universities tended to be silent on AIDS and showed a lack of protective impulse for their most vulnerable students, the state and federal governments did little to nothing to educate people about AIDS prevention. Even though Florida had the third-highest infection rate in the country, Florida Governor Bob Graham turned down grants for AIDS research. President Ronald Reagan did not even mention HIV or AIDS publicly until

1987. This silence was lethal, and in its wake the students and community members had to form support networks at a time when homophobic people thought their ideas about queer people as diseased had scientific merit. The stigma of AIDS attached itself to gay men in particular in such a way that has still not faded.

Finally, this dissertation explores how queer students interacted with other social movements. Early in the queer movement, they learned from and interacted with other grassroots activist groups. Eventually, they adapted their own means of activism and employed mainstream tactics like legal outlets. In the early 1970s, queer students interacted in limited ways with other groups, such as the black freedom movement and the feminist movement. The Gay Liberation Front positioned itself to work with these groups, and this allegiance indicated a desire to end all forms of oppression. Gay people in these activist circles were explicitly forming alliances with other marginalized groups intending to upend the social hierarchy. This sort of partnership meant a greater chance for liberation, rather than one group demeaning another for its own gain. Like these other movements, queer students used visibility and education to reduce the homophobia of their classmates and community members. This did not always work. The spaces they created for themselves within bars and drag shows were emotionally important for many of the queer people who patronized them (though they might also result in problems like alcoholism). However, they did not always serve an educational function. Straight people who entered these spaces were not consistently less homophobic as a result of their exposure.

Anita Bryant surely posed challenges to the queer communities in Florida, but she also made it possible for queer people around the nation to voice their objections in

a way they had never been able to before. Now that non-queer Americans could no longer deny the existence of queer people altogether, queer people could use this visibility to form support groups. While they did not form groups as powerful as the NAACP in the late 1970s, it became increasingly clear how capable queer people were of organizing themselves in the face of violence. There was a downside, however. Thanks to Bryant's efforts, by the early 1980s, conservatives were skilled in tying homophobia to racism through rhetoric about citizenship (positioning only white heterosexuals as "real" citizens) and child protection (the presence of queer teachers or people of color in schools would be to the detriment of those straight white children), and they had legitimized a culture of violence against queer people and people of color.

Often, these forces of conservatism sought to force apart oppressed groups by playing into ideas of black homophobia and other vectors for division. Separated from their coalitions, queer people, poor people, and people of color had to struggle separately and against each other, even though some people were queer, brown, and poor.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, because religious conservatives had control of the conversation about the legitimacy and legality of queer people in public spaces, queer people had to defend themselves. "We are not sick, we are not amoral, we are not monsters" became the discourse, rather than, "We are healthy, we are good citizens, we are your loved ones." Under these conditions, the queer students at their universities did a lot of work simply to maintain their presence on campus. Students like Bill Wade, who had the audacity not only to be out but to upset people's ideas of gender, drew the most fire and those who rallied around him became activists.

---

<sup>6</sup> Christina B. Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

Legal strategies to cement queer visibility became common by 1982. When Trask-Bush threatened to remove their organizations from campus, the USF students formed a group in direct defiance of the law as a way to force the issue. And when the UF administration kicked UFLAGS out of its office, the students sued the university. This kind of direct action had not always been possible for queer Florida students before the early 1980s, but because they had established themselves as a part of campus that deserved to live free of harassment, they were able to convince the Board of Regents to reverse the university's decision.

The AIDS crisis changed the climate for students at these universities, as did the Howard Appeldorf and Councille Blye murders. Before AIDS, homophobic straight students felt empowered to speak against the queer students, deny them funding or advertising space, or to say horrible things about them in print. AIDS did not reduce this sort of attack—in fact, it may have intensified it. When queer students saw that their university communities were not going to support them during AIDS—that they would be contributing to the invisibility that killed people in the 1980s—they did the work themselves. They formed their own community groups, supported each other, and did the best they could. It was often not enough. Even people who did not have AIDS, like Appeldorf and Blye, died because of the lethal silence.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This dissertation study represents one of the first lengthy explorations of queer students in higher education settings, one of the few to include women, and the only such work to discuss queer student activism in the South.<sup>7</sup> “Queers on Campus”

---

<sup>7</sup> The first significant work of gay and lesbian education history is John D'Emilio's 1992 *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992). His book is a collection

addresses the social and political landscapes of three Florida universities and positions the queer students as activists. This positionality is critical to understanding the experiences of queer emergence, because students who may not have ever considered themselves activists were engaging in that work because of their context. Just as queer theory shows us that “outness” is not a binary proposition, neither is activism. One need not participate in a sit-in to be an activist. Those who participated in this activism may not have even seen themselves as activists. But when the forces of oppression—including, often, the university administrations, as well as state legislators and anti-gay activists—insist on invisibility from queer people, defying that demand is often their best course for achieving full personhood. This study therefore speaks to a silence in the history of student activism, which has not accounted for queer students.

