



POWER IN PARTNERSHIPS

Building Connections at the Intersections
of Racial Justice and LGBTQ Movements
to End the School-to-Prison Pipeline

ABOUT US



ADVANCEMENT PROJECT is a national, next-generation, multiracial civil rights organization that supports grassroots movements that aim to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. Advancement Project is an innovative civil rights law, policy, and communications “action tank” that advances universal opportunity and a just democracy. We believe that sustainable progress can be made when multiple tools—law, policy analysis, strategic communications, technology, and research—are coordinated with grassroots movements. For more than 15 years, Advancement Project has focused on the use and devastating effects of harsh school discipline policies and practices, and the increased role of law enforcement in public schools. We work at both the national level and on the ground with our community partners to examine, expose, and reform practices that lead to the criminalization of students.

See www.advancementproject.org and www.safequalityschools.org for more information.



EQUALITY FEDERATION INSTITUTE is the strategic partner and movement builder to state-based organizations that are working on the ground to advance policies that improve the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Founded in 1997, we are focused on ensuring that all LGBT people are protected from discrimination no matter where they live and work; advancing intersectional issues that ensure the most vulnerable parts of our community experience both legal and lived equality in their daily lives; and developing the strong, resilient, and adaptive leaders we need to lead this work on the ground. The greatest opportunities for policy wins are in the states, where the work is hard but the impact is great. With our support, statewide LGBT advocacy organizations are building a strong movement for equality in the communities we call home.

See www.equalityfederation.org for more information.



GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCE NETWORK is a next-generation LGBTQ racial and gender justice organization that empowers and trains trans, queer, and allied youth leaders to advocate, organize, and mobilize an intersectional movement for safer schools and healthier communities. In California, GSA Network connects over 1,000 GSA clubs through regional summits and youth councils. Nationally, GSA Network leads the National Association of GSA Networks which unites 40 statewide organizations organizing GSA youth leaders throughout the country.

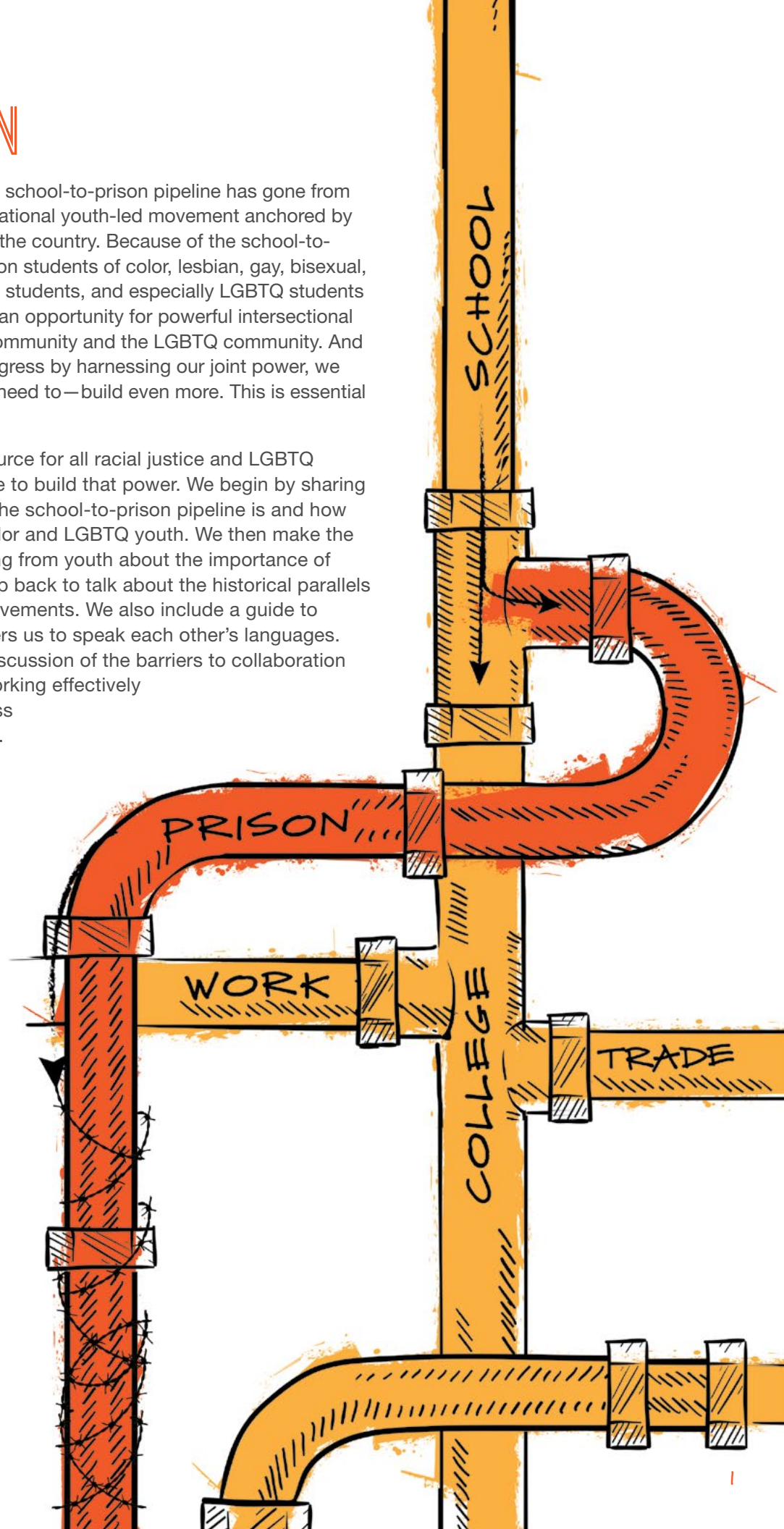
See www.gsanetwork.org for more information.

INTRODUCTION

OVER THE LAST DECADE, the school-to-prison pipeline has gone from a fringe educational issue to a national youth-led movement anchored by grassroots communities across the country. Because of the school-to-prison pipeline's unique effects on students of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) students, and especially LGBTQ students of color, the issue has provided an opportunity for powerful intersectional work among the racial justice community and the LGBTQ community. And while we have made a lot of progress by harnessing our joint power, we would like to—and desperately need to—build even more. This is essential if we are going to win.

