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Youth Leader Irene Rojas-Carroll Accepts eQuality Scholarship: Watch!

Jun. 10, 2011
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjhSjgMLoB0

Watch GSA Network youth leader Irene Rojas-Carroll accept the 2011 eQuality Scholarship or read her speech below. To read more about this year's eQuality Collaborative dinner and the scholarship recipients, check out this post [1].

"The eQuality Scholarship is meant to – I quote – honor and encourage students for their service to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. I appreciate that so much; even if I'm still figuring out exactly who I am and what I want to do with my life, I know that equality for all is the best goal to work for.

When I was small, my dad used to tell me (some people in the room have heard this story before): “Irene, there are all different kinds of people in this world. All different colors. Black, white, yellow, red, purple, green, rainbow…” And I said, “Whoa! I want to meet these people.” I knew that he was speaking metaphorically, and I thought about this diversity, but I never thought of myself as different or fully realized that there could be serious oppression around these differences until I started high school and began questioning my sexual orientation. I immediately joined the GSA as a freshman and started working to motivate my peers and end ignorance, because I saw that most of the hate and homophobia there was just because of a lack of education. To this end, I created and led a series of anti-homophobia workshops in classrooms that were available to teachers if they were needed.

My work within the LGBTQ community will not end when I graduate high school. I am leaving my school’s Gay-Straight Alliance club strong and stable, and I will stay involved with social justice work in college and throughout my life. The best way that I can do this is by continuing my education, showing the world that LGBTQ people can be and are successful and visible, and then bringing that knowledge back.

Being a part of this community has jump-started my leadership skills and my confidence: my most valuable skill is teaching others how to be more accepting while pushing forward and learning how to keep my own mind open. The way I carry myself has completely changed for the

better because of my activism. Because of this, I thank the eQuality Scholarship Collaborative, all the member organizations, my parents, Dr. Mark Wilson, GSA Network, and really everyone who has helped me get to this point. Your contributions will allow me to continue my advocacy and my education as part of Brown University's class of 2015, where I will explore political science, urban studies, education, and gender and sexuality studies. I am incredibly grateful to you all for this amazing award. Thank you."

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[1] https://www.gsanetwork.org/news/blog/congratulations-winners-2011-equality-scholarship/05/26/11