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## Activists Go To Camp!

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This past weekend, over 30 youth from the Central Valley and Southern California joined forces at the University of Southern California for three days of learning, fun and movement building at GSA Network's Activist Camp!

☒ GSA Network's Activist Camps are organized every summer throughout California to empower GSA activists and provide them with the tools to change their schools and communities. Over the three days of Activist Camp, youth take part in workshops on building coalitions, using laws to stop bullying, planning and running a campaign, and sharing their message as a way to change hearts and minds. "As a camper of GSA Activist Camp, I felt extremely privileged to be there and learn about ways I can better myself and my GSA," said **Anthony Barros, GSA President at Antelope Valley High School** in Lancaster, California. "The camp gave me the necessary tools to help my GSA become better activists."

Students also learn about how homophobia and transphobia are connected to other forms of oppression, such as racism, classism, sexism and patriarchy and how to fight those systems together. The youth activists also focus on both the history of discrimination in the United States and the ways activists have come together and fought for a better society. **Elizabeth Harrell, from Mt. Whitney High School** in Visalia, California, learned how the discrimination faced by LGBTQ people is part of the injustices faced by many other communities in the United States. "Activist Camp helped me understand that there is so much discrimination in this world and we are learning to deal with it," proclaimed Elizabeth. "We are fighting. We are fighting!"



**Mario Vazquez, GSA President at SOAR High School** in Lancaster, California said he was transformed by coming to Activist Camp. "GSA

Activist Camp was one of the most important and life changing and unique experiences. I learned useful information and made great friends along the way. I loved it!" **Trio Harris, GSA Network Board Member and Carlsbad High GSA President**, also grew from coming to GSA Activist Camp. "Activist Camp gave me a chance to meet people foreign to my comfort zone. It pushed my boundaries and made me think critically about the impact I have in my community."??Many participants had a powerful experience at GSA Activist Camp and felt that it was a life changing experience that all activists should have. "Respect and Power, that is what GSA Activist Camp is all about. You meet amazing people and become amazingly informed and empowered," exclaimed **AprilGrace Ndwiga from Katella High** in Orange County. "Go to Camp and get your world rocked!"??"From the second that camp started, I knew this was where I belonged," shared **Jennifer Ledesma from Magnolia High** in Orange County. **Albert Solis Chacon, GSA President at School of Global Studies** in Los Angeles, echoed similar sentiments stating, "Camp was an amazing experience; this truly changed my life because it is my giant step in becoming a leader for my community and school. I will never forget this experience!"



GSA Network is very excited to work with these amazing and inspiring student leaders as they utilize

the skills and tools from Activist Camp to continue to change their schools, fight harassment and bullying and become part of the greater struggle for a better society.??

This year's Southern California/Central Valley GSA Activist Camp was led by experienced GSA Network Youth Trainers: **Benji Delgadillo** (San Juan Hills High), **Emily Coffin** (Saugus High), **Glenna Colerider-Krugh** (South Pasadena High), **Isaiah Baiseri** (Glendora High), **Isaias Guzman** (Bell High), and **Melba Martinez** (Granada Hills High).

??Thank you to our fabulous Mentors who made GSA Activist Camp happen: Ryan King, Madel Leal, Amy Rivas, Joey Hernandez, Quyen Ngueyn Le, Anna Mkhikian, and Michael Salvatore!

Special thanks to our mental health staff - Laura Kanter and Melissa Fuimara!

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