



UA G/LA Constitutional Crisis of 1991

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ABSTRACT

Queer History in Tuscaloosa is one subject that is less known within the community. I have always had a fixation on The State of Alabama's adamant opposition to Queer rights, and therefore was interested in researching how the University of Alabama's Gay-Lesbian Alliance survived attempted defunding/delegitimizing by the State of Alabama, through H.B 454. After discovering the series of events within the Miller-Stephens collection, I used local newspapers to find the key factors that led to the UAGLA's success; which was the support obtained by the UAGLA by various leaders, and organizations around the Tuscaloosa community.

METHODS

- In the Miller-Stephens collection I found a Crimson White newspaper clipping titled, "Senate approves resolution on legality of G/LA funding".
- From the information in the article, I began using newspapers from Tuscaloosa, Auburn, and Montgomery, to find a complete timeline of events.
- I then compared the outcome of Auburn University's GLA to UA's. I discovered that after legislation passed to make G/LA's essentially illegal, the AUGLA struggled more to establish a presence within the community.
- From this I was able to clearly define what allowed the UAGLA to remain unhindered in their influence, after the same amount of setback as AUGLA.

CONCLUSIONS/SIGNIFIGANCE

- The UAGLA had an established presence for 8 years prior to the defunding legislation, and had previously faced issues of legitimacy in 1984.
- The UAGLA made sure to define their group specifically within the laws of the State, and this allowed for good standing with the University administration.
- The UA eventually gained the support of many leaders and organizations on campus, such as: the University President; the Student Life Committee; the Student Government Association; professors; local newspapers; and student allies.
- The UAGLA had no significant change in their ability to function on campus.



Members of the University of Alabama's Gay and Lesbian Alliance came to the Plains Saturday to support the AGLA. The group is now having problems of it s own because of the UA SGA's request that Attorney General Jimmy Evans look into the legality of funding gay organizations.

H. 454

Enrolled, An Act,
 To prohibit any college or university from spending public funds or using public facilities, directly or indirectly, to sanction, recognize, or support any group that promotes a lifestyle or actions prohibited by the sodomy and sexual misconduct laws; to prohibit any group from permitting or encouraging its members or others to engage in or provide materials on how to engage in the lifestyle or actions.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. No public funds or public facilities shall be used by any college or university to, directly or indirectly, sanction, recognize, or support the activities or existence of any organization or group that fosters or promotes a lifestyle or actions prohibited by the sodomy and sexual misconduct laws of Sections 13A-6-63 to 13A-6-65, inclusive, of the Code of Alabama 1975.

Section 2. No organization or group that receives public funds or uses public facilities, directly or indirectly, at any college or university shall permit or encourage its members or encourage other persons to engage in any such unlawful acts or provide information or materials that explain how such acts may be engaged in or performed.

Sayers says UA gays within law

Janet Griffith, a University of Alabama spokeswoman, said Friday that UA President Roger Sayers does not expect the University to come in conflict with a bill passed by the Alabama Legislature aimed at campus gay groups.

The bill, signed into law this week by Gov. Guy Hunt, prohibits state schools to use public funds or buildings to support any group "that fosters or promotes a lifestyle or actions prohibited by the sodomy and sexual misconduct laws" of the state.

The University of Alabama provides student funds for the campus Gay/Lesbian Association, but Griffith said "the administration does not feel that that group, or any other is in violation of any state laws."

She said Sayers "stands by the statement he made (two months ago) when the attorney general issued his opinion that funds could be withheld from such groups — that it does not apply here."

— Tommy Stevenson

References

- Miller-Stephens LGBTQ UA Student Organization collection, University of Alabama Libraries Special Collections
- Frank Susko Papers, Birmingham Public Library, Department of Archives and Manuscript
- The Auburn Plainsman, The Auburn University Digital Library