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Senior Capstone

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### LGBT Laws and Rights in Africa

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community, the LGBT community, is an important part of our society today. Different sexual orientations are a fact of human life and are becoming increasingly accepted. Though the norm in most countries is heterosexuality, there has always been accounts and relevance of homosexuality throughout the years. Since BC times, there have been records of the LGBT community across the globe. One of the first records was in 2450 BC where two Egyptian royal servants were depicted embracing in paintings of them, and have been deemed one of the first known same sex couples, (GLSEN, 2017, p.2). In 371 BCE, the Sacred Band of Thebes, an army created in Greece, was composed of 300 gay men. During their service, they were acknowledged for their strength and loyalty in relationships. This army was undefeated for 33 years. (GLSEN, 2017, p.3). In the BCE years, it was recorded that thirteen out of fourteen roman emperors were gay or bisexual. (GLSEN, 2017, p.5). Those are only a few examples of the LGBT community prevalent and accepted in the BCE.

The LGBT community still had a long road ahead to get where we are today. There is an importance in talking about different sexualities and gender identities. Sharing research and perspectives to others will help open minds and educate those who don't know or understand this huge and prevalent community. There have been three waves of pro gay movements so far in history. These movements were, and still are, advocating for the community and expressing the need for equal rights and liberation. There was little activism and movement for the LGBT

community before these three waves, so the first wave was the start of the ongoing fight for equality and tolerance.

The first wave was roughly from 1890-1930, lasting around 40 years. It started in 1897 when the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee was founded in Germany. The goal of this committee was to disprove the anti-homosexual theories, as well as educating researchers and the public about homosexuality. This wave brought people to begin fighting to abolish the laws against homosexuality. In 1919, the Institute for Sex Research was successfully created, which then sparked the creation of the the World League for Sexual Reform in 1921. This league was deemed, “an internationally respected centre for the documentation of sexuality,” (Isike and Onapajo, 2016, p.24). Right before World War Two began, the first pro gay movement ended.

The second wave began in 1950 and lasted 10 years. Many countries, especially European countries, were promoting sexual identity and equal rights. Activist groups were starting to form across the globe such as in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver, Germany, and the Netherlands, (Isike and Onapajo, 2016, p.25). Even with this small progress, many places started taking steps back such as western countries including the United States. People deemed homosexuality as an un american way of life. During this time in the United States, the American dream was promoted and people strived for that goal, which never included homosexuality. Before the third wave began, the infamous Stonewall Riots occurred, beginning on June 28, 1969. The Stonewall Riots were demonstrations held by the gay community against the police, due to violent raids that occurred at the Stonewall Inn against the LGBT community. The riots ended July 1, 1969 but protests and activism skyrocketed from there.

The third wave began in 1970 and is still happening to this day. This wave is known as the “global gay movement,” (Isike and Onapajo, 2016, p.26). Activists started rallying for legal action to protect their ungiven rights. Specifically they wanted to, “provide legal recourse for people denied employment or shelter because of their homosexuality,” (Isike and Onapajo, 2016, p.27). Another committee was created in 1990 named the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission which has 1,005 sub organizations across 117 different countries. Today, many countries have adopted legal measures protecting and recognizing those in the LGBT community. Many countries have also adopted protection against state and private violence against the community. Even though there has been so much growth and progress, there is still a lot of discrimination in the world against gay and transgender individuals. Homosexuality was deemed a mental illness until 1973 when the American Psychiatric Association took homosexuality off the official list of mental illnesses and stated that it is not a sickness, (Turner, 2017, p.2). Today, there is still discrimination and intolerance for being part of the LGBT community. People are being fired from their jobs, denied housing and children, and are being publicly shamed and experiencing extreme violence due to their sexuality. Acceptance and legal measures have grown exponentially since the beginning of the first wave but we still have a long way to go for equality. Not only is this happening in the United States where so much progress has been achieved, but it is also happening in most other countries across the globe, many of which are extremely against this way of life.

