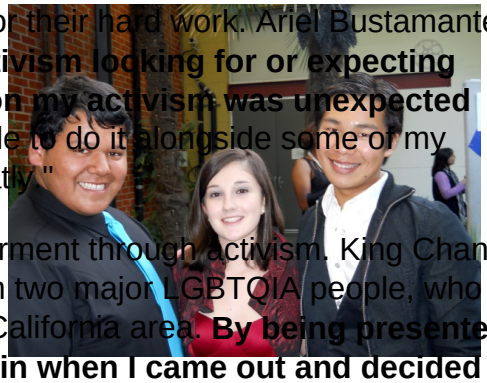
Published on *Gay-Straight Alliance Network* (http://www.gsanetwork.org)

GSA Network Youth Leaders Win Big at 4th Annual Los Angeles LGBTA Youth Awards

Jun. 14, 2010 ? Daniel

On June 8th, four GSA Network youth leaders won a collective eight scholarships at the **4th Annual Los Angeles LGBTA Youth Awards** held at the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center's Renberg Theater. **Ariel Bustamante**, Options for Youth Charter High; **King Chan**, Reid High; **Isobel Murillo**, Pete Knight High; and **Pablo Ramirez**, Lincoln High, as GSA Network youth trainers and members of the Southern California Youth Council, have been helping to build a grassroots movement of GSA activists fighting to make their schools and communities safer places for LGBTQ youth throughout Southern California.

Since all four of these amazing activists joined the GSA movement to make a difference and not for awards, they were all very honored at being recognized for their hard work. Ariel Bustamante expressed this feeling and said, "**I didn't get involved in activism looking for or expecting some kind of recognition, so receiving an award based on my activism was unexpected but felt great.** It was especially a great honor since I was able to do it alongside some of my peers who are near and dear to me and whom I respect greatly."



LGBTA Youth Award winners Pablo Ramirez, Ariel Bustamante, and King Chan

Other winners reflected on their personal journey of empowerment through activism. King Chan said, "I was incredibly proud to be awarded such honors from two major LGBTQIA people, who do tons of work and advocacy for the youth in the Southern California area. **By being presented these awards, I was reassured that I only had more to gain when I came out and decided to take action into my own hands and make an impact on the community around me.**" Pablo Ramirez agreed with King, and added, "My thirst for knowledge and the desire for equality motivated me to join the Gay-Straight Alliance Network in hopes of quenching that thirst. There I was able to grow and learn to my heart?s content; **I was able to learn the laws that protect me, how to deal with irrational people and, most importantly, how to be myself**."

Isobel felt reenergized by the Awards ceremony and is even more committed to being an activist fighting for the rights of LGBTQ youth. Isobel said, "**It felt amazing to win the awards.** I became pretty emotional (which became apparent on stage lol), especially after receiving the Harvey Milk Award. I felt so appreciated for my activist work, and I also greatly appreciated the amazing work

that the other students, teachers, and other activists had done. Seeing them inspired me to continue my activism and go beyond what I'm already doing."

The students won the following awards:
Ariel Bustamante: Opportunities for Learning Scholarship
King Chan: Oigno-Aizumi Insurance Scholarship & Gay and Lesbian Administrators and Allies Scholarship
Isobel Murillo: Gay and Lesbian Administrators and Allies Scholarship & the Harvey Milk Award
Pablo Ramirez: Bob Ames Scholarship, Sotero Soria Scholarship,& the Harvey Milk Award

At the end of this summer, these amazing GSA activists will be heading off to the next phases of their lives and activism - Ariel will be attending Green Mountain College in Vermont, King will be studying at Santa Monica College, Isobel will be a first year student at City College of San Francisco, and Pablo will be enrolling at San Francisco State University.

GSA Network thanks them for their selfless service to their own GSAs and to the GSAs of Southern California. We wish them the best as they continue to work to create a just world!

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