



Published on *Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network* (<http://gsanetwork.org>)

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Youth share their thoughts on the Make It Better Project

Oct. 13, 2010 ? Daniel

"The Make It Better Project is a chance to do something about injustices in our schools. It's an opportunity to have a voice, to be known, to be understood, and to be accepted. It will NOT get better until we MAKE IT BETTER!"

- Buddie Sims, Pomona, California

The Make It Better Project, launched by Gay-Straight Alliance Network in response to the recent string of LGBT youth suicides, is gaining momentum across the country as more than 70 organizations endorse.

- * Visit the Make It Better Project [website](#) [1] to learn how you can Make It Better.
- * Check out the new [For Youth](#) [2] and [For Adults](#) [3] pages for resources!
- * Follow the project on [Twitter](#) [4] and [Facebook](#) [5]. Spread the word.

As students across the nation are turning to the Make It Better Project, we asked some GSA youth leaders to share why they're taking part in this project and what impact it's having in their lives. This is what they told us:

"The Make It Better Project is an opportunity for me to take a very scary time in my life and use it to help and educate other youth who are struggling with issues like the ones I struggled with. For me to turn such a negative experience into a positive one for others is the greatest redemption and it truly makes me happy to know I can give my knowledge to others to use to improve their lives."

- G. Pe Benito, Westlake Village, California

"I decided to participate because to be honest...I've put up with being bullied and seeing others who are getting bullied for too long. I'm hoping that the Make it Better Project will really motivate others to make a difference."

- Kimiko Nishitsuji, San Gabriel, California

"This project means a lot to me. It's another outlet for LGBT youth and adults, that don't have a GSA or any kind of community in their school or town. They can find a video to help them. They

can see other people going through what they are going through and learn how to change it. All these videos can help people feel loved and not alone. They can relate and have support to make things better now!"

- Jeffree Merteuil Clark, Bakersfield, California

"I participated because I know what it's like to be discriminated against, not only because of my gender identity, but by my skin color as well. It hurts to know that someone will not be accepted and it is devastating to feel so unwanted and hated that you get pushed to the brink of self-harm. I've participated in Make It Better because it gives me a chance to help the ones I wouldn't be able to reach otherwise."

- Buddie Sims, Pomona, California

The Make It Better Project was launched in response to the LGBT youth suicides that made headlines in September as anti-LGBT bullying drove a number of teens to take their lives - including Raymond Chase, 19, in Rhode Island; Seth Walsh, 13, in California; Tyler Clementi, 18, in New Jersey; Asher Brown, 13, in Texas; and Billy Lucas, 15, in Indiana. In response, columnist Dan Savage launched "It Gets Better," a video message to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth that life gets better after high school. The Make It Better Project takes this one step further, giving youth and adults the tools they need to make schools better right now.

"School doesn't have to be horrible just because you're LGBT! Schools should be safe for everyone," said Carolyn Laub, Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network, who launched the project. "Through the Make It Better Project, youth and adults can work together to prevent suicide and make schools safer for LGBT youth right now. Go to www.MakeltBetterProject.org ^[6] to learn how."

Make It Better events are taking place around the country to remember the youth who have died, support LGBT students, and call on lawmakers to pass the federal Safe Schools Improvement Act and the Student Non-Discrimination Act. [Find or register an event.](#) ^[7]

Claudia Chen, GSA President at Temple City High, shared how she took this message outside of her school and out into the conservative community she lives in. She said:

"In addition to promoting the Gay-Straight Alliance, fighting homophobic and transphobic slurs, and raising awareness for LGBTQ bullying and suicides at school, I've been able to help plan a candlelight vigil in my local area. Around 25 participants marched down Main Street demanding that our schools and communities support LGBTQ issues. By asking for change now, we are also remembering those who took their lives."

The youth had a message for supportive adults on what they can do to make it better now. G. Pe Benito, GSA President at Westlake High wrote:

"Adults can do so much good by sharing their experiences, by recording a video for the Make It Better Project, volunteering for their local GSA club, or by donating their time and money to Gay-Straight Alliance Network and pro-LGBTQ events. By doing these things, adults are helping to support the community and making it better for themselves and for youth seeking adult support

and reassurance."

These GSA leaders also wanted to let other students that you can make a difference in your school today! Here's what they said:

Report harassment! School administration may not listen but keep bothering them until they take action. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Let your voice be heard! Adults need to know what is important to you. Let them know what you need!

- Kimiko Nishitsuji

Start Gay-Straight Alliance clubs, find an LGBTQ friendly hangout. Start an LGBTQ safe space if one doesn't exist in your community. Be open to talk about how you've dealt with harassment and discrimination. Get involved! Use your voice!

- Buddie Sims

Through the website and YouTube channel, youth and adults can work together to make schools safer for LGBT youth right now.

You can Make It Better Now. Here's How -

1. [Make a video!](#) ^[8] Tell the world what you are doing to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools! Please read the video instructions first. Then make your video and upload it to YouTube. Email the link to video@makeitbetterproject.org ^[9] and we will add your video to the Make It Better Project on YouTube.
2. Start a Gay-Straight Alliance in your school! Contact GSA Network to get help starting a GSA if your school doesn't have one. Check out our resource on [starting a GSA](#) ^[10].
3. Call Congress! Tell your representatives to pass the Safe Schools Improvement Act and the Student Non-Discrimination Act. [Read the Action Alert](#) ^[11].
4. Join the Make It Better Project! We aren't waiting until high school is over for our lives to get better... We are taking action now! Join us!
 - * Visit the Make It Better Project [website](#) ^[1] to learn how you can Make It Better.
 - * Check out the new [For Youth](#) ^[2] and [For Adults](#) ^[3] pages for resources!
 - * Follow the project on [Twitter](#) ^[4] and [Facebook](#) ^[5]. Spread the word.
5. Change your school! Organize a campaign that will forever change your school and stop homophobia and transphobia. Contact GSA Network to learn how. Check out our resources on what it takes to [change your school](#) ^[12].

Thanks for doing your part to Make It Better!

Source URL: <http://gsanetwork.org/news/blog/youth-share-their-thoughts-make-it-better-project/10/14/10>

Links

- [1] <http://makeitbetterproject.org/>
- [2] http://makeitbetterproject.org/?page_id=68
- [3] http://makeitbetterproject.org/?page_id=71
- [4] <http://twitter.com/makeitbetterGSA>
- [5] <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Make-It-Better-Project/151446444894778>
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