Across the world, there is acceptance and discrimination everywhere you go. One of the many places that has made huge improvements for the LGBT community, but is still one of the furthest behind for the acceptance of the community is Africa. Talking about the LGBT

community and the laws against it in Africa is very important to show people who may believe that the improvements already made are enough, because there is still a long way to go for gay and transgender people to be able to live a peaceful life without discrimination. There are still places around the world that punish those who identify with the LGBT community, Africa being one of them. It is important to show how much progress has been made, but also how much there is still left to achieve. Many of the leaders in African countries speak out against homosexuality. Yahya Jammeh, the president of Gambia has stated before, “we will fight these vermins called homosexuals or gays the same way we are fighting malaria-causing mosquitoes,” (Onapajo and Isike, 2016). Also, Robert Mugabe, former prime minister and president of Zimbabwe stated that, “homosexuals are worse than pigs or dogs,” (Onapajo and Isike, 2016). Thirty-eight out of the fifty-four, or seventy percent, of the countries in Africa are noted to be strongly against homosexuality. Africa is also the continent with the most anti gay laws and Africa alone makes up fifty percent of the anti gay countries in the world, with seventy-six percent of the African countries absolutely prohibiting homosexuality. Africa is the second most populous continent with roughly 1.2 billion people but only about 800,000 people openly identify as part of the LGBT community. According to the Centre for Risk Analysis at the South African Institute of Race Relations, 800,000 is definitely an undercount due to the discrimination across the entire continent, thus preventing many LGBT people from openly coming out, (Morris, 2017, p.5).

The Journal of Global Analysis written by Dr. Onapajo and Dr. Isike explains that the foundation of the unacceptance of the LGBT community in those regions largely stems from their religious and cultural background. Islam is a very prevalent religion in many regions of the continent which has been known to prohibit homosexuality. The LGBT lifestyle is known as

unethical in most countries of Africa. Those against homosexuality in that circumstance of religion and culture tend to believe that homosexuality is against procreation and the family system in Africa, (Onapajo and Isike, 2016, p.28). There isn't a clear explanation or fix to this intolerance since this way of thinking was instilled into those in this community since birth. Education about the normalcy of this way of life should be taught throughout these intolerant regions.

There are different legislations of homosexuality in each country but for many countries in Africa, there are very unclear laws but well known prohibition of homosexuality. Such as in Egypt where there is no clear law against homosexuality, but those in or support of the community can be prosecuted. For example, officers will arrest gay people at random under the excuse that they are, "insulting public morals," (Bernstein, 2017, p.3). There are three different ranges of punishments that countries in Africa use against those in the LGBT community. The first punishment is imprisonment or fines without any clear or definite length. You can be imprisoned for homosexuality without any valid reason or any specified date of release. This occurs in countries such as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Guinea, Liberia, Cameroon, Chad, and many more, (Ferreira, 2017, p.2). The second severity of punishment is imprisonment for 14 years to a life sentence. Harsh punishments like this are happening in Egypt, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, and Zambia, (Ferreira, 2017, p.3). The harshest punishment for homosexuality is the death penalty. This extreme and unjust punishment occurs in Sudan, Mauritania, Somalia, and some states in Nigeria, (Bearak and Cameron, 2016, p.4).

Although many of the countries in Africa prohibit homosexuality, some are accepting and homosexuality is legal. This acceptance is part of the countries Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape

Verde, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Rwanda, Djibouti, Mozambique, and South Africa, (Ferreira, 2017, p.4). Throughout Africa, there are many different views on homosexuality and the LGBT community. Since the laws protecting the LGBT community in Africa are few and far between across the entire continent, there is not one region much better than another. Many countries don't have protective laws for the LGBT community and for the ones that do, there is still extreme discrimination and violence toward the community. Much of the opposition of homosexuality comes from a culture deep rooted in their religion and cultural norms. Even though some countries do have those protective laws, there is still a lot of opposition from those holding their belief against homosexuality. There have been cases of Africans fleeing their own countries from intense discrimination, only to find out that there is almost no support for them anywhere they go. There are many forms of violence and inequality happening to this day such as verbal abuse, beatings, jail time, corrective rape, disownment and even death. Beginning to talk about the unacceptance still prevalent today is important for changing the homophobia in the world.

