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Lawrence King Murder Remembered

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This Thursday, Feb. 12 marks the first anniversary of the school shooting that tragically claimed the life of openly gay, gender nonconforming eighth-grader Lawrence King at E.O. Green Junior High School in Oxnard, CA last year.

Students are preparing to remember and honor King, who according to classmates was regularly harassed because of his sexual orientation and gender expression. King, who sometimes wore makeup to school, was brutally murdered by a male classmate. Allegedly King had asked the student to be his valentine.

Though King's death was among the most publicized hate crimes since the murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998, the persistent harassment that King faced at school is not unique. The "2007 National School Climate Survey" found that in the past school year, nearly nine-tenths of LGBT students (86.2%) reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation, and two-thirds (66.5%) because of their gender expression.

The Survey found over one-fifth (22.1%) of LGBT students reported being physically assaulted at school in the past school year because of their sexual orientation, and over a tenth (14.2%) because of their gender expression.

Three in five LGBT students (60.8%) said they feel unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, and over one third (38.4%) because of their gender expression.

Gay-Straight Alliance Network works to empower youth to fight homophobia and trans-phobia in school by training youth activists and supporting student-led Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs. GSA activists are planning events in their schools and communities to commemorate Lawrence King and raise awareness about the hostility and violence that LGBTQ students continue to face.

“In the year since Larry King’s murder and the passage of Prop 8, youth activists have sharpened their focus on creating safer schools and fighting for LGBT equality,” GSA Network Executive Director Carolyn Laub told Bay Times. “Too many youth still suffer harassment at school, but GSA clubs have the power to transform schools and our society.” Laub added, “The vigils organized by GSA Network youth leaders will ensure Larry hasn’t died in vain.”

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