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2012 YES!

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Epic. That?s one way to describe the 8th annual Youth Empowerment Summit (YES) that took place on Saturday, December 15th. YES draws hundreds of queer and straight ally youth, as well as their adult allies to San Francisco for one epic day of learning about safe schools, networking and fun!

?How many hundreds?? you might ask. This year, we set an *epic* record of over 700 attendees at our conference! The masses descended upon Mission High School to attend a jam-packed day of conference programming including over 40 workshops, a resource fair featuring 21 organizations, regional discussion groups, and a youth only dance and drag show.

Participants also got to hear from a youth panel comprised of high school students about their personal experiences with the school-to-prison-pipeline system?a system that often pushes queer youth, youth of color, and youth with disabilities out of school. The four panelists, Emery Cohen, Espii Gutierrez, Raymond Ferronato, and T. Murray, as well as the moderator, Isaias Guzman, explained that through harsh discipline policies, lack of school safety, and lower academic achievement, some students are forced to drop out of school, limiting the possibilities for a quality education and successful future.

Throughout the day, attendees participated in three sessions of workshops and got to attend programming on How to Have a Kick-GSA, America's Most Unwanted [1] film screening, Safer Sex for Queer Youth, Pride in the 1970s, outLoud Radio?s intergenerational story-telling workshop, and Lip Sync For Your Life hosted by the legendary Juanita MORE! [2] Adult allies attended a separate track of workshops that included an all-day GSA Advisor Institute, How to be an Adult Ally, Family Acceptance & School Inclusivity, and tons more!

And what?s an epic day of learning and skills-building without an equally epic youth dance?! After the conference programming ended, youth headed to the cafeteria for three hours of dancing the night away and watching over ten youth drag

performers. Juanita More! herself hosted the drag show, bringing her charm and sparkle to the stage.

The YES Conference would not have been possible with a team of over 70 volunteers, some of whom came with groups such as Google, Gap, PricewaterhouseCoopers, the USF LGBT Caucus, and Gay 4 Good. We give our deepest thanks for your time!

GSA Network would also like to thank our sponsors, Genentech, PG&E, and the Contra Costa LGBT Community Center whose generous donations made our conference possible.

Our sincere thanks goes to supportive principal Eric Guthertz of Mission High School, as well as the Mission High community, including AV Technician Chloe Hult, custodians Jose and Mai, Connor on lights, photographer Jennifer Soliz, and the Mission High Gay-Straight Alliance club.

We?d also like to thank interpreter Trevor Olizabal, dance decorator Jesse Oberst, and dance photographer Isaac Crummey.

And lastly, thanks to YOU for making our event bigger and better than ever, for your support of safer schools for everyone, for your fabulous outfits and sassy queer spirit, and for making this year?s YES Conference pretty dang *epic*!

Check out some more photos from YES at GSA Network's Facebook page [3].

Source URL: http://gsanetwork.org/news/blog/2012-yes/12/19/12

Links:
[1] http://mostunwantedfilm.org
[2] http://www.juanitamore.com/
[3] http://www.facebook.com/gsanetwork