Africa is definitely the least tolerant and accepting continent of homosexuality but there are a few countries and regions that are becoming more tolerant. Specifically talking about the most progressive region though is Southern Africa. Particularly, the country of South Africa is one of the most accepting countries in Africa. South Africans are twice as likely to agree that gay marriage should be legal, (Pushparagavan, 2014, p.4). In 1996, South Africa was the first country in the world to keep sexual orientation as a human right in their constitution. They have made many progressive movements for the LGBT community since then. Same sex marriage is legal in South Africa as well as same sex couples being able to adopt. Another huge milestone that

many countries and regions still haven't moved toward that South Africa has already overcome, is banning conversion therapy. Conversion therapy became illegal in 2010 in South Africa (Equaldex, 2019, p.3). Even in some of the most progressive countries, conversion therapy is still legal in certain areas. The first pride march in Johannesburg, South Africa took place on October 13, 1990. Sexuality education has also increased, specifically focusing on HIV prevention. Raising a concern about this education though is if the instructor is against or uncomfortable with the topic, the material may be brushed over and not explained putting those who are not educated on this topic at a larger risk, (Gacoin, 2017, p.2).

Even though there has been so much progress, the LGBT community in South Africa still faces extreme discrimination, especially against people in rural areas. South Africa has laws protecting LGBT people of violence and discrimination but the laws are not always followed by those against the community. In some countries in South Africa, any outward supporter of the LGBT community can be prosecuted as well. Botswana's constitution still says, "any person who has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature, has carnal knowledge of an animal or permits carnal knowledge of him/her against the order of nature, is guilty of an offence and is liable for imprisonment," (Tabengwa and Nicol, 2013, p.4). A South African journalist stated, "though South Africa has progressive laws for LGBT+ people - what's on paper does not speak for the reality of how things are," (Andersson, 2018, p.2). An analyst at the South African Institute of Race Relations noted that even though LGBT rights are still in South Africa's constitution, the protection it is supposed to give the community is not always guaranteed, (Morris, 2017, p.1). It was reported that four out of ten South Africans know someone who has been murdered for being or suspected of being apart of the LGBT community, (Morris, 2017,

p.3). In South Africa, along with most of the countries in Africa, you can not legally change your gender without having a sex reassignment surgery which is extremely hard to do in a discriminatory place like Africa. Also, people in the LGBT community still can not give blood, even if they have never been in a same sex relationship before.

Women in the LGBT community face extreme violence and are vulnerable to corrective rape, where men against the community believe that they can change the women's sexuality through rape. This is an extremely dangerous and disgusting problem that is most prevalent in African countries. Though South Africa has some of the most laws against LGBT discrimination, they still have some of the highest rates for rape and violence against gay and transgender people. Specifically, black lesbians in rural areas face some of the most violent crimes. Black LGBT people are more likely to be discriminated against than those in any other race groups, (Fletcher, 2016, p.3). There have been many cases of the deaths of LGBT people through violence but the tragic deaths never get documented on the media which can lead to more violence. Without media coverage or punishment of the attackers, it creates a more dangerous and violent community.

Though South Africa made more progress than any other African country or region, South Africa started to take a few steps back in 2012 when the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa filed a document to remove the LGBT rights in their constitution. The constitution of South Africa does state that LGBT residents are guaranteed access to healthcare services but the noted experience of these people shows otherwise. Mental health services in South Africa are slim and almost always exclude the LGBT community in providing adequate mental health care services. Mental health studies have concluded that those who identify as



LGBT, have a higher rate of depression, suicide and other mental health issues, (Equaldex, 2019, p.2). This is even more of an issue for those in Africa due to the extreme violence and discrimination toward them. Finding adequate health care of any kind for the LGBT community in Africa is extremely difficult because if they are allowed the health services, many still face discrimination and prejudice making the experience intolerable for those in the community. Not only do the people in the community have to scramble to find a healthcare service that will treat them, but then many are ridiculed and judged by their own doctors. There have been cases of gay men in South Africa being blamed by their doctors for contracting HIV due to their sexual identity, (Muller, 2017, p.5). There has been much discrimination against the LGBT community in healthcare environments but some places are now starting to make protective laws for the community wanting to access safe healthcare services.

