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Aug. 4, 2010 ? Julia

Fresno, Santa Ana, Ripon, Santa Rosa, San Diego, San Francisco, Hanford, Los Angeles, Coachella, Dinuba, Salinas and Concord - These are just a few of the communities across California represented at our annual GSA Activist Camps held this summer.



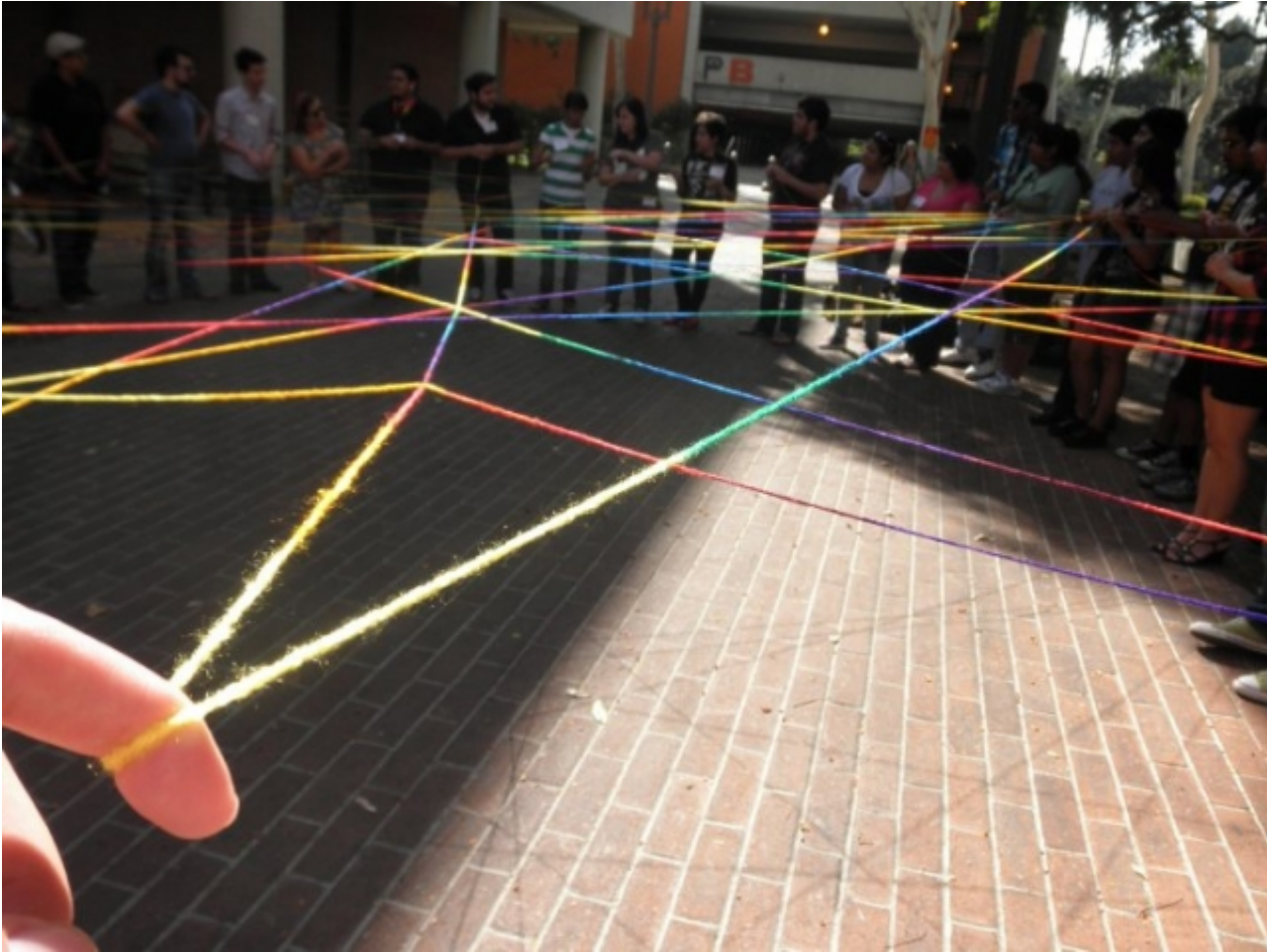
For over 10 years, GSA Network has hosted GSA Activist Camps as part of our mission to transform California's schools into safe and accepting learning environments for all students regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. In this decade, through our GSA Activist Camps we have trained hundreds of youth activists who have gone on to fight to end harassment and discrimination in their schools.

