



**RAINBOW PRIDE  
YOUTH ALLIANCE**

**Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance (RPYA)**

# **Everything You Should Know**



## Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance (RPYA)

RPYA is a grassroots California non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that was founded in 2001. We provide support services to LGBTQ+ youth, as well as their parents and caretakers, including workshops, online support groups, and linkage to resources.

Visit our website for more information.  
[rainbowprideyouthalliance.org](http://rainbowprideyouthalliance.org)

Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance  
Office: 909.206.4830  
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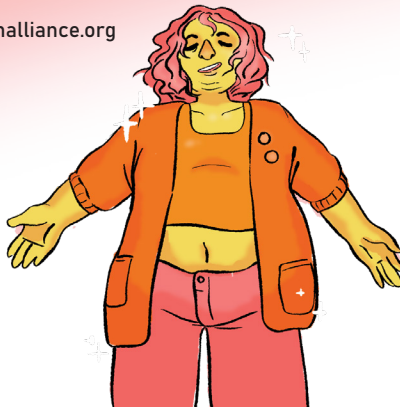
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Hello! We are the Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance and we are an LGBTQ+ organization that focuses on youth from the ages of 11 to 17 with additional programming for Transitional-Aged Youth (T.A.Y.) from 18 to 26. We hold most of our programming in our San Bernardino offices in the Chase building and its surrounding areas!

**Our mission** is to provide a safe, healthy, and enriching environment for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and intersex youth of the Inland Empire. We provide a safe space for young people to meet, make friends, and participate in various weekly events and activities.

**Advocacy:** We are committed to organizing, lobbying, and supporting community efforts to make the Inland Empire LGBTQ+ affirming.

**Education:** We aim to provide youth and parent/guardians psycho-educational support groups and LGBTQ+ education.

**Wellness:** We are dedicated to facilitating activities and programming that enriches the lives of LGBTQ+ folks. We are here to promote creativity, health, and wellness in queer youth!

This interview was shortened for publication purposes.

**Efren:** How did RPYA start? What were its origins?

**Benita:** Well, the simplest way to put it was some young people wanted a support space for LGBTQ+ youth. [They] walked into the then LGBT center and said "Hey, we want a space to meet! We need support!" and that's how it got started.

**Efren:** I read on the website that the origin date was 2001 but I also heard 2008 is an important year. What were some important years for RPYA? How did RPYA get to where it is today?

**Benita:** The foundation of RPYA started in 98-99 but it became a formal organization later. There were distinct periods of birth of the organization as a whole. [Paul Garcia and Aaron] were one of the first students that showed up to the first iteration of RPYA. The first iteration was just a few kids showing up on a Friday night hanging out and then it grew from there. It maybe started out with 15 to 20. Word of mouth started spreading it. It was really at its peak around 2007 when there were not a lot of GSAs on school campuses. This was during a period where there weren't any resources, not even in LA so it was unique! It was a spot where they could just go and be themselves. We were really formalizing as an organizational structure; we had an active board, an active condary of volunteers and our first Executive Director. At the time I was Board Secretary, intermittently governing aspects of the org.

The new period began in 2008. Around that time, we had our 2nd executive director Maggie Hawkins and I was board president. Maggie led us for about 2 years and [she] helped us make more connections in the community. From 2008-2017, I would say, was another period of drought. We really struggled with place, outreach, volunteers,

staffing. As things started opening up for [LGBTQ+] adults, they started opening up for [LGBTQ+] kids. We started having a lull but we still had theater activities going, we had a couple [of] creative events, field trips. We maintained a low key presence.

Between 2018-2020, we partnered up with the local faith organization and the department of behavioral health in Riverside county and started Source. [Source] was a play on what we had already started with our support groups [that was] endorsed and encouraged [by outside orgs]. We were very fortunate that we partnered with a school nearby from where we were meeting. Whether they were coming because we had pizza or if they were coming because they really like the fellowship [students] would come! It was right after school from 3:30 to 5:30. They would walk across the street to the library and tell their parents to pick them up from there. No one would know the difference.

We [also] got funding from the Kaiser Family Foundation to do a suicide prevention campaign for LGBTQ youth and we partnered with public health in Riverside county. From there, [they] expanded our activities in suicide prevention to opioid prevention. [They even] extended [our] grant for that so we were able to do programs, outreach, and education to the community on a whole 'nother level. We weren't just focused on GSAs bringing young people into our support groups, we were also focussed on going where they were.

Then, [in 2020] COVID hit. Our big programming [was] around how we were meeting people where they were at. All of a sudden, that's been snatched away. What did we do? Well, we went virtual! We did a virtual prom. [We did] a mini conference on racial healing and equity because we were also sandwiched in between the protests that were happening so we had this [simultaneous] pandemic going on. We were trying to be responsive and present to that from home.

As things started opening back up, GSA advisors started reaching out saying, "The kids need you!" so we started transitioning back into school.