Power in Partnerships is a resource for all racial justice and LGBTQ groups to help build or continue to build that power. We begin by sharing the latest information on what the school-to-prison pipeline is and how it especially affects youth of color and LGBTQ youth. We then make the case for collaboration by hearing from youth about the importance of intersectionality, and take a step back to talk about the historical parallels of racial justice and LGBTQ movements. We also include a guide to basic terminology that empowers us to speak each other's languages. Next, we engage in a candid discussion of the barriers to collaboration that have prevented us from working effectively together in the past, and discuss best practices for collaboration. We then provide some tools to help move us forward, including effective strategies for fighting against school pushout and core messages to use when talking about this issue. Whether a group is only learning about the school-to-prison pipeline for the first time or is deep into a restorative justice campaign, we hope *Power in Partnerships* serves as a resource to take this work—and our collective movement—to the next level.

Finally, many groups are already engaged in transformative intersectional work that has successfully pushed back



against the school-to-prison pipeline locally, statewide, and nationally. You will see these movement stories sprinkled throughout; they are a reminder of what is possible through the power in partnerships.

Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline, especially for LGBTQ students and youth of color, needs to happen now. Success requires the best of our movement's collective thinking, visioning, and strategy. We have made significant progress but still have a way to go. With *Power in Partnerships*, we look forward to continuing to build, grow, and collaborate toward ending the school-to-prison pipeline and building a better tomorrow for our young people. They deserve nothing less.

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE?

THERE IS A NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS CRISIS affecting students of color and LGBTQ students: the school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline is a term used to describe the policies and practices that push students out of school, and directly and indirectly on a pathway to prison. These policies and practices include underinvestment in public schools, implicit and explicit bias, turning schools into prison-like environments, and punitive zero-tolerance practices, including the overuse of suspension, expulsion, and school arrests. Taken together, the school-to-prison pipeline criminalizes young people for minor misbehaviors, such as chewing a Pop-Tart into the shape of a gun¹ or for being male and dressing in high heels.² In 2014, the Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Education (ED) issued a guidance recognizing the existence of the school-to-prison pipeline and how it “creates the potential for significant, negative educational and long-term outcomes.”³

Nearly 3.5 million students missed out on instructional time due to suspension or expulsion in the 2011-12 school year, with students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ students being disproportionately affected.⁴ Black students were suspended or expelled at three times the rate of White students, while Black girls were six times more likely than White girls to be suspended.⁵ Furthermore, LGBTQ youth of color and gender-nonconforming youth report increased surveillance and policing, biased application of policies, and blame for their own victimization in schools.⁶ These disparities can start as early as preschool, where 3- and 4-year-old Black students are three times more likely to be suspended than their White peers.⁷

The effects of the school-to-prison pipeline are devastating. DOJ and ED's guidance notes that these policies create “an array of serious educational, economic, and social problems, including school avoidance and diminished educational engagement; decreased academic achievement; increased behavior problems; increased likelihood of dropping out; substance abuse; and involvement with juvenile justice systems.”⁸ Studies show that suspended students are two times more likely to drop out and three times more likely to end up in the criminal justice system.⁹ And a longitudinal study in Florida shows that ninth-graders who were suspended only once more than doubled their chances of not graduating from high school.¹⁰ The school-to-prison pipeline has become one of the definitive civil rights issues of this generation.

SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

Today's Students Experience...

Prison-Like Environments

- SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS
- POLICE DOGS
- ARMED GUARDS
- SCHOOL AND LOCAL POLICE ON CAMPUS
- METAL DETECTORS
- PHYSICALLY UNINVITING BUILDINGS
- STRIP SEARCHES

Harsh School Discipline

- OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS
- EXPULSIONS
- TRANSFERS TO ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS
- ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES

Youth of color, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities are punished **more often** and **more harshly** than their peers for the same misbehavior.

Under Investment

- CUTBACKS ON COUNSELORS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES
- UNDERFUNDED AND UNDER-RESOURCED SCHOOLS

Pressures & Uncertainty

- SCHOOL CLOSURES
- PRIVATIZATION
- HIGH-STAKES TESTING PRESSURES ON STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS
- IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT BIAS

Out-of-School Suspensions

OVER **3,000,000** students receive an out-of-school suspension annually.

A NUMBER THAT HAS BEEN RISING FOR DECADES.

School Arrests

OVER **70%** of students involved in school-related arrested or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American.

SUSPENSIONS, RACE & DISABILITY

Likelihood of Being Suspended at Least Once

WHITE 1/20

LATINO 1/14

NATIVE AMER. 1/13

BLACK 1/6

BLACK WITH DISABILITY 1/4

STUDENTS HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN SUSPENDED FOR...

Talking about a Hello Kitty bubble gun

Hugging a friend

Chewing a Pop Tart into the shape of a gun

Just **ONE** out-of-school suspension in the 9th grade **DOUBLES** a student's risk of dropping out before graduation.

HARSH DISCIPLINE POLICIES =

- No Trust in Adults
- No College or Career
- No Safer Schools

STUDENTS HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN ARRESTED FOR...

Kindergartener throwing a temper tantrum

Scribbling on a desk

Sneaking into school for a senior prank

Playing the Fresh Prince theme song on a cellphone

Science experiment gone wrong

BOOKS NOT BARS

END #SCHOOL2PRISON

YOU CANT BUILD PEACE WITH A PIECE

NO EDUCATION NO LIFE

EDUCATION NOT INCARCERATION

PUSHOUT? PUSH BACK



ADVANCEMENT PROJECT

Ending the Schoolhouse Jailhouse Track

safequalityschools.org

THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION

THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL PUSHOUT ON LGBTQ YOUTH AND YOUTH OF COLOR

ANECDOTAL DATA AND STORIES from the ground affirm that the school-to-prison pipeline disproportionately affects queer youth and youth of color. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of large-scale quantitative research to show this phenomenon for LGBTQ people, due in part to the sensitivity of collecting this data. Nevertheless, the outcomes and experiences for this community remain pressing. Below we highlight some of the specific ways the school-to-prison pipeline affects both communities.

