



## Tanene Allison

*Uncommon Legacy Point Scholar  
Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government*



Tanene grew up in an abusive household in a politically conservative and homophobic hometown. After skipping her senior year of high school, she moved to San Francisco with no money and knowing no one. While attending San Francisco State University, Tanene often crashed at friends' houses and lived in a homeless shelter to survive. Despite these obstacles, Tanene was appointed to political office at age 19 and served as an advisor to San Francisco's Mayor and Board of Supervisors. After spending a summer in Boston working for gay marriage, Tanene returned to graduate college and now attends Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. She believes in the power of politics, art and progressive coalition building as ways to fight for further justice for marginalized groups. As an outspoken and out activist, Tanene has advanced the queer rights cause from a policy perspective within Harvard, and plans to continue in leadership work on rights equality.

*"There is such beauty in our work for justice and equality in that we share stories of creating hope where none was given to us. It is an honor to use my life in the service of the audacious belief that a better future is possible."*

## Aaron Arnold

*University of Pittsburgh*



Aaron was born and raised in the small central Pennsylvania town of Lebanon. He came out during his sophomore year, shortly after earning the rank of Eagle Scout. His parents' initial response was disgust and rejection, and Aaron often stayed with friends during the next two years due to the situation at home. His parents suggested religious and psychiatric help instead of acceptance or unconditional love. Aaron was a member of his high school's drama club, vice president of the National Art Honor Society, Arts and Entertainment Editor of his school newspaper and President and co-founder of the Gay Straight Alliance. As a junior, inspired by the documentary *Jim in Bold*, Aaron established a GSA at Cedar Crest High School, the same school Jim Wheeler attended. Aaron fought against an intolerant school board, community administration, and the protests of religious organizations. The GSA has become one of the largest and most active clubs in the school. Aaron also worked extensively with several political

organizations during the 2004 election. During the summer and on weekends he works with homeless outreach programs in cities such as Toronto and Philadelphia. Aaron recently attended Equality Forum 2005 in Philadelphia as a participant on the Jim Wheeler International Youth Panel.

*“As much of a struggle as it was to deal with coming out in a conservative setting, I feel like I have been blessed by what I have learned from dealing with my situation. I can only hope that with each new generation all corners of this country develop into a more open and accepting nation, and I will be there to help this become reality.”*

### **Michelle Carnes**

*Carlos Enrique Cisneros Point Scholar  
American University*



Michelle Carnes is an Anthropology Ph.D. student at American University in Washington DC, studying gender and sexualities in different cultural contexts. Ten years ago, with neither parental support nor a scholarship, she left her Indiana hometown to work two jobs at Purdue University so she could become the second female in her family to earn her BA. She also came out of the closet to a close knit group of friends and, to her mother’s horror, her family. She entered doctoral study at American University in 2002, teaching courses with titles such as, “Sex, Gender and Culture” and “Lesbian and Gay Cultures.” She is a documentary filmmaker, working on her third documentary film about African-American lesbian bar culture in Washington DC. Her work has received numerous awards, including Best Social Science Graduate Paper at the College of Arts and Sciences Conference in 2005, Mellon grants to support her research and the BridgeBuilders Award from the GLBTA Resource Center for campus activism.

*“Being the first in my family’s history to say, “I’m Dr. Carnes” is a tremendous honor and responsibility. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer scholars aren’t just the future — it’s our chance to change the world for the better, our work is urgent, our time is now.”*

## Yve Laris Cohen

*MtvU Point Scholar  
University of California, Berkeley*



Yve began her career as an LGBT rights activist in her native San Diego, where she founded her high school's Gay-Straight Alliance. She expanded the scope of her activism by becoming a youth trainer and organizer for the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, and served as a Co-Chair of a national leadership team for The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). Yve has coordinated and spoken at countless conferences and summits that aim to empower youth to combat homophobia, transphobia, and other intersecting oppressions in their schools and communities. Upon entering college, Yve became involved with campus hunger and homelessness campaigns, teaching free SAT preparation for low-income students in the East Bay, and a mentorship program for inner-city Oakland youth, among other direct service groups. Her most recent political organizing has focused on defending affirmative action, integration, and immigrants' rights. A tireless fighter for social justice, Yve plans to continue her anti-oppression and queer rights advocacy work for the rest of her life.

