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Hundreds March Through Los Angeles to Demand Equality

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EDGE, San Francisco, CA
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Ominous clouds did not deter the more than 300 LGBT young people and others who marched through the streets of Los Angeles on March 22 to demand an end to discrimination, homophobia, abuse and homelessness.

The "Youth March for Equality," which started in Chinatown, continued down historic Olvera Street and ended at Los Angeles City Hall. Equality Action assisted march organizers with securing permits, supplies, marketing and volunteer. And both it and the Gay Straight Alliance Network sponsored the event.

"We were trying to fill in a gap in the movement for high school youth who were not actively being engaged," Equality Action co-founder Dahlia Ferlito said.

Robyn Tyler, who married her partner Diane Olson last June and continues to challenge Proposition 8's passage, also spoke during the march. Some participants, however, expressed frustration they were not included in efforts to stop the ballot initiative.

"There really wasn't a lot that the (No on 8) campaigning asked of youth," Ariel Bustamante Lupton, 16, said. "They could have done a better job of mobilizing youth and getting them into phone banks, and speaking to their peers and people they know who were of voting age."

The Glendale High School junior chaired a No on 8 subcommittee. She said organizers often dismissed and even discouraged youth involvement.
"It's not just about homophobia or transphobia. It's also about racism and sexism and how these things intersect. As queer youth, there are so many opportunities to be taken advantage of,

oppressed or discriminated."
"Youth were set aside even though it was our future," Bustamante Lupton said. "They literally said teenagers were antsy and they didn't want that image for the campaign."

In the aftermath of election and Prop 8's passage, Bustamante Lupton and other young activists sought the support of organizations that would help them become more visible in the fight for marriage for same-sex couples and other issues they contend directly LGBT youth at school and at home.

"All LGBT are facing discrimination, being verbally harassed and teachers are not stopping harassment in their schools," Daniel Solis, the Southern California program coordinator for the GSA Network, said. "Despite efforts to make them safer, our students are not safer."

The GSA Network is a youth leadership organization that connects GSAs to each other and other organizations. Seven hundred middle and high schools across California are part of the GSA Network. And 329 of them are in Southern California.

Bustamante Lupton added she feels youth involvement is important component of fighting for LGBT rights and other issues.

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