HARSHER DISCIPLINE FOR THE SAME BEHAVIORS

We know that both students of color and LGBTQ youth often receive harsher punishments for the same behavior compared to their White, and non-LGBTQ counterparts, respectively—not for higher rates or worse misbehavior.¹¹

One of the only statistical studies on LGB students and school discipline tells us that LGB youth, especially gender-nonconforming girls, are up to three times more likely to receive juvenile convictions compared to their non-LGB peers.¹²

According to recent research from the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, gender- nonconforming youth and LGBTQ youth of color report incidents of harsh school discipline and biased application of policies.¹³

Students of color also fare poorly in the face of suspensions and expulsions. According to the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, Black students make up only 15% of the school population, yet they are 35% of students who are suspended once, 44% of those who were suspended more than once, and 36% of students who are expelled from schools across the country.¹⁴

A report by the African American Policy Forum titled *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected* provides examples of disparate treatment for students of color, particularly Black girls. According to the report, Black girls are suspended at a rate that is six times higher than White girls, and Black boys are suspended three times as often as their White counterparts.¹⁵

DOCUMENTED DISTRUST OF SCHOOL OFFICIALS AND POLICE

Recent events, such as the uprising that followed the death of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and the national #BlackLivesMatter movement, demonstrate the contentious relationship between communities of color and law enforcement. It is well documented that communities are overpoliced across the country, and when young people see these same law enforcement officials in their school building, it leads to further distrust and the degradation of school climate.¹⁶ School police officers currently receive little or no training regarding how to best work with LGBTQ youth, particularly transgender youth. LGBTQ youth who are treated unfairly learn to mistrust not just school police, but all school administration and staff. Nevertheless, we know from recent research that Black and Latino youth support policies that would provide sensitivity training for police, especially with regard to transgender issues.¹⁷

STUDENTS BLAMED FOR THEIR OWN VICTIMIZATION

Another disturbing trend among students of color and LGBTQ youth is that both groups are often blamed for their own victimization. Phrases like “if they’d just pull up their pants,” and “if they didn’t flaunt it” reemphasize the culture of victim blaming when it comes to school discipline. Instead of responding in respectful and culturally competent ways, administrators penalize young people for this minor misbehavior. LGBTQ youth of color are often penalized for minor infractions such as violating gender-based dress codes, cell phone use, truancy, tardiness, and “willful defiance.”¹⁸

THESE SAME LGBTQ YOUTH AND YOUTH OF COLOR ARE OVERREPRESENTED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

While LGBTQ youth make up only 5 to 7% of the overall youth population, they represent over 15% of those in the juvenile justice system.¹⁹ And the statistics for youth of color are even more staggering: over 50% of

students involved in school-based arrests or referrals to law enforcement are Black or Latino.²⁰ The guidance issued by the Departments of Justice and Education also alludes to the fact that racial disparities are not explained by more serious or frequent behavior, and that this could imply discriminatory policies, practices, and treatment from school administrators and others in the school building.²¹

IMPLICIT BIAS AND BULLYING FACTOR INTO DISCIPLINE DECISIONS

Implicit bias also plays a role in funneling Black, Brown, and LGBTQ students into the school-to-prison pipeline. There have been years of stories and well-documented research showing that most people generally don't like cultures or people they are unfamiliar with. This general attitude becomes deeply ingrained biases that can adversely affect school discipline decisions of teachers, administrators, and school police. When students of color and LGBTQ students receive harsh punishments for subjective behaviors like dress code violations, disrespect, and when defending themselves against bullying, implicit bias can be a factor. Studies also show that Black boys are often viewed much older than they really are, which may result in an extreme response to what is developmentally normal adolescent behavior.²²

Moreover, studies reveal that LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming youth are often the victims, rather than the aggressors in school conflicts, which stem from bullying and harassment. LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming youth who are victims of bullying and harassment are often mistakenly perceived as aggressors. As Center for American Progress notes in *The Unfair Criminalization of Gay and Transgender Youth*: "Consider, for example, a gender-nonconforming girl exhibiting masculine traits, who is disciplined for fighting but may be defending herself from peers' taunts. Yet, more often than not, school administrators will consider her the aggressor based solely on her physical demeanor and will suspend or expel her despite the defensive nature of her actions."²³ Furthermore, a study from the Gay-Straight Alliance Network demonstrates that gender-nonconforming youth are often the targets of "bias-based harassment and bullying at school." Not only are these students the victims of repeated bullying, they also experience more harsh punishments than other students for the same infractions, according to the study participants.²⁴ We also see Black and Latino youth being bullied by their peers and administrators over things such as natural hair²⁵ or not being Black/Brown enough.

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP:

CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR LGBTQ WOMEN OF COLOR IN MIAMI

In 2014, Advancement Project was invited by our partner, Power U Center for Social Change (Power U), to assist a new Miami-based group that sought to provide a safe, affirming and empowering space for LGBTQ young women of color and their female identified allies. Started by Miami-based social worker Alina Serrano after she observed a lack of safe spaces for trans female and cisgender young women within the LGBTQ community, Yes Sister Friend seeks to cultivate an organic expression of identity and leadership.

To date, Advancement Project has worked with Yes Sister Friend on several projects, including helping with story collection, conducting a Google Hangout to discuss how pushout affects young women of color and we are planning a town hall with Yes Sister Friend, Power U and other local and national groups in May 2015 to discuss the ramifications of pushout for young women and LGBTQ identified students in Miami-Dade County.

In recent months, Yes Sister Friend has hosted listening sessions that include topics such as: race, state violence, domestic violence and sexual assault. While some of these topics may seem unrelated to school discipline and pushouts, the inclusion of these issues provides a broader understanding of pushouts that encompasses gender non-conforming, LGBTQ, Latina and Black youth.



