

## My Reflective Essay- Using the Maryland Libraries

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Being a South African Jewish immigrant, I have always been interested in my birthplace and the role that Jews played there. When I was told in Honors Humanities that I must write a keystone project that is worthwhile and adds to the knowledge of the world, the only project that truly fits that description for me was writing about what I had heard from family and friends – Jews and their role during the infamous Apartheid era. Before I embarked on this project, I did not realize the amount of research that was necessary or the abundance of information that the Maryland libraries could provide.

For my project – South African Jewish Involvement in the Anti-Apartheid Movement – I used books, microfilms, and even a DVD from the Maryland libraries. In the beginning of my research, I searched online in the library catalog to find books. After I had selected a large amount of material pertaining to my topic, I went to McKeldin library to find them. Fortunately, the libraries categorization proved most helpful since some of the books I found online were not worthwhile for my paper, but they were next to books that I would not have found without looking in that area. In addition to the books, the microfilms that were available were extremely useful and informative; this was my first time using microfilms and although it was a major effort to copy them to a computer and email them to myself, my project greatly benefitted from them. The final material used from the Maryland libraries was a DVD located in Hornbake Library. The wide range of materials located in the Maryland libraries is a priceless asset to any researcher who wants to write an in-depth analysis. Another valuable aspect of the Maryland libraries is that they pick from a wide selection of books and students know that the materials at

the library were selected because they are scholarly and intellectual. When I had to select my sources, I first saw the dates of publication, bibliographic information about the author, and the context of their writing materials before selecting it. If the author was born in South Africa and wrote the book during Apartheid, I better understood that author's mindset, unlike an author who may have been from America or wrote a book after Apartheid's end. Additionally, books that were written about Jews in South Africa had different tones about them depending on if the author was Jewish or whether the author was anti-Apartheid. All these notions come into play when evaluating the research materials.

Throughout the writing process, I was in contact with Professor Sibbie O' Sullivan who provided me with helpful input. I split my paper into three sections – History, Apartheid, and South African Jews – and Professor O'Sullivan was extremely supportive in keeping my paper focused and allowing me to get all my thoughts on paper. The hardest part for me in writing an in-depth paper was starting it and then not getting lost along the way. Once I understood how I wanted to format it, I was able to keep my paper going in the direction that I had in mind.

With this project's completion, I learnt a lot about the different materials that Maryland's libraries have to offer. Before this project, I had never used microfilms or movies in a research paper; I had also never spent the countless hours in the library that I did to find the research materials that allowed me to write the comprehensive essay that I had written. This project also taught me about the various options in Maryland's libraries, which will be very beneficial for future work as an undergraduate student; the biggest lesson I learned from the project was the studying habits that are needed in college and how the libraries at the University of Maryland could give me the materials, the instructors, and the working space that will make me a scholarly and informed college student.