



Religious response to the AIDS Crisis in Utah
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The AIDS epidemic brought profound changes in the way most Americans viewed homosexuality. Initially, the epidemic was deeply linked to homosexuality and was also heavily stigmatized by most conservative Christian religions, as well as a good portion of heterosexual people. While the AIDS epidemic created an initial cultural backlash, it is evident now that AIDS also put the gay community on the path to acceptance and normalization. Professor Elizabeth Clement on her project, “The Reckoning: AIDS in Conservative America”, argues that while the cultural backlash against homosexuality was exacerbated by the AIDS crisis, this same crisis brought upon the various rights the LGBTQ community have attained since the epidemic.

The research with Dr. Clement involved working with *Intermountain Catholic* microfilm at the Marriott Library to see how much encouragement Catholics were getting to engage in caregiving. I found multiple articles that are pertinent to Dr. Clement’s work in the microfilm research in terms religious response to the crisis in Utah, which is what Dr. Clement is looking for in formulating her Church Chapter. Additionally, I worked on coding oral history data for the church chapter, Professor Clement began the oral histories related to this project in 2015 and to date has over 200 hours of oral histories with over thirty different people associated with the epidemic.

Having Professor Clement as a resource was immensely helpful, she asked her graduate student, Juli Huddleston, who has a degree in Library Science, to help train me. Professor Clement showed me how to code oral history data and how to document my work with the correct citations. In addition, Professor Clement supervised my efforts to publicize my own research, helped me develop an abstract, as well as connected me with physicians to shadow that lived through the AIDS crisis in Utah. She has helped me develop an abstract and helped me present at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

While working on my history thesis paper, on the Catholic response to AIDS in Utah, I gained access to the various oral histories conducted by Professor Clement herself that are readily available at the Marriott Library’s special collections. Thus when I started research through UROP, I had head start since my past research allowed me to gain a solid to the material, as well as how to readily find them when Professor Clement needed any of it. UROP allowed me to be able to further explore the impact of AIDS in a conservative and religious place and track the impact of the epidemic on gay claims for civil and family rights, especially after writing my senior seminar research paper on the Catholic response to the AIDS epidemic in Utah. Additionally, I was able to further explore the impact of AIDS in a conservative and religious place and track the impact of the epidemic on gay claims for civil and family rights

Since I am starting a Public Health graduate program this fall, this research has been instrumental in bringing about awareness to the medical community’s response to the AIDS crisis. I have understood that biases in the medical community led to inaction, and yet through exposure to the “marginalized communities” people started to see them as people. This research has helped me empower myself and other marginalized communities. Such plan will allow me to go into medical school with a true purpose and a well-rounded education that will help me treat marginalized communities. Furthermore, the training in oral history methodology will also improve my ability to conduct high quality medical interviews and patient histories, which will, in turn, make me a better doctor.