YOUTH SPEAK OUT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERSECTIONALITY

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a term first coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American scholar in the field of critical race theory, though it describes a concept that has existed within social movements throughout history.²⁶ As described by the African American Policy Forum, “Contrary to the dominant framing of some of these issues, contemporary immigrants are not all Latino; prisoners are not all men; affirmative action beneficiaries are not all African American; and LGBTQ people are not all White and middle class. Recognizing that these constituencies are multiply-constituted means that interventions and programs designed to address group interests can no longer be framed in exclusionary terms. There are constituencies within constituencies that are not well-served by such categorical thinking.”²⁷ Intersectionality is a way of approaching social change work that recognizes that systems of oppression and the communities affected by them overlap, and that addressing inequity affecting one community can’t happen in isolation. In order to effectively address the school-to-prison pipeline, we must consider the intersectional identities of LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming youth of color and how to design interventions, programs, and policies that address their unique needs.

Youth members of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network recently reflected on the importance of intersectionality in their work. We share their thoughts below.



SKYLAR LEE

16, He/Him/His, works with GSAFE in Madison, WI

WE CANNOT SEPARATE THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN RACIAL JUSTICE AND LGBTQ JUSTICE when our oppression and liberation are interconnected with one another. Our identities are intersectional simply because we exist; to say that they are separate enforces White supremacy, creating a culture where it is acceptable for queer and trans POC to be invisible and pushed out of society. We must understand intersectionality to truly be a united force in the fight to dismantle these systems of oppression.

Being East-Asian, specifically Korean, with light skin, able-bodied, and being born a citizen of the U.S., I experience a huge privilege within our education system. I understand that if I was not queer and trans, I would not have been impacted by the pipeline. I also understand that I have still not been as severely impacted by the pipeline as those whom I share community with.

In my activism in racial justice and queer justice, I work with queer youth of color every day who have experienced pushout or are actively being pushed out of school. The direct and indirect ways the School-to-Prison Pipeline have impacted me gives me greater awareness to the urgency of creating programs to combat the pipeline.

It is not justice if we leave behind members of our communities. It is not justice if we ignore the interconnected oppression of those we share community with. It is compliance to the systems that tell us we must fight against each other to uplift our own identity. To dismantle systems of oppression, we must be more creative than our oppressors. We are all socialized to protect these systems, a thought pattern we must actively fight against every moment. One cannot dismantle a system by working within it; rather, one must break outside the limitations of the system itself.

To begin the journey to unification, we must actively and loudly address our own privilege, power, and prejudice. No one can do this perfectly, including myself. We make mistakes, and it is never easy. However, we must never shy away from talking about intersectionality in our activism, for that is exactly what the systems have socialized us all to do. If we do not actively have these hard conversations around racial and queer identities, they will never be addressed nor recognized, and the systems will only maintain their power. I challenge everyone to start their own journey to self-awareness and actively participate in these conversations revolving around racial justice and queer justice.

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TYUNIQUE NELSON

17, She/Her/Hers, Works with Ally Safe Schools, a program at the Mazzoni Center.

INTERSECTIONALITY IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE WHAT'S GOING ON IN ALL COMMUNITIES and not just for a specific community. It is important for people in the lesbian community to be educated about the trans community, and the gay community to be educated about the asexual community. There is a major disconnect between every community within the queer community. As a youth who still has to move through the world into adulthood, allies in communities not specific to my own will be vital to my growth and exposure.

My school has an extremely strict assimilation culture. Every morning, we enter the building and remove all evidence of individuality. We wear the same uniform and follow the rules, so it is pretty easy to notice if someone steps out of line. Our students go through their whole middle and high school years following the same rules, and then they go off to college. They go to college and they don't fit in or they cannot function because they have spent the last couple of years of their lives being told what to do. They drop out, get kicked out, or fail out.

This year I started a program where students from different campuses of my school district could go to another campus and observe the school's culture. They take note of different teaching styles, language, and workloads. They then have conversations with teachers, deans, and students about their findings. This prompts the students to dig into ideas about school policy that they may have never thought about. This opens doors to more conversations with students and staff members, and those conversations lead to ways to change our school's policy. This will ultimately dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

Intersectionality is the beginning of a new appreciation and understanding for each other's thoughts. The LGBTQ community simply asks for respect and acknowledgment. Educating others about our community who are not part of our community is the first in a long list of steps toward building healthy relationships.



KOURTNEE ARMANII DAVINNIÉ

19, She/Her/Hers, Works with JASMYN

ALL THROUGHOUT SCHOOL I WAS KNOWN AS A VERY SMART AND ARTICULATE PERSON, but there was always a red flag floating around my head ... the fact that I am transgender. Some people aren't as accepting to trans men and women. I have been made fun of, bullied, ran out of my school, even treated differently by school staff. There were several times where I felt as if I wasn't safe or felt like I wasn't welcomed at all. After awhile, I stopped going to school to just ignore the day-to-day stress. It pushed me more to the streets, where I didn't have as much judgment or as many issues. People would come up to me just to

have a conversation, but then I realized that most of those people just wanted something from me. I battled with being in and out of school. In and out on the streets on drugs and doing sex work just to make sure I could survive on a daily basis. Then it hit me that I have a life, and I have so much more potential to do a lot of things that people said I never could, so I beat the school-to-prison pipeline stereotypes. I'm currently a college student making big changes in myself and my community.

I am working with the JASMYN organization, and I am a Youth Leader. I take my position at JASMYN very seriously because without them I wouldn't be who I am today. I speak on different panels that deal with topics such as teens in school living with HIV, teens in drug and substance abuse programs, and even my favorite panel where we got to discuss what changes should be made in the school system to protect our LGBTQ youth.

Intersectionality is not invisible, and it's not something that should be overlooked. If you feel like you are being discriminated against, then be the voice and #SpeakUp and #SpeakOut!!



ZEAM PORTER

17, He/Him/His/They/Them/Theirs, works with Out4Good and OutFront MN

I HAVE PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE through the exclusion and suspension techniques used to discipline me throughout my middle school years. The countless times I have spent physically outside of the classroom for being made the class example still have me second-guessing my intelligence in school as well as making me anxious about trusting teachers. Getting into conflicts with other students and being the only one punished, as well as being the only queer student of color in these encounters, tells both me and my peers

that I was in the wrong, that I don't deserve the same amount of respect as a student, as a human being, even when teachers later agree that all parties should have been disciplined.