*"The notion that we are powerless in the face of insurmountable challenges is an illusion. We have the power. I am committed to cultivating that collective strength to fight injustice."*

## Burton DeWilde

*Kalamazoo College*



Burt came of age in the conservative town of Rockford, Michigan, where intolerance and homophobia kept him in the closet, depressed and alienated, for several years. Making the most of a bad situation, Burt devoted himself to extracurricular activities and academics. In addition to running several student organizations, he also graduated salutatorian. After just one week at Kalamazoo College, Burt proudly came out as gay and became a member of the school's LGBT student organization. As the year continued, he took on an increasingly active role in the organization's many events, culminating in his election as leader for the upcoming school year. As leader, Burt has organized National Coming Out Week activities, volunteered for the Human Rights Campaign, invited prominent speakers to campus, and participated in several successful campus and city-wide events. He intends to contribute to the queer and scientific communities for the rest of his life.

*"When I came out, my mom said that it would hurt my chances for success in the future. Every day I work to ensure that my future—and that of all queer youth — will be successful, regardless of sexual orientation."*

## Mónica Escobar

*Georgetown LGBT Alumni Point Scholar  
Georgetown University*



Mónica Escobar was born in Fairfax, Virginia where she was raised by her conservative parents and attended a homophobic Catholic high school. Despite these obstacles, she graduated at the top of her class and now attends Georgetown University, where she was finally able to come out of the closet. Mónica is extremely active around campus, especially around LGBTQ issues. She is currently the Co-President of GU Pride, the LGBTQ club on campus, was co-facilitator of OUTSpoken, the queer support group, and is a student member of the LGBTQ Working Group. Last semester, Mónica interned at the Human Rights Campaign and initiated a student movement for an LGBTQ Resource Center on campus. Mónica is also very involved with diversity work on campus. She is in charge of a pre-orientation program meant to immerse freshmen in the basics of leadership, mentorship and activism around issues of diversity. She also served on student government for the last administration as a member of the Diversity and Religious Affairs Committee. Mónica hopes to become a university professor in Cultural or Sexuality Studies so she can continue to reach out to students, who she believes are a powerful source of change. She also wants to serve as a role model and inspiration for any young queer Latinas who may one day be in her classes.

*“Growing up, I would have given anything to see queer professors at the front of my classrooms. I want to be that professor for future students, the one that inspires the courage to come out and succeed.”*

## Johnathan Harrison

*Elsie De Wolfe Point Scholar  
Academy of Art University, San Francisco*



Johnathan was raised in the South in Charlotte, North Carolina. As a high school student, he served as Sophomore and Junior Class President, as well as Student Body President and a member of the National Student Honor Society. At age 19, he was forced to leave Duke University after his father discovered he was gay and refused to provide tuition support. In the spirit of resilience, Johnathan became a fierce LGBT youth advocate, co-founding the North Carolina Lambda Youth Network, a statewide leadership development organization for other LGBT youth. He has served as a lobbyist for the NC HIV/AIDS Alliance, Youth Program Coordinator for the Lesbian/ Gay Community Service of Greater Cleveland and is also a graduate of Public Allies (an AmeriCorps program) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force’s Youth Leadership Institute. At age 21, he was recognized by the Advocate Magazine as one of the nation’s Best and Brightest Activists.

Currently he serves as a board member of Emerging Practitioners In Philanthropy and as a coordinator of the national Public Allies Alumni LGBT Affinity Group, whose purpose is to advance the practice of value-based leadership within LGBT youth development organizations. Johnathan plans to utilize his sustainable design studies to promote awareness and increase LGBT visibility within the environmental justice and labor movements.