The historiography of student activism can benefit from considering queer university student activism. With a few important exceptions, this body of scholarship has not included queer students or queer theoretical analysis.<sup>8</sup> The Florida students discussed here contribute important understandings to the history of southern student activism. Other scholars have shown why students in the south took longer to become

---

of twenty essays and is focused primarily on northeastern universities. The second, Patrick Dilley's *Queer Man on Campus: A History of Non-Heterosexual College Men, 1945-2000* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2002) uses queer theory to place male sexuality in historical context. His work excludes women. Finally, two books on Harvard came out in the mid-2000s. In 2003, Douglass Shand-Tucci looks to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in *The Crimson Letter: Harvard, Homosexuality, and the Shaping of American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003). His work examines the interaction of gay men who studied there and their impact on American culture. William Wright studied the 1920 purge of gay Harvard students in *Harvard's Secret Court: The Savage 1920 Purge of Campus Homosexuals* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005). James T. Sears does discuss queer southern people, and some of them were students, but does not focus on queer student activism in particular. See Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> For two accounts of the history of queer student activism in higher education settings, see Brett Beemyn, “The Silence is Broken: A History of the First Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Student Groups,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (April 2003): 205-223 and D’Emilio, *Making Trouble*.



involved in the student movement but that their tactics were just as effective.<sup>9</sup> Some queer students were involved in anti-war, anti-racist, and feminist movements, and others were not. However, they came to activism after personal experiences with homophobia, much like the students in Gregg L. Michel's work got involved with activism after witnessing racism.<sup>10</sup> A personal interaction with oppression increased their consciousness and inspired them to act. As was the case with Midwestern students,<sup>11</sup> these queer Florida students were far from the centers of activism, and yet did the work of testing boundaries to make space for themselves.

Like black student efforts, queer activism on campus changed over time. Both groups wanted to make places for themselves on campuses that considered them "non-traditional" and resented the intrusion on straight white male spaces. At times they were able to work with other activist groups towards the goal of more liberated campus communities, but at times, both black student groups and queer student groups split from other movements to focus on their own struggles.<sup>12</sup> Black student organizations, in

---

<sup>9</sup> Robert Cohen, David J. Snyder, Dan T. Carter, eds. *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Christopher A. Huff, "Radicals Between the Hedges: The Origins of the New Left at the University of Georgia and the 1968 Sit-In," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 94, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 179-209; Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South, 1960-1970* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Gregg L. Michel, *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Robbie Lieberman, *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 2004); Mary Ann Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland: The Sixties at Indiana University* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Stefan M. Bradley, *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Stefan Bradley, "'Gym Crow Must Go!' Black Student Activism at Columbia University, 1967-1968," *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 163-181; Claybourne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Harvard University Press, 1995); William H. Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest: Black Student Activism in a White University* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985); VP Franklin, "African American Student Activism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,"

many ways, achieved more success than did queer students, particularly in their demands to hire more black faculty, recruit more black students, and to establish black studies departments on campuses. Queer students could not even ask for these things. To this day, there has been no concerted effort on the part of college students to demand that universities hire queer faculty. Indeed, many states do not have employment protections for queer people and not all universities are friendly to queer perspectives. Some departments have queer studies departments, but to date, no university in the US offers a PhD in queer studies. Homosexuality was considered a mental disorder until 1973, and the American Psychiatric Association removed Gender Identity Disorder from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 2013.<sup>13</sup> Overcoming the mental illness stigma is one struggle black people have not had

---

*Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 105-109; Peniel E. Joseph, "Dashikis and Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement," *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 182-203; Harry G. Lefever, *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005); James P. Marshall, *Student Activism and Civil Rights in Mississippi: Protest, Politics, and the Struggle for Racial Justice, 1960-1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013); Richard P. McCormick, *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students at the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Peter Wallenstein, ed. *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008); Joy Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois 1965-75* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> That said, "Gender Dysphoria" is still a diagnosis meant to communicate the emotional distress some people experience when they feel a disconnect between their gender identity and their assigned-at-birth gender. Under this diagnosis, they can seek treatment and, if they wish, transition care without the stigma of disorder. It is worth noting that homosexuality underwent a similar evolution in the DSM: after "homosexuality" itself was removed, the APA continued to recognize "Sexual Orientation Disturbance" as a diagnosis for people who felt in conflict with their sexual orientation in the DSM-II. In the 1980s, the DSM-III replaced Sexual Orientation Disturbance with "ego-dystonic homosexuality," or "a sustained pattern of overt homosexual arousal that is a source of distress." This was deleted as a diagnostic entity in 1987. See Zack Ford, "APA Revises Manual: Being Transgender is No Longer a Mental Disorder," *Think Progress* (December 3, 2012) <http://thinkprogress.org/lgbt/2012/12/03/1271431/apa-revises-manual-being-transgender-is-no-longer-a-mental-disorder/#> (Accessed February 27, 2014) and LGBT Mental Health Syllabus [http://www.aglp.org/gap/1\\_history/](http://www.aglp.org/gap/1_history/) (Accessed February 27, 2014).

to face. While black people have endured unparalleled violence and bigotry in the United States, the two groups differ in the forms their marginalization and resistance took in the 1970s and 1980s.

Finally, the histories of queer student activism and anti-war activism can inform each other. Was the queer student movement reformist or revolutionary? It depends on context. The Gay Liberation Front wanted revolution. They were explicitly informed by Third World Marxist perspectives and held workshops on oppression of all kinds.<sup>14</sup> Their agenda went beyond just queer rights. Many college students in the mid-1970s and on, however, were more informed by the New Left ideological framework. These students were motivated by university contexts, just as the liberal-progressive historians argue was the case with anti-war protestors. Rather than seeking to upset the system, these groups wanted to reform their environments to make them more hospitable.<sup>15</sup> Considering queer student efforts can bring together the liberal-progressive and leftist understandings of student activism.

