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White House Summit on Bullying

Mar. 10, 2011 ? Jill

Hi everyone! I just arrived at GSA Network as the coordinator for the Make It Better Project. I'm so excited that, in my very first week, the White House held a [summit to address bullying](#) [1] ? with a focus on LGBT youth leaders, like our very own GSA Network Board Member and summit attendee [Kimiko Nishitsuji](#) [2]!. She'll fill us in later with her own report, but for those impatient to make it better NOW, I wanted to give a quick (livestream) recap.

The heart of the conference ? [LGBT youth activism](#) [3] ? could be found in the powerful speech by MacDuffie School GSA President Dominique Walker. Reflecting on the 2009 suicide of her 11 year-old brother, Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover, which followed anti-LGBT bullying against him, she called on the nation to make it better through GSAs and new laws that would curb the type of abuse her brother faced.

It's a good thing ? a great thing ? that the White House allowed youth to speak for themselves in this interactive conference. As Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, announcing the creation of 33,000 student groups, the youth themselves must be the leaders in solving this problem.

With 9 out of 10 LGBT students experiencing some form of bullying each year, we were glad to see the conference organizers did not forget about the disproportionate amount of bullying that is based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. The closing ceremony emphasized the importance of safe spaces for LGBT students specifically, as well as the need to address overall school culture in creating those spaces. Touting the resources on [stopbullying.gov](#) [4], which prominently features a section on LGBT bullying, Secretary of Health Kathleen Sebelius talked directly about harassment based on sexual orientation and urged adults to confront homophobic slurs.

The White House created a unique opportunity for youth to participate in the summit online through Facebook. Now it's time to create more opportunities for youth to lead the anti-bullying movement. At Gay-Straight Alliance Network, that is our commitment. We started the [Make It Better Project](#) [5] to support and empower young people (and adult allies) who are working day-in and day-out in schools across the country to put an end to bullying and create safe, welcoming

schools.

Overall, I was impressed by the conference, and I'm eager to comb through stopbullying.gov [4]'s resources and share the best with you. I can't wait to read the full conference rundown from Kimiko and, of course, I'd love to hear your thoughts. Leave a comment here, email me at makeitbetter@gsanetwork.org [6], or Tweet me [@makeitbettergsa](https://twitter.com/makeitbettergsa) [7]. I'm here to support your efforts -- It is YOUR movement, after all!

-- Jill Marcellus
Communications Coordinator
GSA Network's Make It Better Project

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Links

- [1] <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/03/10/president-obama-first-lady-white-house-conference-bullying-prevention>
- [2] <https://gsanetwork.org/about-us/board>
- [3] <https://gsanetwork.org/adopt-an-activist-2011>
- [4] <http://stopbullying.gov>
- [5] <http://www.makeitbetterproject.org>
- [6] <mailto:makeitbetter@gsanetwork.org>
- [7] <http://twitter.com/makeitbettergsa>