The South African National Health Assembly held in 2012 proposed, “appropriate non-judgemental care for marginalized vulnerable groups such as LGBT persons,” (Muller, 2017, p.4). This is a great new legislation for the South African LGBT community but it is still in concern how this legislation will be monitored and implemented. Healthcare professionals will be educated about this legislation but there is no clear policy on punishments if they do not follow it. Since the legislation was proposed, there has not been any accurate and clear examples of it in effect. South Africa has made great improvements benefitting the LGBT community, especially with the many legalities imposed in the government. These great progressions do not justify the still discriminatory and violent nature against the LGBT community. South Africa has made great changes but is still far behind from acceptance.

A region of Africa where homosexuality is almost entirely discouraged and banned is Central Africa. Not only are most of the Central African countries anti LGBT, many countries on the east and west are as well. Uganda, Nigeria, and Tanzania are three countries in or around the central region that are strictly against homosexuality. Those who choose to embrace their LGBT lifestyle in these countries are being brutally punished. Recently, many of these countries have been increasing the severity of their anti gay laws. In 2013, Uganda passed an anti homosexuality law that will lengthen the sentence of those who are in a homosexual relationship as well as promoting their sexuality, (Ombuor, 2018, p.1). This new law will put people in the LGBT community in prison for life for being out about their sexuality. Nigerian and Tanzanian laws have become much stricter over the last few years as well, (Amnesty International, 2018, p.4). Both countries are starting a crackdown to punish LGBT individuals. Many activists have expressed that they believe that the government is putting harsher punishments on LGBT people to distract the country from real issues happening in the government, (Ombuor, 2018, p.3). The violence is steadily increasing and it is extremely dangerous to be an out person in the LGBT community, as well as activists fighting for the community.

The most vulnerable group in the region of Central Africa is LGBT women in rural areas. An East African LGBT organization has noted on average, 10 incidents of corrective rape per week, (Ferim, 2016, p.5). Women reported that they were terrified to walk down the street because many LGBT women are being beaten in front of the police. The police usually do not intervene to stop the violence and almost always favor the attackers if the victim is part of the LGBT community, (Ferim, 2016, p.4). Some anti LGBT men in Central Africa were interviewed stating that they, “wished to kill all homosexuals and rape the lesbians in order to address

homosexuality, what they consider a social ill,” (Ferim, 2016, p.5). The police do not care how many people they are arresting and how full the prisons are getting, their only motive is to punish LGBT people for simply living. In late 2018, ten men were arrested for holding a same sex marriage ceremony in Tanzania. All men arrested whether being out as gay or not were forced an anal examination. The purpose of these examinations are to check for homosexual activity but mostly to hurt and humiliate, (Burke, 2018, p.1). These procedures have no medical justification and are completely immoral. Six out of the eight countries that still practice forced anal examinations are in Africa. The African countries still practicing are Tanzania, Egypt, Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, and Cameroon. Three of the six countries in Africa that still conduct anal examinations are Central African countries.

Recently, many LGBT people in Tanzania have gone into hiding due to a recent crackdown that’s targeting and punishing those in the LGBT community. Starting in 2015, an announcement was made by the regional commissioner of Dar es Salaam, Paul Makonda, to report anyone who is, or is suspected to being gay. These officials are giving longer prison sentences and increasing the discrimination overall throughout the country, (Burke, 2018, p.2). Officials received approximately 5,700 reports and over 100 names in the first few months. Someone can spend up to 30 years in prison for just having the knowledge of someone being apart of the LGBT community and not reporting it. There has always been discrimination against homosexuality in Tanzania, but ever since John Magufuli became president in 2015, the extreme discrimination and persecution of the LGBT community quickly increased. Magufuli is very much against the LGBT lifestyle and community and believes that, “even cows disapprove of homosexuality,” (Maizland, 2017, p.1). An activist of human rights and the LGBT community

stated that this crackdown was like, “open season on gay people,” as well as comparing it to a witch hunt, (Burke, 2018, p.3). Officials are raiding the houses of those who are, or are suspected of being gay. These raids are tearing families apart and many people are fleeing the country, only to find out that this same thing is happening in many countries around them as well.