*"I am committed to living my life fighting in the pursuit of social justice and equality for all and in the recognition of LGBT individuals, young and old, as more than victims, but as change agents who are actively working to create a better future."*

### **Lindsay Higgins**

*GLMA Point Scholar*

*Tulane University Medical School*



Lindsay Higgins was raised in a suburb of Chicago, where she stayed in the closet until her junior year of high school. At this time, Lindsay came out as her school's only out lesbian, and as a result, Lindsay's parents sent her to over a dozen different physicians and psychologists, against her will, in search of a cure to her lesbianism. For the remaining two years of high school, Lindsay lived under total house arrest and was denied access to a telephone, the internet, and television. Despite her own problems at home, Lindsay felt the need to reach out and help other LGBT youth in her community, which led her to found her community's first Gay/Straight Alliance. On her 18th birthday, Lindsay left home and has put herself through college, working 40-50 hours per week at times, while serving as a LGBT campus leader and maintaining honors status. The humiliation and abuse that she endured as a LGBT youth continues to inspire Lindsay to work for a better future for LGBT people. As Lindsay will now be attending medical school, she will continue her work for the LGBT community on the healthcare front.

*"As an undergraduate, I had to work 40-50 hours per week to support myself. However, this is not a possibility during the rigors of a medical school curriculum. Because of the Point Foundation, I now have the opportunity to fulfill my dream of becoming a physician."*

## Lam Ho

Harvard University  
Law School



Lam Ho's doctoral thesis on queer sexualities and genders in Victorian fiction is entitled *Lost Boundaries*. This could also describe how Lam has defied the personal and socio-economic limitations he has faced since emigrating from Vietnam to Brockton, MA. Not speaking a word of English, Lam mutely witnessed domestic violence inside his family's two-bedroom apartment, into which were squeezed nine people; from its single window, he observed drug-dealings and gunshots outside. He suffered hunger and ridicule as his family survived on his parents' sub-minimum wages from temporary, night assembly shifts and public assistance. Nonetheless, Lam graduated valedictorian of his high school, where he co-founded Brockton's first Gay Straight Alliance and AIDS service student-organization. He did so in response to the physical and verbal harassment he endured as its first openly queer pupil—from being trapped into lockers and molested by peers to being publicly humiliated by his headmaster. And despite being financially independent from his conservative, religious family and working between 30-40 hrs/wk, he completed both an A.B. & M.A. in English in 4 years and earned some of Brown University's top distinctions for academic achievement and public service. He also won three of academia's most competitive awards: the Coca-Cola, Beinecke, and Marshall Scholarships, which have enabled him to pursue his degree at Oxford University. It is Lam's commitment to fighting what he describes as "the paralyzing silence of ignorance and fear" that has inspired his pursuit of education and activism. He has been hailed as an "instinctual bridge builder" for uniting the Third World and queer communities at Brown, as well as Brown and Oxford universities with their local neighborhoods (for which he was selected as Honorary Co-Chair of Rhode Island Pride 2001), through his volunteer work on such issues as police homophobia monitoring, sexual health, public advocacy, homelessness, and disadvantaged children. He has also been Research Fellow at the Danish National Organization for Gays and Lesbians.

*"I have discovered the experience of overcoming adversity to be transformative: it changes anger into resolve, sorrow into compassion, and despair into inspiration; all ultimately into forces for a better and wiser humanity."*

## Matthew Howard

*Tuck School of Business  
Dartmouth College*



Matthew was born into a Mormon family and grew up in a predominantly LDS town in northern Utah. His family counseled against ‘choosing a homosexual lifestyle,’ withdrew all emotional support, and ceased providing for most of his basic needs. Facing conflict between Mormon religious ideology and his sexual orientation, Matthew left the state to attend college at Emory University in Atlanta, GA, working to put himself through school. During and after college, he worked for a non-profit foundation that conducts medical research and development aimed at solutions to HIV/AIDS and other serious conditions. As a regular volunteer for a HIV/AIDS meal delivery service, Matthew can attest to the impact of medical research. Working as a volunteer rowing coach for new college students, he is able to support the development of confidence and self-esteem among several gay athletes each year. Now at the Tuck School of Business, Matthew eventually hopes to run a non-profit foundation aimed at stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS within marginalized populations who might not seek help from traditional sources.