Aside from filling a gap in the literature surrounding queer student experiences in higher education, "Queers on Campus" examines how gender is constructed and enforced in higher education settings, and the consequences of defiance. The

---

<sup>14</sup> Max Elbaum, "What Legacy from the Radical Internationalism of 1968?" *Radical History Review* 82 (Winter 2002): 37-64.

<sup>15</sup> Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Larry Isaac, Steve McDonald, and Greg Lukasik. "Takin' It from the Streets: How the Sixties Mass Movement Revitalized Unionization," *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 1 (2006): 46-96; Andrew L. Johns, "Doves Among Hawks: Republican Opposition to the Vietnam War, 1964-1968," *Peace and Change* 31, no. 4 (2006): 585-628; George N. Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1987); Joel Lefkowitz, "Movement Outcomes and Movement Decline: The Vietnam War and the Antiwar Movement," *New Political Science* 27, no. 1 (2005): 1-22; Melvin Small, "The Doves Ascendant: The American Antiwar Movement in 1968," *South Central Review* 16 (Winter 1999): 43-52; Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002); Melvin Small, *At the Water's Edge: American Politics and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005).

theoretical underpinnings of queer studies—the construction of gender, multidimensional interactions between different facets of a person’s identity, the transformative potential of queering spaces—are evident in this story. The presence of queer students laid bare issues of gender construction, as queer students performed in drag, ran for Homecoming Princess, and challenged notions of masculinity and femininity. The Bill Wade story is one example, but homophobic attacks on queer male students for not being masculine enough were rampant over the 15-year span covered here. That queer people might disrupt the gender binary was threatening to people who felt they had a stake in their ideas of what it meant to be a man or a woman, and they did a great deal to undermine the queer students’ efforts.

Sometimes these self-identified stakeholders responded with violence, or threats of violence, as the students on the UF Plaza of the Americas did in 1982. These students believed that queerness undermined the very fabric of American society, and that they must defend it forcefully: “Clean Up America—Shoot a Queer. Everyone Should Do His Part—Take Aim Today.”<sup>16</sup> They pathologized queer identities and resorted to biblical evidence of the nature of humankind and “correct” gender and sexual relations. This form of oppression points to an important use for queer theory. As some queer students saw themselves as more assimilationist and used mainstream tactics like lawsuits to gain or maintain traction on campus, it became clear that queer theory was even more imperative as a framework. The students may have been doing less obvious work in deconstructing their own gender identities, but those who sought to

---

<sup>16</sup> Roxana Kopetman, “Student Petitioners Accused of Harassing Gays,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, May 18, 1981.

oppress them continued to use hysteria over eroding gender roles as one of their prime weapons.

Embedded in these struggles is queer pedagogy of gender and identity. Some queer students participated in the gender-baiting and admonished gender-benders to assimilate. Others, even from the very beginning, wanted to “exist in your face” and rejected assimilationist politics and practices.<sup>17</sup> They did important activist work through educating themselves and their communities about identity, sexuality, gender, and the contours of liberation efforts. By engaging and often struggling with this pedagogy, the queer students at UF, FSU, and USF reshaped their educational spaces.

### **Practical Implications**

Queer history has yet to integrate fully into historical scholarship, within or outside of education history. Beyond merely acknowledging the existence of queer people, mainstream historical scholarship needs to embrace the effects of queer activism on the course of history. Historians and education historians in particular need to consider the implications for queer people in the future when they write their recommendations for further study, alongside people of color, women, immigrants, the working class, and other marginalized groups. Karen Graves has shown how many historical questions can be addressed more fully by considering LGBTQ issues.<sup>18</sup> This dissertation seeks to justify the inclusion of queer people in education history through showing how queer university students have changed their institutions.

---

<sup>17</sup> Hiram Ruiz, interview by Jess Clawson; October 10, 2012, transcript, FQH3, Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

<sup>18</sup> Karen L. Graves, “‘So, You Think You Have a History?’: Taking a Q from Lesbian and Gay Studies in Writing Education History,” *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (November 2012): 466-487.

This study also has implications for curriculum. Queer history needs to come out of the dusty corners of a few graduate programs and become fully part of history and education curricula. Good scholarship already exists. Graves's book illuminates the Cold War context in a way no other work has. Blount's scholarship shows how central gender is to the educational project. Both of these books highlight ongoing oppression. "Queers on Campus" shows a new side of university activism and the ways universities continue to enforce gender performances. Students deserve to know these stories because without this knowledge, their understandings of US history are incomplete. But it goes beyond this consideration for academic fulfillment. As Graves argues, if people think they do not have a history, they can lose their moorings.<sup>19</sup> Queer students now cannot look to examples of queer people being strong, using their voices, and changing their contexts if those examples are not included as part of the story of US history. And this void leaves room for oppression to happen within classrooms.

Equal protection and equal access are civil rights that are often denied to queer students in educational spaces. Too often, they are silenced completely, through shame or fear or proposed legislation, in the case of Tennessee's "Don't Say Gay" bill.<sup>20</sup> The threat of exposure and the fear of bullying affect students whether they are gay or not. Teachers have been known to bully students for perceived queerness. If male students

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 467.