Sharing my experience with larger systems of oppression as a queer student of color in the education system helps make the oppression real for some and makes my humanity real to others. Speaking to a variety of audiences—from superintendents and my peers to parents—helps spread awareness and promotes advocacy in others. I have also lobbied for my state's more inclusive Anti-School Bullying Bill, which has since passed, and am now part of the technical council implementing the bill. Taken together, I also believe that thriving in school as a Black, queer, and trans male is revolutionary, a blessing, and a privilege.

Without intersectionality/LGBTQIA justice, I wouldn't be alive today. Intersectionality is what allows me to feel hope, like I won't always be a second-class citizen just because of my race, my gender identity, and my sexual orientation. When the world is screaming I am less than what I am, and racist, trans-misogynistic, and queerphobic systems of oppression are all working against me, intersectionality reminds me I am not the oppression I face, that I don't have to choose between being Black and being trans and queer, that holding all three identities is in fact okay.

The countless times I have spent physically outside of the classroom for being made the class example still have me second-guessing my intelligence in school as well as making me anxious about trusting teachers.

When I say I wouldn't be alive without intersectionality, I mean it. The intersectional programs/organizations I have had a chance to work with and be a part of—such as LearningWorks, Out for Equality, The Queer and Trans Leadership Program in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and the GSA Network—have really helped me see I am worthy of a good education as well as a good life. They have also made me aware that there are rules/regulations/laws only put in place to keep my people down, and my voice IS important to conquer such injustice.



MARIO VASQUEZ

20, He/Him/His, Works with LYRIC, GSA Network, and Students for Educational Justice

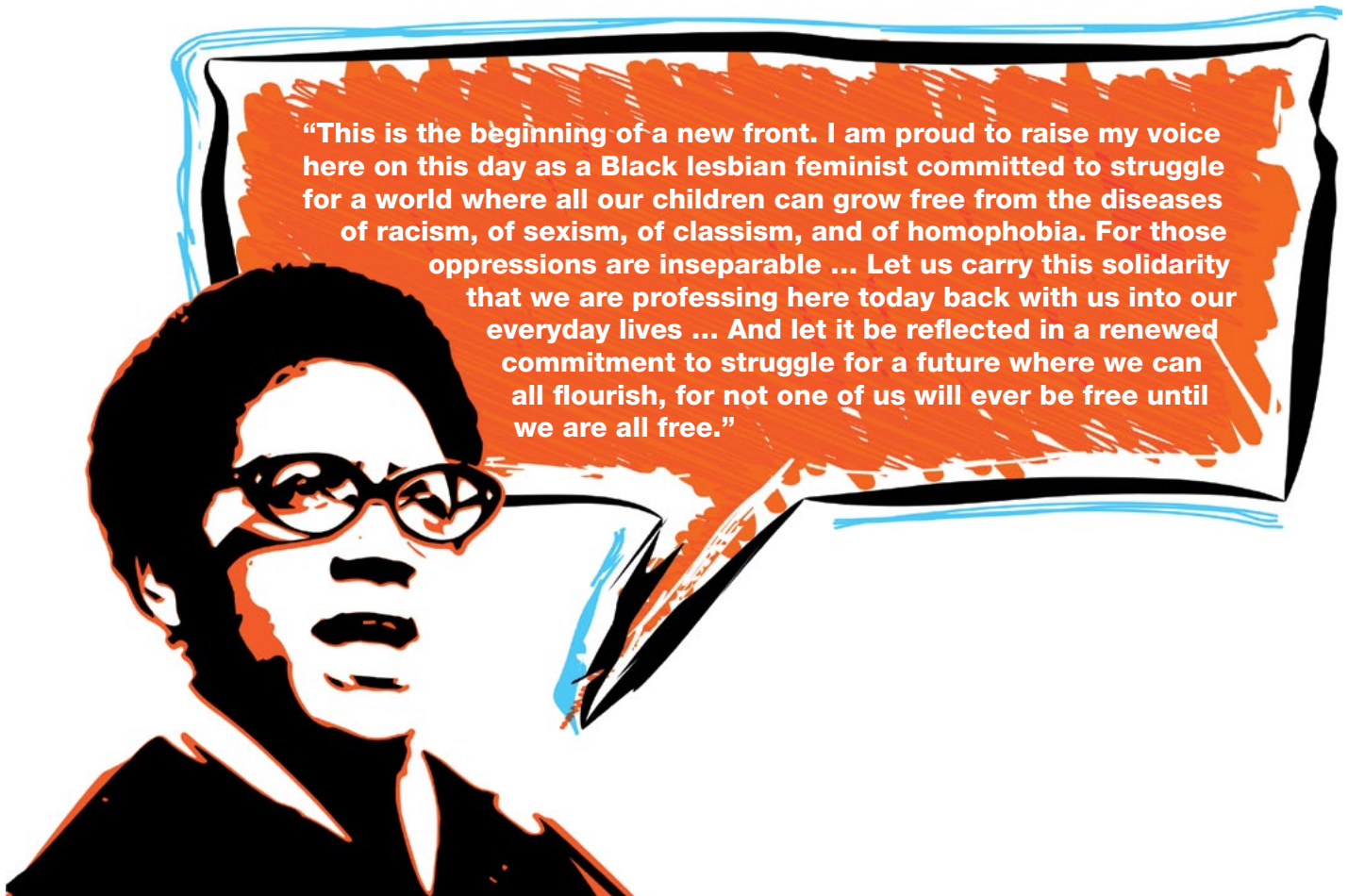
MY FRESHMEN YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL I WAS FACING SUSPENSION AND POSSIBLE EXPULSION

after I was accused of having sex—with the only other openly gay boy at my school—in my school's restroom. The accusation was completely false, but before my school administrators even investigated, my parents were called, I was outed to an individual in my household, I was pulled out of class for an entire day during state testing, and I was punished with three weeks of Saturday school. After the investigation was completed, administrators

found that it was all made up by a homophobic student, who was not even present for the day he claimed to have witnessed the incident. I did not receive an apology from my school's administration; it was all dropped, and the student who made the false accusations was not held accountable. Yet I had already been wrongfully punished, I no longer felt safe at school, and I did not trust my school administrators. Additionally, I had a difficult time making up the work and tests that I missed because of the time I spent in the school's office.

