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Thesis: Changing Legal and Social Status of LGBT People in the United States since 1990.

This topic has been one of major interest to groups, judicial and law making bodies, communities and individuals in the United States during the time of this study. Significant changes occurred and are still of vital interest in the legislatures and courts of some states of the country. It is also likely to continue to be an issue in federal courts and the U.S. Supreme Court. As greater numbers of people have self identified as gay individuals, their families, friends, and communities confronted new challenges and ideas which often impacted each. These issues continue to be developing creating not only legal cases but also generating significant research and publication. Mr. Sochacky has done an impressive amount of work in accessing a great deal of this literature, not always easy to do. His sources are excellent. He has invested a great deal of time in editing and rewriting his thesis. During the winter term, we met weekly to discuss his ideas and his writing. His editing and rewriting demanded substantial time and work, something he never hesitated to do.

The introduction defines terminology. It also includes a brief history of the legal and social realities of the past. Theories promoted by many different ideologies are included. Those who believe that sexual identity is a choice seem to be no longer a majority as many Americans realize that their colleagues, friends, and family members are gay. This theme recurs throughout the paper as is appropriate.

The second chapter compares the struggle of black Americans in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for legal rights, with LGBT's also seeking security, ending violent repressions.

The following chapter on judicial rulings and laws is particularly well done

and an important aspect of contemporary American challenges. Jakub addresses the rights of all citizens granted by the US Constitution and the Amendments, particularly the Bill of Rights. State laws are cited on granting rights and denying them, making freedom of movement more difficult for anyone whose work or life make moving to another state a significant issue.

The most interesting chapters to read are on the changing views of the public, as more American citizens support the legal and moral rights of this minority and the chapter which follows on parenting. Parenting is a recent question as parents leave traditional families which produced children and seek parental rights.

The right to adoption is also a significant issue, one which has succeeded in changing the perception that gay people cannot be parents or that children will suffer from having parents of one gender.

Legal complications continue to challenge those living in some states. These include not only parenting but also pensions, investments, joint ownership, legal guardianship in the event of illness, etc. Complications make it difficult to determine how, when and if rights are fairly given to partners. Jakub successfully addresses these issues.

However, many people continue to believe that gay relationships are sins, some based on their personal religious beliefs, others influenced by history of gender relations. The Defense of Marriage Act represents the response of these people who legally define marriage to be restricted to one man and one woman. Future courts and legislatures will obviously continue to confront such laws and the issues.

Jakub concludes that there has indeed been major changes in American communities and legal bodies during the period he has studied. He confronts the challenges of the future as well as the present situation in multiple places in the United States. These are issues across the globe in many societies today, even challenging international relationships. This is also an issue for most world wide religions ; the topic may well be useful for future research and publication.

Due to previous obligations at St. Andrews and the University of Nottingham, I was obliged to read Jakub's conclusions while traveling. I read, commented, and returned the paper to him but, apparently the Christmas mail deliveries are such, that he did not receive it before turning in his MA thesis. Judging by the work we have done together, I am confident that his thesis is one of quality. He was working on the footnotes which I have not seen but trust that he has also done satisfactory work to complete them. I recommend that his thesis be accepted for defense and be graded highly if his defense is as good as his work.

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