<sup>20</sup> In 2012 and again in 2013, legislators in Tennessee proposed a bill that would have banned elementary and middle-school teachers from discussing sexual activity unrelated to "natural human reproduction." The bill did not pass in 2012, but in 2013, House sponsor, Republican Rep. John Ragan amended the legislation to require counselors or principals to identify students who might be a threat. The Senate version meant to give schools the authority to inform parents about children who talked to school officials about their sexuality. Ragan intends to reintroduce the legislation in 2014.

are harassed for wearing earrings, even straight men cannot express themselves.<sup>21</sup> But for queer students, the stakes are especially high. They may have no safe spaces at all, if their homes and schools are not places they can be themselves. And if their school environments are not safe because they do not have equal protection, then they do not have equal access to learning. By exposing students to homophobic opinions, triggering them, and putting them in vulnerable places (which can happen even with “well-meaning” teachers who do not conceive of themselves as homophobic), educators can put queer students in crisis. Heteronormative and heterosexist schooling environments reduce queer students’ capacity to learn or retain information because they can feel threatened. That some students do not have to constantly justify their existence constantly is a privilege that queer students did not and do not have. Some students are privileged because they do not have to hear negative opinions about themselves from fellow students, community campus administrators, public figures, and state legislatures—sometimes all in one day. The queer students studied here did not have that privilege, and the emotional, intellectual, and academic burden denied them both equal access and equal protection.<sup>22</sup>

This dissertation itself was done in the context of much of this burden. I am a queer scholar, in the sense that I am queer and my work is queer. Over the course of writing the dissertation, I saw things happening around me that meant I had to take time away from writing and teaching to do activist work in my community. A trans\* friend was

---

<sup>21</sup> Catherine Lugg, “Sissies, Faggots, Lezzies, and Dykes: Gender, Sexual Orientation, and a New Politics of Education?” *Educational Administration Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (February 2003): 95-135.

<sup>22</sup> For a thoughtful discussion of how heterosexism is enshrined in public schools and the ways this harms queer children, please read C.J. Pascoe, “Becoming Mr. Cougar: Institutionalizing Heterosexuality and Homophobia at River High School,” in *Sexualities in Education: A Reader*, Therese Quinn and Erica R. Meiners, eds. (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 145-157.

thrown out of a store when she wanted to try on clothes. My office door was defaced several times. Two law students keyed the word “faggot” into a law professor’s car at UF. The UF administration spent \$10,000 installing a large statue of a white heterosexual couple dancing in the Plaza of the Americas—the site of that horrible Kappa Alpha “shoot a queer” incident. Students voiced concern over the reification of white heteronormativity and were roundly dismissed by the university. Also at UF, the office of LGBT Affairs wanted to print t-shirts that said, “Queer: Fine by UF.” But the head of LGBT Affairs got a phone call outside of normal business hours from someone in the administration who said that she could not print these t-shirts, use the Gator logo, or use University of Florida colors, because the university did not want to appear to be endorsing queer students. I participated in teach-ins, protests, lawsuits, and community support, not because I wanted to boost my credibility in some way, but because I had to for the survival of my community. Writing about a history one seems to be living positions the researcher to see how urgent the implications are. Not only could the inclusion of queer students help queer people connect to their history and heritage—one which is not passed down generationally as is the case in communities of color—it could also serve to reduce this burden by educating homophobia out of people.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There is much more to be written about queer education history. Education history would be stronger for an intentional focus on trans\* and genderqueer people, and how their radical reimaginings of gender and bodies have reshaped their lives and their educational spaces. A 2011 joint study by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force reports that of those who expressed a trans identity or gender non-conformity in K-12, 78 percent were harassed,



35 percent suffered physical assault, and 12 percent survived sexual violence. Harassment was so severe that it led 15 percent of these children to leave school in K-12 or higher education. Respondents who were harassed and mistreated by teachers in K-12 settings—31 percent said their abuse was from educators—showed dramatically worse health outcomes than those who did not experience this abuse.<sup>23</sup> These outcomes implicate higher education beyond the dropout rate. If universities consider queer students at all, at best they embrace a model that continues to privilege financially secure white cis gay students, who are increasingly mainstream.<sup>24</sup> This privileging of only some queer identities continues to marginalize trans\* and genderqueer students, among others. In order to avoid integrating queer identities into a burning neoliberal house, we must look at the ways trans\* and genderqueer people educate themselves inside and outside of academia and how they queered their educational spaces. Those of us who defy gender expectations, who resist the “gay or straight” category, who wish to see a wild reimagining of the world have visions for higher education. But this is not new—this has been part of education history for as long as there have been bodies in schools.

Once we have moved past visibility, what is next? Queer theory tells us we must look at resistance. What have trans\* and genderqueer people brought to their educations to challenge the gender binary and its lethal exclusion of people who cannot be easily placed in a men’s or women’s dorm? And if their project was incomplete, does

---

<sup>23</sup> Jaime M. Grant, Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling, “Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, Executive Summary.” (Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011): 2.

<sup>24</sup> J. Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013).

that mean we should not learn from it? Too often, educational spaces cannot accommodate bodies that do not adhere to hetero-capitalist logic, and so part of this work will involve a greater understanding of community education efforts. Trans\* and genderqueer people need to see ourselves in history. This is not an academic point. In a time when trans women of color are being murdered at an unbelievable rate, we need to boost the centrality of trans\* people in educational contexts.<sup>25</sup>

Along with this insistence on centralizing those people whose gender identities are marginalized even within gay and lesbian discourses comes a need to study the specific experiences of queer people of color in higher education history. It is too easy to privilege the voices that have always been easiest to hear—those of white people—especially when the desegregation of higher education institutions was in no way complete. This dissertation does include the voices of some people of color, but not nearly enough. And simple inclusion is insufficient: how does a queer of color critique change the story? Beyond just adding more people of color into queer education history, we should approach studies by centralizing queer of color voices, including those of trans\* people of color, lest we omit these important groups from our history and analysis.