All GSA Activist Camp participants learn how to:

- strengthen their GSAs through better organization and fundraising

- understand the ways that homophobia and transphobia are connected to racism, sexism and classism
- use their legal rights to protect themselves and their peers from bullying and discrimination
- build coalitions with people and groups outside of the LGBT community
- successfully lobby their school administrators and local school boards to fight homophobia and transphobia

The Southern California/Central Valley (SoVal) GSA



Activist Camp was held at the University of Southern California from July 23rd to July 25th. SoVal GSA Activist Camp was led by veteran GSA Network Youth Trainers including: **Isaiah Baiseri (Glendora), Glenna Colerider-Krugh (South Pasadena), Charisse Delk (San Dimas), Rene Franco, (Los Angeles), Pablo Ramirez (South Los Angeles), and Aye Robin (Granada Hills).**

Northern California GSA Activist Camp was held at the Headlands Institute in Marin, from July 30th to August 1st. NorCal GSA Activist Camp was led by GSA Network Youth Trainers including: **Lexi Adsit (San Leandro), Logan Cuevas (San Jose), Karissa Doll (San Jose), and Olivia Tennant (Sonoma).**

We asked some GSA activists what they learned and experienced at GSA Activist Camp this summer. This is what they shared with us!

Becca Rodriguez (Hanford High in Kings County) came to Activist Camp to learn the basics to GSA organizing so she can make her new GSA grow. Becca shared, "I came because I just started my GSA this last year. I wanted to take back how to make my GSA work and how to recruit more straight allies like me. My goal is to make a change at my school."

Activist Camp participant **Violet Guardado (Maywood Academy in Los Angeles County)** gained valuable skills at camp and is ready to put them to use back at her school. She says, "I learned about effective strategies that would allow me to convey lessons about LGBTQ issues and oppression to students in my school. I also learned about proper organizing strategies and coalition building, which are important parts of activism."

Victor Romos (Santa Rosa High in Sonoma County) built a powerful network of friends that will help support his activism long after camp is over. He says, "The thing I'm going to miss the most are the other students I met. The students are what make Activist Camp: how you interact with them, what you all share, how you help support each other at camp and after."



Youth who attend GSA Activist Camps leave with a community that crosses all types of boundaries and helps them to continue making change in their schools and communities. Some find acceptance that is missing in their schools. **Becca** shared, "I felt very accepted. Even though I'm straight, usually at my school people think I'm a lesbian because I lead the GSA. Now I know that I'm the A (Ally) in the LGBTQA movement! I'm an activist fighting for equal rights!"

Other youth find a renewed sense of commitment to fighting for equal rights for everyone that is oppressed. **Victor** shared, "I hope not to forget why I came to camp in the first place ? to learn

how to fight for justice with my GSA. I made friends who I can work with to create a safe space in our schools and focus on the rights of transgender students and make sure that my GSA works for them too.?

All 56 youth activists that came to one of our camps this summer are now ready to make change and fight homophobia and transphobia at their schools and communities! GSA Network will continue to support them throughout this school year and beyond!



We want to thank our trainers, mentors, staff, and everyone who donated time and space to make this event happen! We also want to thank all of our participants and wish them the best of luck in their school campaigns in the upcoming year!

>> [Learn more about camp and see more pictures](#) [1]

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[1] <http://gsanetwork.org/events/activist-camps>