

## **Rachael Walker: 2018 Research Award Entry Essay**

In writing my thesis, my biggest hurdle was finding primary sources. As my thesis work was about musicians, I did a great deal of internet scouring, diving into 2007-era music forums in French text-speak, and deciphering something that is in more ways than one a foreign language. While I did not use library resources in a traditional sense for this portion of my research, finding something intentionally obscure would be essentially impossible without the strong research skills I learned from the librarians and using library materials in other venues, especially through my two years in the Honors program. I did use library materials a great deal in finding my theorists and background information to inform my analysis and thought processes in creating the argument that became my thesis. After I knew the topic on which I would be writing my thesis, I planned my research to be background knowledge and theory first, primary sources second, so that I knew with what lenses I would be looking into my specific materials. Understanding the historic background and significance of resistance and protest in France, music in France, and queer history in France was all essential in diving into my thesis research and understanding its significance. It then took a lot of time and research to find my specific musicians and beyond that, their specific albums and music for me to look into. I did struggle to find primary sources; while I knew they existed, as an outsider to the French queer community as an English-speaking American, it was a space I struggled to gain access to, particularly as I decided to place the limitation upon myself that these musicians had to be independent. I dealt with this by dedicating a significant amount of time scouring the internet and making contact with people I knew who could help, and eventually I found the perfect musicians for my thesis. After I found them, locating interviews and their social media was much simpler and things started to fall into place afterward – I was completely engrossed once I connected with these musicians on a human-to-human level. Another challenge I faced, not at all uncommon, was putting forth the necessary dedication. Every senior I've met has complained about their thesis and scared me to write one myself, so my coping mechanism became to ignore it while the mounting pressure built. Had I worked diligently from week one, it would have been a much better and more cohesive experience, but instead I was sweating over my thesis for many long hours in November and December. I made a lot of choices in writing my thesis that made it more challenging than it probably needed to be – translating from French, integrating poetic analysis, analyzing dance moves, watching long interviews, and actively seeking out obscure music – but I am glad I did. Because it was difficult, I was so in love with my research. It was uniquely my own: my own interests, my own skills, my own passions.