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For Immediate Release  
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## **True Colors' XVIII: ibelong**

**The largest conference in the world for LGBTI youth and the people who care for them.**

Hartford, CT – On March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, the nation's largest conference for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex youth will be held at the University of Connecticut campus in Storrs. During the two-day conference, over 2,500 youth, guidance counselors, social workers and the public descend on the Storrs campus ever spring for this event. They come from all over throughout New England and the Northeast to attend over 240 workshops.

Among the workshops that are offered are workshops that foster diversity, understanding, and social justice. In addition, there are workshops that develop leadership and support for school and community based groups that support LGBTI youth. The workshop presenters come from all over the country and range from professional educators to students with a passion for this area of study.

“It is amazing to watch the students get off the bus when they arrive. The looks on their faces (is priceless), when for some of them it is the first time in their lives that they are in a safe space where they can be themselves and not have to worry about their safety.” says Leif Mitchell, GLSEN Connecticut Co-chair and proud co-sponsor of True Colors XVIII.

According to the 2009 National School Climate Survey 84.6% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed and 72.4% hear homophobic remarks, such as "faggot" or "dyke" frequently or often at school. Conferences like the True Colors conference help reduce these horrible incidents to create more positive experiences, fewer homophobic remarks and less victimization for LGBTI students.

This year theme is belonging. Here are just a few highlights:

- The Friday morning WELCOME by Governor Malloy
- Expanding our vision: a humorous look at challenging our binaries, by nationally known speaker, author and consultant, Robyn Ochs ([www.robynochs.com](http://www.robynochs.com))
- Hidden Voices: the Lives of LGBT Muslims with queer Muslim activist, Faisal Alim ([www.hiddenvoices.info](http://www.hiddenvoices.info))

True Colors is a non-profit organization that works with other social service agencies, schools, organizations, and within communities to ensure that the needs of sexual and gender minority youth are both recognized and competently met. The organization trains more than 2,400 people annually and manages the state's only LGBT mentoring program. True Colors has been spotlighted by both national and local media for their expertise in LGBTI youth issues, including most recently CNN.