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Queer Youth Have Rights? You Bet They Do!

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On Tuesday, April 13th, the ACLU of Northern California?s **Friedman Education Project**, held its annual **Youth Rights Conference** at the Cesar Chavez Student Center at San Francisco State University. This year the theme was ?Fresh, Fierce + Fabulous!? because you know queer youth are the freshest, fiercest, and, of course, the most fabulous around!

The question for the day was: ?How does discrimination and oppression of queer communities and individuals affect us all, and how do we envision and fight for a world that truly includes and honors us all?? Dang, ACLU, that?s a deep question!

The conference organizers hoped to get participants thinking about this question with the workshops being offered, keynote speakers, youth presenters, and performances.

The morning kicked off with some beats by the **Loco Bloco Women?s Crew**, followed by inspiring poetry from **Lex**, **Yosimar Reyes**, and **Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha**. And what Youth Rights conference would be complete without some youth activist keynote speakers. This year, **Alexander Adsit** (a GSA Network alumni and board member!) and **Cassandra Chase** shared their words. Finally, the last keynote speaker was **Ms Major**, an elder and long time

organizer who was actually involved in the Stonewall Riots!

Karissa Doll, a senior at Oak Grove High School, had this to say about the conference: ?I attended workshops called "If you're queer, come here, if you're straight, ally to fight the hate!" and "Uncle Sam says "SHHHH!": censorship & media" and both were very informative. The first was about how to be an ally and the proper terms of genders, and the second was about what the media would censor and to show why and how. I feel this conference was very well put together and I enjoyed myself."

GSA Network put on a legal rights workshop focusing on the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 (AB 537) [1] and the California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Act of 2004 (SB 71) [2]. Be real now, show of hands of who knows what those two laws mean? If you don?t know about these laws and how they protect LGBTQA youth, then you should definitely give GSA Network a call or shoot us an email so we can tell you all about them! Heck, we?ll even come to your school to do it! Just contact Kiely [3], Daniel [4], or Julia [5].

Not only did the conference focus specifically on queer youth issues, but also issues relating to all youth in general. David Carson, a senior at College Park High School (and who tore up the floor with his boss dance moves) said, ?I learned that the police can not check your bag without your consent.?

The ACLU Friedman Education Project has some amazing and educational youth programming. For more information, please contact **Shamar Theus**, Youth Outreach Coordinator, at **(415) 621-2493 ext. 355** or at stheus@aclunc.org [6].

If any of this sounds interesting or fun to you, be sure to give GSA Network a holla!

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