Finally, this study examines the lives of students in higher education contexts, and Graves, Blount, and Harbeck discuss teachers in K-12 settings. High school students have done activist work that needs greater inclusion in the literature on the history of student activism. Students have formed Gay-Straight Alliances out of hostile

---

<sup>25</sup> Mara Keisling, "State of the Transgender Union: Time for Collective Action Toward Racial Justice," LGBTQNation.com, January 27, 2014. <http://www.lgbtqnation.com/2014/01/state-of-the-transgender-union-time-for-collective-action-toward-racial-justice/> (Accessed January 27, 2014).

environments and thereby altered their education settings. Some of this feels contemporary, but its roots are historical. Our understandings of the teachers' contexts from Graves and Blount, and from education policy as Catherine Lugg has written, can inform the environments in which queer K-12 students have operated. Oral histories of people who participated in the work of making their schools safe, or at least trying to, can be a powerful tool in illuminating the lives of students who seem invisible. There is no reason students should have to wait until college to understand activism.

I was at the History of Education Society conference in November 2013 and talking to a non-academic friend on the phone. He was attempting to understand why I was at the conference, what my work is about, and why any of it matters. "Isn't queer history just history?" he asked. "Aren't queer people just people?" Yes and no. Queer people are just people, but people who have been invisible too long. After concluding our conversation, I wandered to the book publishers' tables. As I surveyed the books on offer, I realized that any of them could have the word "straight" included in the title and be accurate. I thumbed through index after index, looking for queer inclusion, and rarely found it. When I did, it was just a sentence or two in a larger story about non-queer people. I was growing weary and frustrated with this exercise, although much of the scholarship I was encountering was excellent in many ways. Indeed, a good deal of it seemed oriented to social justice, which in some ways made the exclusion of queer people even more painful. Then I came across *Fit to Teach*, and let out a deep breath I had not realized I was holding. Here, at last, was a book that was not about straight people. Here was a book about my community. I had known the book for years, of

course. Passages of it I have nearly committed to memory. But seeing it on the table, amidst a sea of straightness, was liberating.

Education history has been told from the straight perspective, even though issues of queerness affect us all. We each construct and perform our gender. This is not to say the non-queer work is not good. I have read, loved, been moved by, and most importantly, learned from the work of education historians whom I admire and respect deeply. But this does not mean that we can allow the straight perspective to continue to dominate. This dissertation is an attempt to disrupt that perspective and redirect the narrative to queer lives, which have been present in every facet of education throughout history. It is no longer sufficient to say, "My work or my class is not *about* queer people." If it is about people, it is about queer people.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Anderson, Terry H. *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Alligator* (Gainesville, FL), 1970-1985.
- Bailey, Beth. *Sex in the Heartland*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Bruce Bawer, *A Place at the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.
- Beemyn, Brett. "The Silence is Broken: A History of the First Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Student Groups." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (April 2003): 205-223.
- Behind Closed Doors*. Directed by Allyson A. Beutke and Scott Litvack, 2000. DVD. Gainesville: Documentary Institute in the College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida, 2000.
- Berkowitz, Dana and Linda Liska Belgrave. "'She Works Hard for the Money': Drag Queens and the Management of their Contradictory Status of Celebrity and Marginality." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 39, no. 2 (April 2010): 159-186.
- Biondi, Martha. *The Black Revolution on Campus*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.
- Blount, Jackie M. *Fit to Teach: Same-Sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the Twentieth Century*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "From Exemplar to Deviant: Same-Sex Relationships Among Women Superintendents, 1909-1976." *Educational Studies* 35, no. 2 (2004): 103-122.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The History of Teaching and Talking about Sex in Schools." *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2003): 610-615.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Spinsters, Bachelors, and Other Gender Transgressors in School Employment, 1850-1990." *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 1 (2000): 83-101.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Manliness and the Gendered Construction of School Administration in the USA." *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice* 2, no. 2 (1999): 55-68.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Manly Men and Womanly Women: Deviance, Gender Role Polarization and the Shift in Women's School Employment, 1900-1976." *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no. 2 (1996): 318-339.
- Boca Raton News* (Boca Raton, FL), 1975-1982.
- Bradley, Stefan M. *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "'Gym Crow Must Go!' Black Student Activism at Columbia University, 1967-1968." *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 163-181.
- Braukman, Stacey. "'Nothing Else Matters But Sex': Cold War Narratives of Deviance and the Search for Lesbian Teachers in Florida, 1959-1963." *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 553-575.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Communists and Perverts under the Palms: The Johns Committee in Florida, 1956-1965*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
- Cain, Roy. "Disclosure and Secrecy Among Gay Men in the United States and Canada." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 1 (July 1991): 24-45.
- Carson, Claybourne. *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Clawson, Jessica. "Administrative Recalcitrance and Government Intervention: Desegregation and the University of Florida, 1962-1972." *Florida Historical Quarterly* 89 (Winter 2011): 347-374.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Coming Out of the Campus Closet: The Emerging Visibility of Queer Students at the University of Florida, 1970-1982." *Educational Studies*, in press.
- The Committee*. DVD. Produced by students and faculty at University of Central Florida. Orlando: University of Central Florida, 2011.
- Cohen, Robert, David J. Snyder, and Dan T. Carter, eds. *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
- Coloma, Roland Sintos. "Ladlad and Parrhesiastic Pedagogy: Unfurling LGBT Politics and Education in the Global South." *Curriculum Inquiry* 43, no. 4 (2013): 579-598.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Putting Queer to Work: Examining Empire and Education." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19, no. 5 (2006): 639-657.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Que(e)r(y)ing Nationalism: History, Nation, and Imperialism." *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 19, no. 3 (2003): 51-70
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Can I Speak and Do You Hear Me?: Quest(ion)s for r/evolution." *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 7, no. 1 (2002): 61-68
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Who's Afraid of Foucault? History, Theory, and Becoming Subjects." *History of Education Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (May 2011): 184-210.
- Collier, Peter and David Horowitz. *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts about the Sixties*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2006)
- Crotty, Michael. *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (London: Sage Publications, 1998).
- Crume, Allison Hawkins. "The Historical Development of the Student Government Association as a Student Sub-Culture at The Florida State University: 1946 1976" (Dissertation, Florida State University 2004).
- Daytona Beach Morning Journal* (Daytona, FL), 1980-1981.
- DeGroot, Gerard J. *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- D'Emilio, John. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- Dilley, Patrick. *Queer Man on Campus: A History of Non-Heterosexual College Men, 1945-2000*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2002.
- Duberman, Martin. *Stonewall*. New York: Plume, 1994.
- Echols, Alice. *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Eisenmann, Linda. *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945-1965*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.
- Elbaum, Max. "What Legacy from the Radical Internationalism of 1968?" *Radical History Review* 82 (Winter 2002): 37-64.