What COVID did for us was that it gave us an opportunity to target our community with some messaging around mitigating COVID [and] getting the vaccine. [We made] sure that we had wellness at our forefront as our siblings were dying all over the country. We wanted to see what we could do to advance information and knowledge in our areas. That stabilized us. It allowed us to go from 3 staff members to 25. It allowed us to send out an army of folks into the community to help with food distribution, toys, school supplies, [and] backpacks. We were doing text and phone banking, door to door canvassing, spreading the message that "you matter". It didn't matter what your race, ethnicity, sexual, or gender identity [was], we wanted people to know that there were folks who looked and loved like them who wanted to affirm their existence. Every kind of thing that was able to be delivered and carried out to somebody, we were right there doing that. Art walk really took off for us. It really became a part of our pattern of outreach and engagement. That was a big deal.

And so here we are today, making another pivot! [We are] finding another way to do outreach in the community to send a message of hope and resilience through the zines. The zines have become a library of information for folks. It says, here's what we're thinking on this topic. Here's the information you need to lead a healthy and sex-positive life and to help fight the viruses of today and tomorrow!

**Efren:** That's amazing! I remember you mentioned field trips and programming from the early days of RPYA. Which were most significant that you think were vital in the development of RPYA?

Benita: There was one field trip with about



Photo of Benita Ramsey

Find the rest of the interview at here:

15 young people that took a plane to San Francisco. [We] went to visit one of the largest LGBTQ centers in the country. They serve LGBTQ youth, homeless youth, and youth of different backgrounds. [Our youth] really wanted to go out and see what people did in other more liberal communities. This gave them access to dream big about what might be possible for us to do in a conservative community that wants us to be invisible. That was one significant activity that I think gained young people a sense of purpose. It guided how we developed our initial messaging out of our planning board. In the fall, we also have Q Camp where we take 50 young people who are interested in having a GSA at their campus. We have leadership development, training and talks about techniques [about] how they [can] build the capacities of their schools to handle their GSA.



## Programming: Source Youth Group

RPYA's source group is for LGBTQ+ youth between the ages of 11-18 who are looking for a space that supports them. We provide workshops and

field trips for in-person youth along with opportunities to participate in other events hosted by RPYA. Online members will be able to have access to any digital programming we may host from anywhere in the world!

Topics: Affirming self-care, protecting your mental health, and resources/support services that center their care focus on LGBTQ+ communities.

We have locations in Riverside, San Bernardino, and Zoom. To keep up to date with our current times and locations, please check out our website or Instagram!



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<https://rainbowprideyouthalliance.org/source-youth-group/>

## Programming: Source Youth Group

### San Bernardino Poetry Workshop

Ready to connect, communicate, and collaborate with other young writers? Join us for our poetry group created as a brave space to share, learn, and be creative while expressing yourself! All skill levels are encouraged to attend this group with other youth ages 11-18.



We also host open mic events open to the community but catered toward poetry workshop participants! Here are some pictures from our event "Nightmare on Queer Street" we held in collaboration with Back to the Grind!



### Source Summer Camp

In collaboration with Elevate Youth California, The Center at Sierra Health Foundation, Inland Empire Harm Reduction, and RODA, the Source Summer Camp provides youth from Source workshops on social justice issues that are of interest to the youth of today!



\*please check our Instagram or website for updates on time



## Programming: Source Youth Group

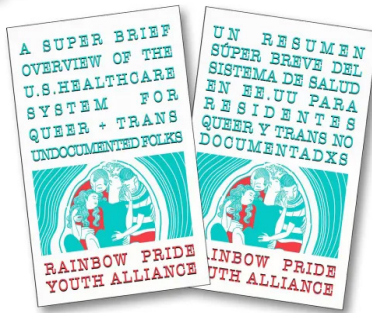
### Zine Library

The Zine Library will serve as an introduction to free and accessible information for the community. We have opened our bilingual library (English and Spanish) of zines discussing topics such as:

- Allyship to LGBTQ+ Youth
- HIV Prevention
- Party Safety
- Recognizing and Reversing an Overdose

We provide these zines at events we table at and are available digitally on our website! By special request, we can also provide zines from our library to local organizations and businesses!

Our digital library contains zines made in-house but will also contain some zines self published by queer voices that we feel are important to share with the community.



QR Code to Digital Zine Library.



## Programming: Source Youth Group

### Free Store

Through generous donations from sponsors like Vans, Haus Labs, and Warner Music Groups, we have been able to create a free store within our offices. We offer books, clothing, make-up, shoes, and assorted school supplies available at any time to our Source youth groups and at special events open to community members of San Bernardino and its surrounding areas.

We have our free store open to Source participants and to the community during the holidays. We also give out select items from our free store during tabling events we participate in!



## Programming: Source Youth Group

### Youth Centers for Pride

RPYA provides a family friendly space for youth below the age of 18 to hang out and meet other LGBTQ+ people during Pride events! We provide art spaces, video games, bracelet making, and snacks for families, student organizations, or any youth at major pride events across the IE.