*“With the help of The Point Foundation, I will be able to turn around and give back my time and energy to future generations of gay youth, aiding with their educational, career, and volunteer goals.”*

## Brett John Janecek

*University of Notre Dame*



Brett was born and raised in Billings, Montana in a conservative Catholic household. After he discovered his sexuality identity, his parents, teachers, and Church told him he was “intrinsically disordered” and the only acceptable lifestyle was one of chastity and self-denial. Although Brett suffered throughout high school, he was valedictorian of his graduating class and student body president, and now attends the University of Notre Dame. While working towards his Political Science degree, Brett is involved with acting and social service at Notre Dame despite the discrimination he faces at school. He continues to study at the nation’s most conservative university in hopes that he can add diversity and incite change from within. He has consistently achieved recognition on the Dean’s Honors List and ranks in the top quarter of his class. His professional plans include working in higher levels of government and educational institutions to help ensure equal rights for alienated social groups including gays and lesbians.

*“After so much pain, tears and loneliness, I’m emerging to find a world*

*full of possibilities. The more I learn about myself, the more I see how much I can give. Thank you to The Point Foundation for helping me realize my potential and for allowing me to share my dreams with you.”*

## **Amanda Jessen**

*University of California,  
Los Angeles*



Amanda Jessen was born and raised in Los Alamitos, California, a small town on the western ridge of Orange County. After coming out to her mother, she was removed from the home that she had known for her entire life. The core of her senior year consisted of nomadic conditions, moving from her mother's to her grandmother's and finally settling in with her father. Amanda has maintained a cumulative GPA of 4.12 and is a four-year letterman on the softball team. An openly gay senior at her high school, Amanda has worked to further gay and progressive rights by helping solidify the first Gay-Straight Alliance since her high school struck down the organization three years ago. She is also the vice-president of Liberal Youth of America, the school's only political organization. She raised funds for the peace corps, collated petitions for peace and participated in a toy drive for HIV positive children. In the fall of 2005, she will attend the University of California, Los Angeles where she will mentor gay students as well as write for 10 Percent, UCLA's most prominent gay-oriented magazine. She hopes to pursue a career in law, working to further civil rights on both domestic and international fronts.

*“...It is important for this country to honor its pledge to offer liberty to each and every individual. However, until there is recognition of equal rights for GLBT's in America, that pledge will fall drastically short in the eyes of its citizens, gay and straight alike. I intend to pursue the fulfillment of this promise with vigor and resolve until I can wake up one morning and be treated equally as the American citizen that I am...”*

## Christopher Kawasaki

*Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government*



Chris was born and raised in a conservative Christian family in Virginia, where his mother home-schooled him until the age of fourteen. At fifteen the Evangelical Christian school he was attending learned that he was gay and asked him to leave. After being sent to Christian corrective therapy and taking away his computer, his mother informed him that gays were not allowed in their house.

He subsequently spent most of high school between his own home and those of his friends. After graduating high school with honors, he eventually enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Summa Cum Laude while working two jobs to support himself. Most of his time at Penn was also spent leading a number of LGBT-affiliated organizations that dealt with issues of sexuality, race, and increasing understanding between communities.

Currently, he is pursuing a Masters of Public Policy at Harvard, where he is one of the youngest students enrolled. With his degree he hopes to be a future policy-maker and influence the laws and the discourse that shape our lives. He is also currently leading Harvard's Mothership group, an umbrella organization responsible for connecting all LGBT groups across campus.

Although his relationship with his parents has improved in the past couple years, they still refuse to discuss or condone his lifestyle. His education and cost of living are also considered to be his own responsibility.