Another extremely unsafe Central African country for those in the LGBT community is Nigeria. In some parts of Nigeria, homosexuality is punishable by death. Recently, blackmail and extortion against gay men has been a huge issue that is tearing many families and peoples lives apart, (Akinwotu, 2018, p.2). Also, there has been a lot of police malpractice and infringement of given rights. The police is not stopping the violence toward the community, they are taking a part in it as well. As one could imagine, this violence and discrimination has hurt the mental health of many gay people. Dr. Ade Toyin, a case worker at the International Centre for the Advocacy of Rights to Health in Abuja, has noted that substance abuse and self harm are very prevalent among gays in these harsh conditions, (Akinwotu, 2018, p.3). Mental health services are usually not available in these areas in the first place, especially for those in the LGBT community. If mental health services are available though, the person struggling usually is not comfortable telling their care provider about their sexuality due to backlash much of the community is receiving. Something that is taking a toll on many LGBT Africans mental health is the new sex education tactics starting to be implemented in Uganda. They are moving their sex education programs more from scientific, medical, and successful ways of HIV prevention, toward the ideological and religious way of abstinence. These abstinence only programs have been proven that they are not changing sexual habits of the youth and preventing HIV, but they are also hurting the mental health of many young people, (Cohen and Tate, 2006, p.3). This lesson

teaches them that if they do engage in any of those activities, they are sinful and wrong. The mental health of LGBT people in these discouraging regions has become increasingly worse throughout the years. Central Africa is definitely not a very progressive region in support of the LGBT community, and is one of the worst places for homosexuals in the world.

Another brutal and unjust region in Africa for the LGBT community is many North African countries. Places such as Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, and Sudan are just a few countries that the LGBT community is completely unwelcomed. The LGBT people in North Africa have noted that their region is the black hole for LGBT rights, (Human Rights Watch, 2018, p.3). A notable country that is strictly against LGBT acceptance is Morocco. For the past few years, there has been a divide in Morocco due to the countries head tourism minister, Lahcen Haddad voicing that homosexuality should be decriminalized, (Lahrichi, 2016, p.2). At the same time, the government had voiced their ideas on increasing the already existing, anti LGBT laws. This situation has put Morocco's government and LGBT community under even more strain for 3 years now. After a recent study, it was shown that eight out of ten Moroccans reject homosexuality, (Lahrichi, 2016, p.1).

Also, many of these people who reject the LGBT community, believe that homosexuality is a curable disease or a mental problem. The country of Sudan is another unsafe place for homosexuals and transgender people and has continued to become worse throughout the last few years. In Sudan, homosexuality is punishable by death for men and women. Many religious leaders in Sudan have publicly voiced their hatred against LGBT persons and many of these leaders have banned anyone in or in support of the LGBT community from entering their churches. It has been common that these leaders are justifying their actions with the excuse, "we

are not going to sin against God by blessing same-sex relationships in our churches,” as well as, “it’s against God, those crossing from one gender to another,” (Chan, 2018, p.2). Some of these same leaders have called homosexuality, perversion. This type of discrimination is extremely degrading to the LGBT people who face this everyday.

Egypt is another country in the North African region that has been known for its anti LGBT violence and discrimination. Homosexuality is technically not illegal in Egypt, but any crimes against the LGBT community is not illegal either. Gay and transgender men and women can be arrested in Egypt for no given reason. This discrimination has gotten worse over the last few years due to changes in government officials who are against the gay and transgender community. In September of 2017, 76 people were detained in Egypt for being part of or in support of the LGBT community, (Stewart, 2018, p.4). They were peacefully and quietly waving pride flags in public but when arrested, the officials reason for this was that they were, “promoting sexual deviancy,” (Nnaobi, 2018, p.5) Many of the men were given anal examinations, and the women were being abused by guards and their cellmates. By the end of November that same year, 16 were already convicted and imprisoned. Law enforcement in Egypt has also been creating fake gay dating profiles to arrest those who show up for dates, (Bernstein, 2017).