During high school, as a Gay-Straight Alliance club leader, I advocated for state policies that minimized the number of suspensions and expulsions for minor infractions, and aimed to define willful defiance as well as efforts to limit suspensions and expulsions. Now, as part of my job at LYRIC, I help create and present curriculum to queer and trans youth pertaining to social justice issues. The school-to-prison pipeline is an issue we address and connect to social movements happening today around police brutality and violence, and the policing and criminalization of Black and Brown youth.

We do not live single-issue lives—issues like the school-to-prison pipeline, police brutality, economic justice, homelessness, etc.; they are ALL queer and trans issues, and they are all connected through systems that were created to keep certain individuals in power. We cannot talk about one issue without talking about the other. If we truly want to achieve LGBTQ justice, we must address the issues at the root, and understand that these issues are connected and must be dismantled simultaneously.



Audre Lorde at the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, October 14, 1979

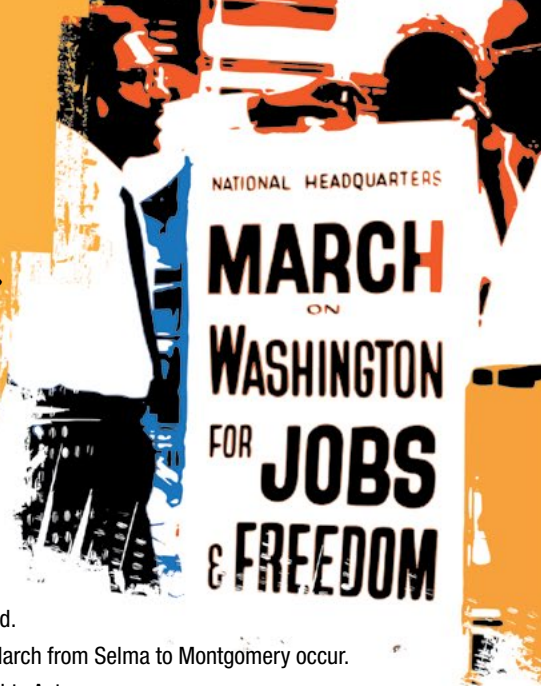
RECLAIMING OUR PARALLEL HISTORIES AND SHARED EXPERIENCES

MANY PEOPLE ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE HISTORY of solidarity and collaboration between the racial justice and LGBTQ movements. Over the course of each of these movements, LGBTQ people, people of color, and LGBTQ people of color have shared similar lived experiences that demonstrate the inseparable nature of our respective oppressions.

While the experiences of oppression in LGBTQ communities and communities of color differ in many ways, there are also many shared experiences. Both have faced a long history of abuse and mistreatment by police. Both have faced attempts to limit their freedom of speech and assembly. Both have had the government limit who they are allowed to marry. Both have been targets of hate violence.

At many points in history, we have bolstered the strength of both movements through mutual support. To move forward in solidarity and collaborate to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, we must build on these past successes. It is imperative that we know our own history, our shared history, and each other's histories. The timeline ahead links together our parallel histories, and their convergences and divergences over the last 50 years:

50 YEARS OF PARALLEL HISTORIES & SHARED EXPERIENCES



March on Washington, with Bayard Rustin, a gay Black civil rights leader, serving as a chief organizer.

1963

The Mississippi Freedom Summer Project (Freedom Summer) takes place.

Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlaws discrimination based on race.

64

Malcolm X is assassinated.

Bloody Sunday and the March from Selma to Montgomery occur.

Passage of the Voting Rights Act.

LGBT protest at Dewey's Lunch Counter in Philadelphia against its refusal to serve individuals dressed in "nonconformist clothing."

President Lyndon B. Johnson signs into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as part of the "War on Poverty" and to close the achievement gap for students of color.

65

Compton Cafeteria Riots take place in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, marking one of the first recorded transgender and transsexual revolts against violence and police brutality.

66

The U.S. Supreme Court rules that bans on interracial marriage are unconstitutional in *Loving v. Virginia*.

67

Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

68

Stonewall Riots in New York City in response to a police raid on the Stonewall Bar, which is marked as a foundation of the modern LGBTQ Rights movement.

69

Huey P. Newton delivers a speech on gay rights and the gay liberation movement that urges solidarity between the Black Panthers and the gay liberation movement.

North American Conference of Homophile Organizations passes resolution to support the Black Panther Party.

1970

President Richard Nixon declares the "War on Drugs" that disproportionately targets communities of color.

71

1970-1980

Many multiracial gay groups emerge: Salsa Soul Sisters, Black and White Gay Men Together, National Coalition of Black Gays and Lesbians, Dykes Against Racism Everywhere, Combahee River Collective.

1980

[continued]





The Anti-Drug Abuse Act signed by President Ronald Reagan creates a 100-to-1 crack/powder disparity, increasing the incarceration rates of people of color.

The Centers for Disease Control publishes a report on an unusual outbreak of *pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP) occurring in a cluster of gay men living in Los Angeles, the first indication of the disease which they will later name AIDS.

Wisconsin becomes the first state to ban employment discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The efforts of the Salsa Soul Sisters, Black and White Gay Men Together, Dykes Against Racism Everywhere culminates in the formation of the Anti-Police Abuse Coalition in New York City, which sought to “express [...] solidarity and build alliances with other oppressed communities who are fighting police abuse.”²⁸

First Black Gay Pride celebration takes place in Los Angeles. Sgt. Perry Watkins, an openly gay Black man, successfully appeals his dishonorable discharge from the U.S. Army and becomes the first out gay soldier to retire from the Army with full honors.