*"My dream is to work at the highest levels of policy-making; to make sure that our community not only has a voice, but that our voice can be heard in every town where marginalized LGBT youth might live. I believe that with the right leadership, inclusive policies, and a stronger community, that the need to make a decision like mine will slowly fade away."*

## Sol Kelley-Jones

*Hampshire College*



Sol has grown up on the frontlines of the LGBT rights movement. As the daughter of lesbian parents, she has known the painful sting of homophobia for as long as she can remember. However, from her earliest years, Sol countered the harmful effects of homophobia through her activism and public education efforts. In her elementary years, she developed a multi-racial anti-homophobia curriculum still used in the schools today, and began years of leading LGBT cultural competency and diversity trainings for both teachers and youth. At the age of 10, her compelling testimony at a hearing on same sex marriage produced front-page headlines, and she stepped into a role as a national spokesperson on behalf of LGBT

families, which continues to this day. As a teen, she spoke at national gatherings in Oakland, Chicago, and New York, and before over 500,000 people during the Millennium March on Washington, and appeared in countless stories in the national and local media. Increasingly targeted for her activism and pride in her own queer identity, she was forced to leave her middle school, because staff could not keep her safe. However, she refused to be silenced and instead turned her talents toward giving a voice to other marginalized youth. She has received numerous awards and recognitions for community activism and academic achievement from organizations including, National GLSEN, ACLU, NOW, Urban League and the Madison Rotary. Perhaps her proudest accomplishment is as a co-founder and youth artistic director of “Proud Theater,” an award-winning theater troupe and support group for queer youth, which produces powerful theatrical vignettes evoking the struggles and triumphs of LGBT family members and LGBTQ youth. As she begins her academic career at Hampshire College, it's just the beginning for this young woman whom *The Advocate* once called “one of the nation’s youngest and most effective advocates for LGBT rights.”

*“As an activist and artist, I believe that by fusing art, heart, and activism, we can provide new and creative ways to encourage young people who have felt silenced to believe in the power of their voices to transform our world.”*

## **Shawn Luby**

*University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill*



Shawn Luby grew up in a small town in Kansas. His coming out was not met well by his family, and on his own he moved to North Carolina to find an LGBT community and establish himself as a leader committed to challenging LGBT injustice. Through his experiences, and those of his friends, Shawn has become committed to fighting for accessible health care choices, and accurate information regarding the long-term health concerns for the transgender community. His belief in responsible health care for disenfranchised communities has inspired him to become a medical researcher studying at the University of North Carolina.

*“I fight because good health care should not be a chance event. I fight because every trans person should feel safe walking into a health care facility, without fear of ridicule, or harm.”*

## Maya Marcel-Keyes

Wanda Alston Point Scholar



Maya was raised in a conservative Catholic household. Growing up she was taught that homosexuality was immoral, a sin against God - both at home and in the Opus Dei Catholic school she attended through middle and high school. She began to question these teachings in middle school, around the time she began to question her own sexuality.

Her sexuality became a matter of public record when, during the 2004 elections, her father was nominated to run for the Illinois Senate seat and made the remarks that the homosexual lifestyle was one of "selfish hedonism." Not too long after these unfortunate remarks were made, her weblog, where she openly talked about being out and proud, was discovered by the media. As a result of her public outing, she was kicked out of the family home and had all financial support, including that for college, withdrawn. But nonetheless, she has never ceased being a tireless advocate for LGBT homeless youth, speaking at rallies to raise awareness for a problem that is often overlooked within the community.

*"Dum spiro, spero"— while you breath, there is hope. Never let anyone tell you that you are less of a person, or that you will never amount to anything. Even when things seem their darkest, there is always, always hope."*

## Andrew Moe

MtvU Point Scholar

Arizona State University



Andrew grew up in Janesville, Wisconsin where he excelled academically. While his mother abused drugs and his distant father started a new family, Andrew moved from home to home while excelling as Governor of the Wisconsin-Upper Michigan Key Club District, Editor-in-Chief of his high school's newspaper, and becoming a strong advocate for gay rights. Accepted as a Leadership Scholar at Arizona State University because of his involvement in community service and servant leadership, Andrew now serves as one of ASU's student body presidents while actively being involved in Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, Devil's Advocates, and the Student Admissions Relations Team. He is changing the face of ASU's conservative student body by serving as a role model for other gay youth as a member of the Barrett Honors College and the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism. Andrew hopes to go to law school to become a United States Senator from his home state of Wisconsin.

