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Artist Statement

I came out of the closet as bisexual in 2011. Growing up in San Antonio, TX thought the conservative nature of where I lived had eluded my parents, but I was wrong and they were not happy. In conflict with their religion and responsibility to me, they stopped talking to me for months and things were uncomfortable while they worked on coming to terms with my identity. A year and a half later, being sick of being ignored and unhappy, I left home and attended college 1200 miles away in Tampa, FL at The University of Tampa.

With my move to college, I had no idea how the city of Tampa felt about the LGBTQ+ community. I often reflect on how lucky I was to literally just move in without checking out or researching the community to find acceptance. GLTSBA Pride was the name of the LGBTQ+ and Ally student organization on campus and I immediately got involved. I began to fall in love with the education and activism involved with being a part of this organization. Over the years I moved from a general member to executive board positions such as Student Government Representative, Secretary and now I am President. As soon as my presidency was official I used my knowledge of digital arts and graphic design along with my experience and education of the community to rebrand the organization, both inside and out. I changed the name to UTampa Pride, something people would understand more than a confusing acronym, created a new, recognizable logo, revamped the weekly meetings to be more interesting, brought in fundraisers and changed the mission statement to be more inclusive. With these changes, the membership went from an average of 15-20 members weekly to 50; something never seen on campus.

It quickly became apparent that sharing LGBTQ+ education and history was my passion, and I wanted more. Although a little too late to change my major, I decided I wanted to go into social work. By sharing my passion with other people including professors, who had seen my work with UTampa Pride, I was seen as a helpful addition to joining a team with the Sheriffs Office of Pasco County in developing an app to educate and help in the fight against human trafficking nation wide. Roughly 40% of the homeless youth in the United States identifies as LGBTQ+, and being homeless is one of many large factors that can put one at risk for being caught in a human trafficking ring. With my passion for the community, and even humanity itself I am excited to be able to work as a designer for TRAC. I was even more excited to learn that they were also interested in bringing my girlfriend on as the second designer, which personally worked as both an aid and challenge to attaining a finished project. We had to adjust to the way we work together and re-evaluate a way to communicate to have something we both liked for this application, while also using the work of the sociology team to encompass all of the statistics, facts and knowledge. Overall, I am thoroughly excited to be a part of this team, working to make a difference in the community through designing something that can educate people nation-wide.