Policies restricting immigration of lesbian and gay individuals to the U.S. are repealed.

Los Angeles police officers acquitted in Rodney King beating, sparking several days of riots.

Minnesota becomes the first state to ban employment discrimination based on gender identity.

The federal Defense of Marriage Act is enacted, defining marriage as a union solely between a man and a woman.

Amadou Diallo is fatally shot 41 times by four NYPD officers. The first annual Transgender Day of Remembrance is held to memorialize those who have been killed as a result of transphobia.





Massachusetts becomes the first state in the United States to legalize marriage for same-sex couples; same-sex marriage bans pass in 11 states across the country.

2000

04

2010

Killing of Trayvon Martin, sparking national outrage over the value of black lives in America.

12

13

The U.S. Supreme Court struck down part of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act in *Windsor v. United States*, requiring the federal government to recognize the marriages of same-sex couples.

14

Unarmed teenager Michael Brown is killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, resulting in protests and a national uproar.

Black transgender women are killed at a rate of more than one per month in the United States, and the average life expectancy of a Black trans woman is 35 years. Multiple grassroots groups and activists come together around this issue through the use of the #TransLivesMatter hashtag and as part of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, started in 2013 by women of color, two of whom identify as queer.



POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP:

SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE ON POLICING IN NEW ORLEANS

Founded in 2011, BreakOUT! is a New Orleans-based grassroots community organization that works to end the criminalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth to build a safer and more just New Orleans. In 2012, BreakOUT! secured an unprecedented victory for LGBTQ youth of color in the wake of a Department of Justice (DOJ) finding that the New Orleans Police Department engaged in unconstitutional policing practices. BreakOUT!'s proposed language prohibiting profiling on the basis of gender expression, gender identity, or sexual orientation was included in the DOJ's final consent decree.

In 2013, BreakOUT! designed a groundbreaking education initiative to address the needs of LGBTQ youth pushed out of school. The program, The Posh Academy, is a pilot education program where LGBTQ youth who have been pushed out of school because of gender identity and expression can earn their HiSET (or GED).

BreakOUT! has stood at the forefront of shifting the narrative and public discourse to be more inclusive of the lives of transgender and non-conforming youth of color. In April 2015, in honor of Penny Proud, a 21 year-old black transgender woman who was murdered in New Orleans, BreakOUT! purchased a 24 foot wide billboard as part of their #MakePennyProud #BlackTransLivesMatter campaign, reaching over 400,000 people a day. BreakOUT!'s model around racial justice and LGBTQ advocacy, particularly around Black trans lives, has served as a powerful model throughout the South and nationally. "When a trans woman of color can walk down the street or go to school, safely and free from harassment, we will know that our work has been successful," —Wes Ware, Co-Executive Director of BreakOUT.

Learn more at www.youthbreakout.org.



SPEAKING EACH OTHER'S LANGUAGES

WORKING ACROSS DIFFERENCES CAN BE CHALLENGING, but the payoff is big. In this section, we offer some basic tips on how to talk about LGBTQ people and issues for organizers with a racial justice background, and how to talk about racial justice for organizers with an LGBTQ background.

UNDERSTANDING A RACIAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

Basic Terminology

Racism is a complex system of beliefs and behaviors, grounded in a presumed superiority of the White race. These beliefs and behaviors are conscious and unconscious; personal and institutional; and result in the oppression of people of color and benefit the dominant group, Whites.²⁹

The following chart explains different types of racism and how they play out in the school-to-prison pipeline.

TYPE OF RACISM	DEFINITION ³⁰	EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS PLAYS OUT IN THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE
INDIVIDUAL	The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways.	CONSCIOUS Principal White does not like Black people or people who he thinks may be gay or lesbian. He sees Black student Breanna Black in the hallway with friends, who recently came out to the school as lesbian. Breanna Black is laughing and smiling in a masculine way that Principal White does not appreciate. Principal White knows Breanna Black must be causing trouble and asks her to come into his office. UNCONSCIOUS Principal White gets into an argument with a White student, who says, "I'll get you, Principal White!" to which Principal White replies, "I'll get you back." Principal White later gets into an argument with Breanna Black, who also says "I'll get you, Principal White!" Principal White feels threatened and calls the school security office.
CULTURAL	Cultural racism refers to representations, messages, and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with White people or "Whiteness" are automatically "better" or more "normal" than those associated with other racially defined groups.	Principal White's school has a new dress code, which mandates that all students must wear "appropriate clothing." In the first week of the new policy, students of color are sent into his office because their T-shirts and jeans are too "baggy" or too "tight fitting and showing too much skin." Breanna Black and some of her other friends got into trouble for wearing a baggy shirt and pants, which administrators told them was "unladylike and inappropriate."

TYPE OF RACISM	DEFINITION ³⁰	EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS PLAYS OUT IN THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE
INSTITUTIONAL	Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which policies and practices of organizations or parts of systems create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create, maintain, or fail to remedy accumulated advantages for White people and accumulated disadvantages for people from other racial groups.	<p>Principal White's school has a "zero tolerance" policy for insubordinate and disrespectful behavior; any student who is insubordinate or disrespectful receives a referral to the school police.</p> <p>At the end of the year, Principal White looks at his data and notices that Black students have been referred to the school police far more than White students for insubordination and disrespect, which is surprising because he knows that Black students are not misbehaving more than White students.</p>
STRUCTURAL	The term structural racism refers to a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity ... "the structural racism lens allows us to see that, as a society, we more or less take for granted a context of White leadership, dominance, and privilege." ³¹	Breanna Black had to drop out of school. It is no surprise because Principal White called her into his office for no reason, causing her to miss class time. Later that week, she was suspended for wearing "unladylike and inappropriate baggy" clothes, which made her feel even more targeted, misunderstood, and unwanted. Finally, when the teacher called on her and she didn't feel ready to respond because she was so far behind in class, the teacher called the school police to write her up for being "insubordinate"; the teacher said she was just following the school's policies. Now Breanna has a court date. She's too far behind, and no one cares about her at school, so why should Breanna care herself? The system has failed her at multiple levels.

