



Martin Butel (1959)
Hollywood High School

Martin Butel Scholarship for LGBT+ Students & Allies

Scholarships are available to LGBT+ students and allies attending California State University San Bernardino who plan to use their education and career to advance the well-being of LGBT+ individuals, couples, or families. Priority will be given to graduate students and third or fourth year undergraduate students.

A scholarship of \$1,000 will be awarded each year. The Martin Butel Endowed Scholarship Fund is financially supported by Spectrum Institute and the Estate of Martin Butel, as well as by Thomas F. Coleman and Michael A. Vasquez.

Martin Butel was born in 1941 in New York City. His father immigrated from Russia; his mother from Ukraine. By 1950, the family moved to Los Angeles. Early on, Marty knew he was gay but did not feel free to “come out” due to the social oppression and legal persecution of homosexuals during that era. Gays were being excluded from the military and were actively being fired from federal civil service jobs. Homosexuality was considered a mental illness by the psychiatric profession and a mortal sin by mainstream churches. Homosexual conduct, even between consenting adults in private, was a felony in all states. Marty graduated from Hollywood High School in 1959.

Despite the rampant homophobia in society that kept many people in the closet, Marty became active in the gay rights movement during the 1970s. He joined with other activists to lobby for the repeal of criminal laws against homosexuality, to stop police entrapment of gay men, and to have the Los Angeles City Council pass an ordinance prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. All of these goals were realized.

Marty died in 2024. He named attorney Thomas F. Coleman, a longtime friend and fellow gay rights advocate, as executor of his estate. Marty wanted a portion of his estate to be used to combat homophobia in society. Coleman and his husband Michael believe that the best way to fulfill Marty’s wish is by financially supporting college students who are pursuing careers that will advance LGBT+ rights. Applicants should include information about current and past activities supporting LGBT+ individuals and organizations as well as their plan to address the needs of this population in their chosen occupation or profession.

Coleman and Vasquez are residents of Palm Springs. They were married in international waters in 1981 – a time when same-sex marriage was not recognized by any nation. They have been advocates for equal rights and justice ever since. Much of this advocacy work was done through Spectrum Institute, a nonprofit organization founded by Coleman in 1987.

Scholarships are available to qualifying students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.



For more information about the
Martin Butel Endowed CSUSB Scholarship Fund
contact Thomas F. Coleman.
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