In Egypt, you don’t even have to be part of the LGBT community to be arrested and discriminated against, you just have to be in support of or associated with the community. Recently there has been a lot of imprisonment, disappearances and public killings of LGBT activists. The discrimination has gotten worse and the extrajudicial killings, mass arrests, and censorship of pro LGBT speech has been steadily on the rise. This discrimination is ruining

many people's lives for being who they really are. An extreme form of discrimination that is all too common happened in May of 2018 in Cairo, Egypt when Ahmed Alaa held up a rainbow pride flag at a concert. After not receiving serious backlash that night, Alaa posted a picture of himself holding up the flag on Facebook. The next day, he was starting to receive death threats. Later on in an interview he stated, "I was shocked at the number of comments threatening to kill me and drag my body through the street," (Arraf, 2018, p.2). During this time, his university publicly condemned him, his father was shunned throughout his whole village, his younger sister was brutally bullied, his best friend was detained, and Alaa was arrested. Despite only being one out of the one hundred arrested after that concert, Alaa was the only one who was placed in solitary confinement. He explains that him and his families lives were already ruined at this point and expressed that he would rather die than face any more of the extreme discrimination that he already did for months on end. After leaving prison and still facing discrimination everyday, Ahmed Alaa attempted suicide. Luckily, he survived and fled off to Canada where he peacefully resides now. He faced intense discrimination such as death threats, he was arrested and in jail for many months, after being released he attempted suicide and so much of Alaa's and his families life was ruined, for waving a rainbow flag. That, is the discrimination that the LGBT community still faces to this day and it is continuing to get worse.

Activists across the continent have began to create organizations helping the LGBT community and other minority populations. This is a great start to expanding tolerance and education about the community, producing less discrimination in the areas of their work. A few of these organizations are OutRight Action International that works across Africa and The Centre for the Development of People which is primarily based in Ghana. A very notable organization

though is the National Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission. They are focused in Kenya but have small locations across Africa. Their mission statement is, “helping the community live free and equal lives and are treated with dignity and rights within their community and respective counties,” (NGLHRC, 2019, p.1). Since 2013, they have been the go to organization for LGBT legal aid and security response. They provide legal support for cases of discrimination, sexual and gender violence, evictions, blackmail, extortion, and more. In 2017, NGLHRC began to bring legal aid to less accessible places across Africa. They are helping end the issue of discrimination against the community by providing paralegal training and civic education to police officers, court members, medical personnel and government officials about the justice challenges that the LGBT community faces. They have been encouraging diversity and addressing a need for change throughout Kenya, and all of Africa.

Across the globe today, the LGBT community is thriving in many places, but there is still discrimination almost anywhere you can go. The acceptance as well as the hatred is more severe in some areas than others. Many places have made huge strides toward equality, tolerance, and acceptance of the LGBT community. Our home, the United States is one of those places where there has been great improvements but also some setbacks. In Chicago, 1924, the first society for human rights was founded by Henry Gerber and the activism for the LGBT community slowly grew from there. Even though activism for gay and transgender rights began to grow, discrimination was still very prevalent. Later on with little improvement for the community, the American Psychiatric Association declared that homosexuality is a sociopathic personality disorder in 1952. Taking steps backward only one year later in 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower signed an executive order prohibiting homosexuals from working for the federal government



under the reason of a, “security risk,” (CNN, 2019, p.3). Illinois became the first state to decriminalize homosexuality in 1961 giving the LGBT community hope toward a more accepting future. There was still extreme discrimination against the community though, even in safe spaces. The Stonewall Inn raides and riots began in June of 1969 in a place that was supposed to protect and bring together the gay and transgender community. The American Psychiatric Association finally removed homosexuality from the list of mental disorders in 1973.

