



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

1050 K Street, NW #400, Washington, DC 20001 | sjc@nagps.org | www.nagps.org |

Dr. Houston Davis
Office of the President
University of Central Arkansas
201 Donaghey Ave.
Conway, AR 72035

Dear President Davis:

My name is JD DiLoreto-Hill and I am the Director of Social Justice Concerns for the [National Association of Graduate and Professional Students](#) (NAGPS), the largest advocacy organization for graduate and professional students in the United States. I am also currently serving as the President of the graduate-professional student body at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. I felt obligated to publicly respond to the actions taken by you on your campus over the past few days when you forced the library on your campus to remove a sign that expressed optimism and pride for the LGBTQ+ community.

Our organization has been monitoring the situation and your most recent clarification is appreciated and has provided some much-needed context to the situation. **However, let us state unequivocally: those who identify as LGBTQ+ are not a *point of view* and their safety and well-being should never be reduced to the simplicity of a political discussion.** To classify an entire group of people as a *political position* reduces the individuals within this community to nothing more than a talking-point. The reality of the situation is that these are human beings who deserve the exact same dignity afforded to the rest of your campus.

I feel compelled to remind you of the health disparity faced by those who identify as LGBTQ+ on your campus and why words and actions by our leaders matter so deeply. The following are statistics from the [National Alliance on Mental Health](#):

- LGB adults are [more than twice as likely](#) as heterosexual adults to experience a mental health condition.
- LGBTQ people are [at a higher risk](#) than the general population for suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts.
- High school students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are almost [five times as likely](#) to attempt suicide compared to their heterosexual peers.
- [48%](#) of all transgender adults report that they have considered suicide in the past 12 months, compared to 4% of the overall US population.



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The aforementioned are just a small sample of the many troubling statistics that demonstrate the challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community. It is commendable that UCA has a large number of organizations that are available for support as you referenced in your most recent statement. **It is, however, imperative that you understand how deeply impactful your gesture may have been for those who feel marginalized and hated each and every day.** Indeed it may not have been your intention, but the message sent was that the lives of at-risk individuals are merely a part of a debate that you do not believe worthy enough for your campus to openly support. When [hate crimes are on the rise](#), *every single* gesture matters. And while your ongoing support is noted, praise is not reserved for those who are simply acting with basic decency and morality. The LGBTQ+ community deserves more from leaders than simply accepting our existence.

Again, we are appreciative that you took the time to clarify the issue today. However, it is important for you to understand that your actions, intentional or otherwise, were hurtful to an entire community during the one month each year that they are able to celebrate being who they are. **We would strongly implore you to do more than simply stand up for the basic rights of your campus, and take this opportunity to truly demonstrate UCA's unwavering commitment to the LGBTQ+ community during Pride Month.**

As a member of the LGBTQ+ community and fellow Arkansan, I want to make myself available to you any time regarding this issue or any other that will help make UCA a safer and more inclusive institution of higher education for the LGBTQ+ community.

Sincerely,

James "JD" DiLoreto-Hill

Director of Social Justice Concerns, NAGPS

President, University of Arkansas Graduate Professional Student Body

Cc

Mr. Robert "Bunny" Adcock

Chair—Board of Trustees

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