*"As a civic leader and public servant, I want to help those who are struggling in life. The world has potential to change, one individual at a time."*

## Bryan Allen Olsen

*Merle Aronson Point Scholar  
Oxford College of Emory University*



Bryan is a junior at Emory University, studying philosophy with the intent to enroll in law school and pursue a career in the public sector. After coming out to his Mormon family when he was 16 years old, Bryan was subjected to rigorous counseling and was sent to a behavioral modification boarding school in Mexico. Despite a tumultuous early life, Bryan has excelled both academically and socially in college, co-founding the Progressive Student Union, a student run organization that promotes political advocacy on campus, serving as the activity coordinator for the debate society, working as a tutor in the writing center, and being awarded the Judy Greer Leadership scholarship for his sophomore year. Bryan lives with his partner of over three years in Atlanta, Georgia.

*“Making meaningful change for the GLBT community requires more than just sporadic social movements. Lasting change comes in the decisions we make and in how we live day to day. I believe the small things that we do when it seems no one else is watching are what will positively influence for future for GLBT Americans.”*

## Francisco Parra-Camacho

*Columbia Law School*



Having been born in Mexico, Francisco grew up in South Central Los Angeles knowing he was gay. At age six, a television program mistakenly lead him to believe that he would die of SIDA (AIDS). This realization haunted him for years, as he was unable to discover the truth within the confines of his homophobic environment. The challenges of his childhood pushed him to venture out of the expected and inspired a thirst for learning about the world outside of his reality. In high school, he was selected by the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations to form part of the Young Ambassador Delegation to Japan; an honor reserved for eight students in all of L.A. County. In college Francisco further excelled. Eager to gain insight into the working of the human mind, he majored in Biochemistry and minored in Psychology with a Neuropsychological emphasis. He was named an American Chemical Society scholar and he recently graduated Cum Laude from the Jesuit institution of Loyola Marymount University (LMU). His academic achievements are complemented by his strong commitment to community service. Not only did he build and maintain the Association for Gay and Lesbian Awareness at a Catholic university, but he also became a strong voice for diversity issues on campus. While an undergraduate, he received two awards for “Service and Leadership” and one for “Intercultural Service,” but according to him, the most important

reward came from gaining confidence in his ability to contribute to the creation of a better world. It is his desire to make a positive impact in the lives of others that has taken Francisco to Columbia Law School.

*“I seek to harness the power of the law to help ensure that we have a society that is much more conducive of GLBT people achieving their full potential than they are destructive to that goal.”*

### **Lyndsey Vierra**

*Carlos Enrique Cisneros Point Scholar  
American University*



Lyndsey first came out when she was 15, and quickly got involved with LGBT youth organizing in Washington, DC. As a youth activist, she organized on issues such as promoting safe schools, funding for HIV/AIDS, and sexual education curriculum. From her earliest years, Lyndsey intended to become a classical violinist, but in high school developed a career-threatening injury. After exploring other career options, she dedicated her passion to community organizing and social change in Washington, DC. While attending American University full-time, Lyndsey works at an after-school program and is co-editor of *Divided City*, a magazine showcasing socially conscious writing and artwork by DC residents. She also serves on the Development Council of SMYAL, the organization for LGBT youth that was Lyndsey's entrée to activism ten years ago. Through her studies at American University, she hopes to gain a broader understanding of United States history, culture, and politics that will act as a foundation for her many community projects and activities. Lyndsey is committed to improving the lives of many, especially DC residents, LGBT people, and young people.

*“I see the sacrifices that so many made for me to be here, and I want to honor their memory by devoting my life to the fight for justice and liberation.”*