- Eskridge, William N. *"Dishonorable Passions": Sodomy Laws in America, 1861-2003* (New York: Viking Press, 2008).
- Evans, Nancy J. "Guiding Principles: A Review and Analysis of Student Affairs Philosophical Statements." *Journal of College Student Development* 42, no. 4 (Jul-Aug 2001): 359-77.
- Evening Independent* (St. Petersburg, FL) 1970-1982.
- Exum, William H. *Paradoxes of Protest: Black Student Activism in a White University*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985.
- Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Fendrich, James Max. "The Forgotten Movement: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement." *Sociological Inquiry* 73, no. 3 (2003): 338-358.
- Fejes, Fred. *Gay Rights and Moral Panic: The Origins of America's Debate on Homosexuality*. New York: Palgrave, 2008.
- Flambeau* (Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL), 1970-1985.
- Florida State University Special Collections (Tallahassee, FL).
- Frank, Gillian. "'The Civil Rights of Parents': Race and Conservative Politics in Anita Bryant's Campaign against Gay Rights in 1970s Florida." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22, no. 1 (January 2013): 126-160.
- Franklin, VP. "African American Student Activism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century." *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 105-109.
- Frisch, Michael. *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- Gainesville Sun* (Gainesville, FL), 1970-1985.
- Gallant, Thomas W. "'Got a Revolution, Go To Revolution': Student Activism and the Antiwar Movement. An Historical Assessment." *Historiein* 9 (2009): 57-66.
- Gallo, Marcia M. *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement*. New York: Seal Press, 2007.



Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. "Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, Executive Summary." Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011.

Graves, Karen. *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

\_\_\_\_\_. "So, You Think You Have a History?': Taking a Q from Lesbian and Gay Studies in Writing Education History." *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (November 2012): 466-487.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Political Pawns in an Educational Endgame: Reflections on Bryant, Briggs, and Some Twentieth-Century School Questions." *History of Education Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (February 2013): 1-20.

Greenberg, Mark I. *University of South Florida: The First Fifty Years, 1956-2006*. Tampa: University of South Florida, 2006.

Halberstam, J. Jack. *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2013.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, Mary Murphy, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly. *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987.

Hanhardt, Christina B. *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Harbeck, Karen M. *Gay and Lesbian Educators: Personal Freedoms, Public Constraints*. Malden, MA: Amethyst Press & Productions, 1997.

*Harlan Daily Enterprise* (Harlan, KY), 1972.

Heineman, Kenneth J. *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. New York: New York University Press, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Put Your Bodies Upon the Wheels: Student Revolt in the 1960s*. Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2001.

Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Howard, John. *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