We've collaborated previously with Riverside Pride and Palm Springs Pride to allow space for local GSAs and any other youth to participate in Pride!



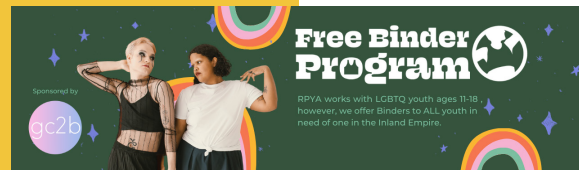
## Programming: Source Youth Group

### Free Binder Program

Visit our site to learn more here:



Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance offers Free Chest Binders to youth, prioritizing youth living in the Inland Empire. We distribute chest binders via mail (shipping is covered) & through in-person pride-related events.



### How does the program work?

Fill out the Chest Binder Survey on our website and you will be added to our mailing list

Once we have ordered your binder, we will ship it to your mailing address. We currently have a waitlist for binders, so we will notify you as soon as possible. We are partnering with some amazing binder manufacturers that we look forward to being able to distribute as soon as possible.

If you feel comfortable doing so, post and tag us on social media to let us and your friends know you received it!

We offer sizes XS - 5XL at half and full length

In addition to physical binders, RPYA's Free Binder Program also provides educational resources and workshops that focus on instructing any interested youth in safe binding practices. All of our work is centered on the well-being of gender affirming resources and knowledge for queer and trans youth.





## Workshops

RPYA hosts many workshops of various different topics based on the interests of our staff. We hold these workshops with our **SOURCE Youth Groups**, at community centers, schools, or any public venue that welcomes us! If you are interested in having RPYA host a workshop in your area, email us! Our info is on page 2.

### Zine Workshop

A zine is a shorter version of a magaZINE. It's smaller, more compact, and easily readable for people of all ages! It is meant to encourage inspiring creatives to self-publish their own work. Our zine workshops cater to youth who have an interest in putting their creative work into a collection. We encourage youth to share their stories because they matter and there is a value to their voice.



### Theater workshop

Theater is a way in which youth can explore self-expression using all parts of their body. In our theater workshops, we provide youth techniques on how to feel more comfortable on stage and loosen up to create a performance. Our theater workshops are perfect for any aspiring actors, slam poets, or public speakers that want to learn how to hone in on their stage presence!

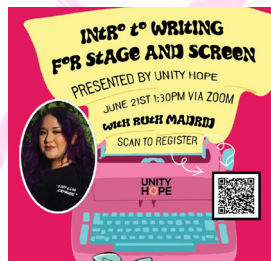


## Workshops



### Procreate workshop

Digital art has become a popular form of self-expression for youth as of recently. With the rising popularity of tablets, many youth find themselves wanting to take advantage of the latest technology available to artists. In our workshop, we will teach your youth how to navigate the Procreate app and create art beyond your wildest imagination!



We also host a variety of other workshops about various topics such as screenwriting, community wellness, knowing-your-rights, bracelet making, and so much more!



## Events

RPYA also participates in and hosts community events catered toward the LGBTQ+ community but open to the community at large. Some events we've held in the past include:



### Miracle on Court Street:

A Christmas-themed event that featured local organizations like Young S.A.M.Q.A., Foothill Aids Project, San Bernardino Public Health, and Family Assistance Program to spread their resources to the San Bernardino community. We also provided free hot chocolate, an arts table, and a skating rink with skate trainers for beginners! RPYA's Free Binder Program also provides educational resources and workshops that focus on instructing any interested youth in safe binding practices. All of our work is centered on the well-being of gender affirming resources and knowledge for queer and trans youth.



## Events

### Ready-Set-Gay:

A community healthcare event focusing on assessing the mental health needs of the LGBTQ+ community. We have resources. We have resources. We have resources, music, and art workshops for members of the Riverside community and its surrounding areas.



### Sex after Dark:

Hosted by Borrego Health, this event set out to promote HIV prevention, PrEP, and sexual wellness. This event featured performances from Athena Kilts and Anita Rose!

### Raw Talk:

In collaboration with DAP and VA58, this event allowed community members to ask questions to Dr. James Simmons, a gay doctor seen on KTLA, NBC, and many other media platforms. This event was hosted by Palm Springs drag queen Miss Rusty Waters!

DAP, VA58, BORRERO HEALTH, and others present  
**RAW TALK**  
Everything You've Wanted To Ask Your Gay Doctor



Queer Sexuality: A Night of Open Discussion  
Hosted by Miss Rusty Waters

Special Guest Dr. James Simmons  
(as seen and heard on KTLA, NBC, CBS, ABC, KROQ, Channel 9, Sirius XM, iHeartRadio, and much more)

VIP Nightclub  
3074 Merrill Avenue  
Riverside, CA 92506

First 50 people get two free drink tickets  
Free pre and COVID-19 vaccines  
Free taco truck  
(priority for those getting vaccinated)  
Free hot and cold food  
Live Radio Remote Broadcast





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