

Youth Leadership and Action Program 2003 Participants

Abigail L. is 16 years old and lives in the town of Camp Meeker with her two moms Kimberly Lawton and Elizabeth Bryant. She attends Santa Rosa High School, where she is an advanced student in the drama section of her school's specialized arts program. As a child, Abby appeared in Both My Moms' Names are Judy, a film about children with gay and lesbian parents used to educate teachers in elementary schools. At the moment her goals are merely to try and define who she is through the choices she makes, and to become either a renowned actress or an elementary school teacher.

Breauna D. has two gay fathers with whom she has lived in San Francisco for the past eight years. Next year she will be a freshman at Notre Dame High School which she hopes will be an amazing new adventure. Bree likes to write poetry and do black and white photography. She enjoys being with her family whom she adores and being a gay rights activist in her community. Breauna and her dads have appeared in That's a Family and on the Montel Williams Show, and visited the White House to educate about her family.

Claire V. is a 14 year old aspiring volleyball star. She lives in Richmond with her mother, sister, and her mom's partner. Claire also spends time with her straight father. She is excited to be entering 9th grade at Bishop O'doud Academy in Oakland this fall. After attending Family Week in Provincetown, MA, Claire became an active participant in COLAGE.

Kate M. is an 18 year old COLAGEr who lives in Santa Rosa with her lesbian mother and grandmother. She is a recent high school graduate and was a prominent member of her local high school's Gay-Straight Alliance. She also is very busy in school and work and plans to attend community college next year.

Landon M-K. is a 20 year old college student at City College of San Francisco. She lives with her mom Michele and Kelly (her mom's partner of eight years). Although she spends most of the school year attending classes, she manages to still work at Nordstroms in the Handbags department. After spending two years going to school in Oregon, she decided that she would rather be in San Francisco, where she can be closer to her family. She has attended the Pride Parade for the past 6 years, having more fun being in the parade than watching it.

Maraya M-L. is a 16 year old creative writing student at the San Francisco School of the Arts. She has been involved in COLAGE for many years. She has two lesbian moms and was born through donor insemination. Though her mothers separated about 6 years ago, they remain close friends and Maraya splits her time between the households.

Marina G. is a 15 year old who attends Mercy High School in Burlingame. She has two moms and has been an activist for the gay community since she was 9 years old. Marina lives in conservative San Mateo County, and has been active in promoting changes within the community, the state, and the nation. This year she received a certificate of honor from Assemblyman Mark Leno in front of the California State Assembly. She was also named one of the Grand Marshals of the 2003 San Francisco Pride Parade. Marina has appeared on "The Today Show", A Nickelodeon Special entitled "My Family Is Different" with Linda Ellerbee and Rosie O'Donnell, "Mornings On Two" with Ross McGowan, and "The Montel Williams Show".

Morgan E. recently jumped into a bustle of community activism. Whether she is teaching 7th graders about what it means to be gay or speaking on panels for 11th grade homophobia workshops, she loves sharing her experience of having both a lesbian mom and a gay dad. She was the President of the Rainbow Alliance at her high school, where she enjoyed acting, directing, playing basketball, and, oh yeah, studying. She loves working with kids at summer camps and babysitting, as well as spending hours at the restaurant where she works. This fall she heads to UCLA to pursue journalism, marine biology, and/or acting.

Quinn D. is an eighteen year old who just graduated from St. Ignatius College Preparatory. He splits time between his coparents, a lesbian mom and gay dad whose partner (Quinn's stepfather) has a daughter (Quinn's sister) from a similar family situation. Quinn loves baseball--watching it, talking about it, and especially playing it: he played center field and co-captained the St. Ignatius baseball team. Quite surprisingly, Quinn does not enjoy long walks on the beach, possibly his greatest character flaw. He will attend Boston University this fall.

Rachel K-B. is 16 years old. Her mom and dad were married for 5 years and then they divorced when she was 2. When she was 3, Rachel's mom told her she was a lesbian. Her mom is currently single and her dad got remarried about 4 years ago. Rachel says, " I now have a mom, a dad, a step-mom and 2 step-sisters. I live with my mom and I see my dad frequently - he lives about 10 minutes away. I wouldn't change anything about my family."

Ruby C-W. just graduated from Lick-Wilmerding High School and is headed off to the East Coast to attend Smith College next fall. She is the proud 18 year old daughter of lesbian moms and a wonderful big sister. Ruby is an active member, volunteer and teacher at Congregation Sha'ar Zahav. She also helped start and was a leader in the Gay Straight Alliance at Lick HS.

Whitney M-K. is 17 years old and lives in San Francisco, switching houses every two weeks between her dad and two lesbian moms. Whitney attends school at Sacred Heart Cathedral (in the middle of SF), where she is a junior and she plays club and school soccer. Whitney enjoys shopping, hanging out with friends, dancing--all that fun partying stuff. One day Whitney hopes that she'll become a famous make-up artist.

Jill Shenker is the collaborating artist working with YLAP this spring to create this youth media extravaganza. She also works with the San Francisco Day Labor Program, Jewish Youth for Community Action and Jews for a Free Palestine. From 2000-2002 she directed the arts activism program, Free Zone, at Gay-Straight Alliance Network. Jill came to the Bay Area from Colorado Springs to complete a degree in Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity at Stanford University. She is active in local organizing around youth empowerment, Palestinian solidarity, immigrant rights, and fighting the Bush administration. As an artist, she enjoys photography, book making, around the house projects, graphic design, and playing with oil pastels.

Meredith Fenton is the Program Director at COLAGE. She first became involved with COLAGE when she interned in our office the summer after her mom came out as a lesbian. For the next three and a half years she served as a member of our National Board of Directors and Bay Area volunteer. Originally from Illinois, Meredith graduated from Wellesley College in 1998. When not working with youth or fighting for social justice, Meredith performs with the queer and political Burlesque-Esque, skates with Quality Bad, and organizes with the 5Janets Collective.

The COLAGE Youth Leadership and Action Program began in 2002-2003 in response to a request from COLAGE's membership for more structured and diverse youth development opportunities for kids of LGBT parents. Over the course of the past 8 months, fifteen youth with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) parents and allies participated in this pilot program gaining skills and practice in leadership, public speaking, media literacy and advocacy while focusing on two action projects selected by the group. For their Education Project, YLAP youth provided panels, workshops and trainings to a diverse spectrum of people in the Bay Area, including: students ranging from 3rd grade through college age, prospective LGBT parents, LGBT parents with younger children, social workers, pediatricians, and teachers. In all, the youth shared their experiences and views with several thousand people. YLAP also created the Respect All Families poster series and That's So Gay: Art by Youth with LGBT Parents. In addition to these focus projects, the 2002-2003 YLAP group also participated in a Media and Public Speaking training, developed Steps for Making Schools Safer for Students with LGBT Parents, worked with magazines, newspapers, and television to promote awareness, and managed to still have a fabulous time!