- Huff, Christopher A. "Radicals Between the Hedges: The Origins of the New Left at the University of Georgia and the 1968 Sit-In." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 94, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 179-209.
- Hughes, Tonda L. and Sharon C. Wilsnack. "Research on Lesbians and Alcohol: Gaps and Implications." *Alcohol Health and Research World*, 18, no. 3 (1994): 202-205
- Humphries, Emma. "Accommodating Jane: The GI Bill and Coeducation at the University of Florida." Paper delivered at American Education Research Association conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 2011.
- Isaac, Larry, Steve McDonald, and Greg Lukasik. "Takin' It from the Streets: How the Sixties Mass Movement Revitalized Unionization." *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 1 (2006): 46-96.
- Johns, Andrew L. "Doves Among Hawks: Republican Opposition to the Vietnam War, 1964-1968." *Peace and Change* 31, no. 4 (2006): 585-628.
- Johnson, David K. *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Joseph, Peniel E. "Dashikis and Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement." *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 182-203.
- Katsiaficas, George N. *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968*. Boston: South End Press, 1987.
- Kaminski, Elizabeth. "Listening to Drag; Music, Performance and the Construction of Oppositional Culture." Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2003.
- Karabel, Jerome. *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2005.
- Keisling, Mara. "State of the Transgender Union: Time for Collective Action Toward Racial Justice." LGBTQNation.com, January 27, 2014.  
<http://www.lgbtqnation.com/2014/01/state-of-the-transgender-union-time-for-collective-action-toward-racial-justice/>
- Krieger, Susan. "Lesbian Identity and Community: Recent Social Science Literature." *Signs* 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1982): 91-96.
- Lakeland Ledger* (Lakeland, FL), 1972-1977.

- Lastra, Frank Trebín. *Ybor City: The Making of a Landmark Town*. Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2007.
- Lefever, Harry G. *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005.
- Lefkowitz, Joel. "Movement Outcomes and Movement Decline: The Vietnam War and the Antiwar Movement." *New Political Science* 27, no. 1 (2005): 1-22
- Levine, D.O. *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1986.
- Lieberman, Robbie. *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest*. Columbia: University of Missouri, 2004.
- Link, William A. *Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *William Friday: Power, Purpose, and American Higher Education*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Lugg, Catherine A. "Thinking about Sodomy: Public Schools, Legal Panopticons, and Queers." *Educational Policy* 20, no. 1 (2006): 35-58.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Our Straight-laced Administrators: LGBT School Administrators, the Law, and the Assimilationist Imperative." *Journal of School Leadership* 13, no. 1 (2003): 51-85.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sissies, Faggots, Lezzies, and Dykes: Gender, Sexual Orientation, and a New Politics of Education?" *Educational Administration Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2003): 95-134.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Religious Right and Public Education: The Paranoid Politics of Homophobia." *Educational Policy* 12, no. 3 (1998): 267-283.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Why's a Nice Dyke Like You Embracing this Postmodern Crap?" *Journal of School Leadership* 18, no. 2 (March 2008): 164-199.
- Marshall, James P. *Student Activism and Civil Rights in Mississippi: Protest, Politics, and the Struggle for Racial Justice, 1960-1965*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013.
- Marshall, J. Stanley. *The Tumultuous Sixties: Campus Unrest and Student Life at a Southern University*. Tallahassee: Sentry Press, 2006.

- Mayo, Cris. "Queering Foundations: Queer and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Educational Research." *Review of Research in Education* 31, no. 1 (March 2007): 78-94.
- McCormick, Richard P. *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- McKirnan, DJ and PL Peterson. "Alcohol and Drug Use Among Homosexual Men and Women: Epidemiology and Population Characteristics." *Addictive Behaviors*, 14 (1989): 545-553
- McMullen, David Lee. "Was Florida State Really the 'Berkeley of the South' in the 1960s and 1970s?" (H-Net, September 2006) <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=12237>.
- Meyer, Elizabeth J. "From Here to Queer: Mapping Sexualities in Education" In *Sexualities and Education: A Reader*, edited by Erica R. Meiners and Therese Quinn, 9-17. New York: Peter Lang, 2012.
- Miami News* (Miami, FL), 1971-1982.
- Michel, Gregg L. *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor, MI), 1976-1979.
- Milk, Harvey. "The Hope Speech," in *We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics*, ed. Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan, 451-452. New York, 1997.
- Moran, Mark. "Activists Forced Psychiatrists to Look Behind Closet Door." *Psychiatric News*, November 3, 2006.
- Mormino, Gary R. *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005.
- Mormino, Gary and George E. Pozzetta. *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998.
- Muñoz, Jose Eseteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Niddifer, Jana. *The First Professional Deans of Women: More than a Wise and Pious Matron*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Women Administrators in Higher Education: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000.
- Ocala Star-Banner* (Ocala, FL), 1977-1985.
- Oracle* (University of South Florida, Tampa, FL), 1970-1985.
- Ortiz, Paul. *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
- Palm Beach Post* (Palm Beach, FL), 1975-1981.
- Pascoe, C.J. "Becoming Mr. Cougar: Institutionalizing Heterosexuality and Homophobia at River High School," in *Sexualities in Education: A Reader*, edited by Therese Quinn and Erica R. Meiners, eds., 145-157. New York: Peter Lang, 2012.
- Pleasants, Julian M. *Gator Tales: An Oral History of the University of Florida*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006.
- Power, Lisa. *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles: An Oral History of the Gay Liberation Front, 1970-1973*. London: Wellington House, 1995.
- Pratt, Robert A. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Triumphant Story of Horace Ward, Charlayne Hunter, and Hamilton Holmes*. Athens: University of Georgia Press 2002.
- Robert Q. Marston Manuscript Collection. University of Florida Special Collections. Gainesville, FL.
- Renn, Kristen A. "LGBT and Queer Research in Higher Education: The State and Status of the Field." *Educational Researcher* 39, no. 2 (March 2010): 132-141.
- Rentz, Audrey L. *Student Affairs Practice in Higher Education*. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1996.
- Reuben, Julie. *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Robesonian* (Lumberton, NC), 1973.
- Rogers, Ibram H. *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students at the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