This moves the government toward passing the first federal gay rights bill addressing discrimination in 1975. More movements toward equality began to happen such as the creation of the first pride flag and the first national march for lgbt right occurs in Washington D.C. in the 70’s. During Bill Clinton’s presidency, he signed a military order banning any openly gay man or woman from serving in the military. Only three years after that ban in 1996, Clinton signs the defense of marriage act prohibiting marriage of a same sex couple. Later on countering this act, Massachusetts becomes the first state to legalize gay marriage in 2003. Democrat, Barack Obama becomes president in 2008, leading the government to more accepting legislations for the LGBT community. At the Democratic National Convention in 2012, the Democratic party becomes the first political party in history to support same sex marriage on a national scale. Finally in 2015, gay marriage was legalized in all 50 states. That was one major accomplishment for the US but there is still a long road ahead to reach the acceptance that every person wants to have.

Many LGBT people have restrictions that most people out of the community take for granted. For instance, in most places in the United States, gay or lesbian couples are not always able to adopt, and just received the right to marry. If they are able to adopt or have children with

medical assistance, usually only one of the parents will get to legally put one name down on the birth certificate. I personally know a member of the LGBT community that has gone through this struggle in her own life and her story is a great example of what millions of LGBT people go through not only the United States, but many places where homosexuality is even legal. A friend of mine, Jaime, along with many other LGBT people have felt like outsiders due to their sexuality. Feeling like an outsider or different than the people around them is a common feeling gay and transgender feel quite frequently. Like many people, Jaime and her wife wanted children but only one of them could put their name on the birth certificate. Jaime was the one listed on the document meaning her wife could not make decisions at the doctors office, school and other places without Jaime's permission. This happens to many gay and lesbian couples which can be incredibly hurtful to the one parent that can not make decisions for their own children. Situations like this are happening daily to many families. This law was changed on June 26, 2015 when gay marriage was legalized across the country. Even with good progress like this, there is still intolerance across the country and globe so shining light on the progresses and educating about the discrimination is important in creating a better future.

LGBT rights and acceptance is spreading across the globe but with acceptance comes discrimination in many places. For whatever reason it might be, there is still hate spewed at the community in minor, and extremely large amounts. Talking about the progress and acceptance in our world is so important, but it is all just as necessary to discuss the hate and discrimination still happening. Educating and enlightening those who do not tolerate other individuals can help create and spark more acceptance in our world. Something that any of us can do to create change is educating others about the growing community and voicing our concern about the

overwhelming discrimination still happening. It is not just the laws, the acceptance, and discrimination around us locally that matters, but even across the world. The more we grow as a society into being more tolerant, the more other places will follow. Hatred and discrimination is not something we are born with, it is something we are taught. Love, acceptance, and tolerance are things we have from the beginning and they are something that should be utilized. The LGBT community is a big part of our society today and will continue to grow as the years go on.

I am extremely glad that I chose this topic for my capstone paper because the LGBT community holds a special place in my heart and I would love to see the acceptance for the community to grow even more. I am part of the LGBT community and have noticed that the four pillars of JAGS are good representations of some of the things this large community advocates for. I wanted to write a paper specifically about the LGBT community in Africa since they are the least progressive region for LGBT rights. It is important to show how much more advocating and activism needs done to educate those about the community and increase tolerance across the world. This capstone paper reflects my hard work in JAGS by expanding my knowledge of something that is very prevalent in our world today and putting in effort to do research and ask questions about this hard hitting subject. I hoped to find organizations working to improve the lives of LGBT Africans and educate people who do not know what these innocent people are struggling through on a daily basis. I was successful with this by finding multiple organizations based in Africa and explained much of the hardships the LGBT community has endured. The main pillar I focused on was investigating the world. Since my paper was almost entirely research, I learned and reviewed the lives of a minority group in a region completely different to my own. JAGS will always hold importance in my life by reminding me to be curious about the

world and learn about a wide range of topics from across the globe. I have learned that I am curious minded and have a drive to make other people feel included and important. JAGS taught me more about myself than I ever thought it would. Hopefully my paper will still be in the mind of my JAGS teachers to share and inspire younger classmates to actively learn about what they are interested in. I have been a leader by being focused on specific goals but always making room for new people to join who want to also change the world. Inspiring others to continue with their passions is something I have done my four years in the JAGS program and will continue with after I graduate.

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