- Rojas, Fabio. *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.
- Rudolph, Frederick. *The American College & University: A History*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962.
- Rullman, Loren J. "A Legal History: University Recognition of Homosexual Organizations." *Association of College Unions Bulletin* 59, no. 2 (1991): 4-9.
- Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Archive (University of Florida: Gainesville, FL).
- Sanday, Peggy. *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus*. New York: New York University Press, 2007.
- Sarasota Herald-Tribune* (Sarasota, FL), 1977-1982.
- Schnur, James A. *Cold Warriors in the Hot Sunshine: The Johns Committee's Assault on Civil Liberties in Florida, 1956-1965*. Master's thesis, University of South Florida, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Closet Crusaders: The Johns Committee and Homophobia, 1956-1965," in *Carryin' On In the Lesbian and Gay South*, edited by John Howard, 132-163. New York: New York University Press, 1997.
- Sears, James T. *Lonely Hunters: An Oral History of Lesbian and Gay Southern Life, 1948-1968*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Growing up Gay in the South: Race, Gender, and Journeys of the Spirit*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001.
- Shand-Tucci, Douglass. *The Crimson Letter: Harvard, Homosexuality, and the Shaping of American Culture*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003.
- Shires, Preston. *Hippies of the Religious Right*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007.
- Small, Melvin. *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *At the Water's Edge: American Politics and the Vietnam War*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Doves Ascendant: The American Antiwar Movement in 1968." *South Central Review* 16 (Winter 1999): 43-52.

- Solomon, Barbara. *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.
- St. Petersburg Times* (St. Petersburg, FL), 1977.
- Student Senate Manuscript Collection, 1976-1985. University of South Florida Special Collections, Tampa, FL.
- Suran, Justin David. "Coming Out Against the War: Antimilitarism and the Politicization of Homosexuality in the Era of Vietnam." *American Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (September 2001): 452-488.
- Sycamore, Mattilda Bernstein. *Why are Faggots so Afraid of Faggots: Flaming Challenges to Masculinity, Objectification, and the Desire to Conform*. Oakland: AK Press, 2012.
- Syrett, Nicholas. *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Taylor, Verta, Leila J. Rupp, and Joshua Gamson. "Performing Protest: Drag Shows as Tactical Repertoire of the Gay and Lesbian Movement." *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, 25 (2004): 105-137.
- Terzian, Sevan G. and Leigh Ann Osborne. "Postwar Era Precedents and the Ambivalent Quest for International Students at the University of Florida." *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 286-306.
- Thelin, John. *A History of American Higher Education*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Thomas, June. "The Gay Bar: Is it Dying?" *Slate*, June 27, 2011.  
[http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the\\_gay\\_bar/2011/06/the\\_gay\\_bar\\_6.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_gay_bar/2011/06/the_gay_bar_6.html)
- Turner, Jeffrey A. *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South, 1960-1970*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010.
- University of Florida Special Collections (Gainesville, FL).
- University of South Florida Special Collections (Tampa, FL).
- Veysey, Laurence. *The Emergence of the American University*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965.
- Village Voice* (New York, New York), 1969-1974.

Wallenstein, Peter. "*Brown v. Board of Education* and Segregated Universities: From Kluger to Karman—Toward Creating a Literature on King Color, Federal Courts, and Undergraduate Admission." Organization of American Historians, Boston, MA, March 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Segregation, Desegregation, and Higher Education in Virginia." Policy History Conference, Charlottesville, VA, June 3, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. ed. *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008.

Wilchins, Riki. *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer*. New York: Alyson Books, 2004.

Joy Williamson. *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois 1965-75*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003.

Wright, William. *Harvard's Secret Court: The Savage 1920 Purge of Campus Homosexuals*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005.

Wynkoop, Mary Ann. *Dissent in the Heartland: The Sixties at Indiana University*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Marion Young, Iris. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Yow, Valerie Raleigh. *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2005.



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jessica Laine Clawson was born the first of three children in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1981. Her father, Thomas, is a high school English teacher and her mother, Teresa, is a neonatologist. Jessica grew up riding horses and competing in eventing and show jumpers. Her family relocated to Winchester, Virginia just before her freshman year of high school. She graduated from James Wood High School in 2000 and attended the College of William and Mary, where she majored in English and graduated in 2004.

Contemplating law school, she took a job as a case manager at Boies, Schiller, and Flexner LLP in Washington, DC. She worked there for about a year and a half and then realized she was not interested in practicing law. She decided to apply for graduate school, and in the meantime, took a job managing a show horse stable in Virginia. In 2006, she moved to Gainesville to attend the University of Florida with the intention to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy degree in history. After attaining her Master of Arts in history, Jessica transferred to the College of Education to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy degree in curriculum and instruction and work with Sevan Terzian in 2008.

While working on her degree, Jessica also became involved with various community education efforts. She gave talks on queer history at the Civic Media Center and facilitated reading groups on queer studies for non-academics. Through the contacts she made in these engagements, she also began to perform as a drag king on the weekends. During the week, she practiced with the local roller derby league until a shattered fibula ended her derby career too early. In spring 2013, she rescued a horse from an auction who turned out to be the horse of her dreams, and she held several

part-time jobs to help support the horse and the rest of her crew of pets while she finished her dissertation.

Jessica is currently on the job market and occupies her time caring for her horse, dogs, and cats. Her research focus continues to be queer higher education history.