White Privilege and the School-to-Prison Pipeline

On any given day at any given school, a student is less likely to be suspended, expelled, or referred to law enforcement—whether they were misbehaving or not—if he or she belongs to a group that has historically been defined as White. Although no one asks to be privileged or oppressed, White privilege "is shared by all Whites, affluent and poor, albeit to varying degrees ... White skin privilege is usually less a matter of direct, referential, and snarling contempt than a system of protecting the privileges of Whites by denying people of color opportunities for asset accumulation and upward mobility."³² Working on the school-to-prison pipeline requires an understanding of privilege and how it interacts with racism.

UNDERSTANDING LGBTQ PEOPLE AND ISSUES

The chart below explains different aspects of anti-LGBTQ oppression and how they can play out in the school-to-prison pipeline.

TERM	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
HOMOPHOBIA	Critical or hostile behavior (such as discrimination) directed at non-heterosexual individuals or communities.	Two male students are given an in-school suspension for “inappropriate conduct” when the assistant principal sees them holding hands in the hallway.
HETERONORMATIVITY	A term used to describe the way that heterosexuality is naturalized, normalized, and assumed, while other sexual identities are stigmatized or rendered invisible. While homophobia is often used to describe individuals’ attitudes, heteronormativity helps to describe systems, institutions, and practices that privilege heterosexuality over other sexual identities.	A school requires all couples attending the prom to be of the opposite sex. A lesbian couple must each attend prom with their male friends instead of being able to go together as a couple.
TRANSPHOBIA	Fear, anger, disgust, or hatred directed at transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals or communities.	A teacher gives a transgender student a suspension for wearing hair extensions because she says they are inappropriate for “boys” to wear.
CISSEXISM	A term used to describe norms that assume all individuals are either male or female, and that gender is always congruent with one’s biological sex.	On a school trip, sleeping arrangements divide students based on gender. A transgender female student is forced to room with all males because teachers decide that is her “real” gender.

BASIC TERMINOLOGY³³

Throughout this report, we use the acronym LGBTQ as an inclusive way to talk about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning people. Though there are many ways to talk about the vast diversity of sexual and gender identities, in most spaces these terms are the most widely accepted and commonly understood. Note that not everyone knows what the LGBTQ acronym means. When speaking to a general audience that may not be familiar with this, saying out “lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender” or “gay and transgender” is important to help them understand. It is also important to remember that gay and transgender are adjectives, not nouns. It’s best to talk in terms of “gay men,” “gay people,” and “transgender people,” as opposed to “gays” or “transgenders.”

Sexual Orientation

We use the term sexual orientation to refer to the gender(s) that a person is romantically, emotionally, and sexually attracted to. We avoid terms like “lifestyle” or “preference” because they suggest that this orientation is a choice, or something that can be changed or cured. It is often most useful to think of sexual orientation as a spectrum, with heterosexual and homosexual on either end. Between the two are a multitude of different identities and variations, including bisexuality and pansexuality.

Though it is common for individuals to have an innate sense of what gender(s) we are attracted to, sexual orientation can be fluid and complicated. Note that the “Q” in LGBTQ is used to refer to both queer and questioning individuals as a way to include individuals who may be unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity as well as those who prefer to avoid identifying themselves as “gay,” “bisexual,” “lesbian,” or “transgender,” which some view as rigid or confining categories.

Gender Identity

We use the terms gender and gender identity to refer to an individual’s innate sense of self as male, female, transgender, or other gender category. “Gender” describes the way a person identifies themselves, as opposed to the biological “sex” they were assigned at birth. The term transgender refers to individuals whose biological sex does not match their gender identity. Individuals whose gender identity and biological sex are congruent are referred to as cisgender. This report also uses the term gender nonconforming to describe individuals who do not identify as trans, but perform their gender in a way that differs from traditional ideas about males and females.

At some point in their lives, many transgender people decide they must live their lives as the gender they have always known themselves to be, and often transition to living as that gender. Not all transgender individuals choose to transition; some feel more comfortable somewhere between male and female identities. It is important never to assume someone’s gender identity and to give everyone the opportunity to define themselves. Accept the fact that you do not need to know the intricacies of someone’s gender or sexual orientation to engage with them as a human being.

When talking about issues affecting the LGBTQ community, such as nondiscrimination or safe schools protections, it is important to mention both sexual orientation and gender identity, as both must be included to protect the whole community.

Additional Terminology

You may hear people use terms such as queer, genderqueer, pansexual, nonbinary, or other words to refer to themselves and their identities. When addressing a general audience, remember that not everyone understands these terms, and some may even be offensive to some LGBTQ people. When working with LGBTQ activists, it is okay to ask how someone identifies, what terms they prefer, and how they want you to refer to their organization or group. For example, an activist may prefer that you refer to her group’s work as “advocating for the queer community.”

Pronouns

It is important to respect the identities that people share with you in the course of working together. One way to do this is to always refer to people using the gender pronouns they prefer. A “preferred pronoun” is the pronoun that a person wants used when others are talking about them. You can’t always know what someone’s preferred pronoun is by looking at them. Asking for and correctly using someone’s preferred pronoun shows your respect for their gender identity.

Some commonly used pronouns are she, her, hers; he, him, his; and they, them, theirs. For example, if someone named Dylan prefers a gender-neutral pronoun like “they,” you would say, “I talked to Dylan, and they are running a few minutes late for the meeting.”

A great way to discover a person’s preferred pronoun is to ask. Many groups begin meetings by asking everyone to share their pronouns. This practice can make a safe space for people to share their preferred pronouns, as well as educate new folks to the importance of respecting everyone’s preferred pronouns. When meeting a new person, it is polite to share your preferred pronouns and ask them for theirs.

LGBTQ People of Color

People of color make up more than 30% of the individuals who identify as LGBTQ in the U.S., and data shows that Black people are more likely to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender than any other racial group.³⁴ When talking about the LGBTQ community, it is important to remember its racial diversity. Avoid using language that creates a dichotomy between people of color and LGBTQ people, as this can exclude LGBTQ people of color or pressure them to choose between their race and their sexual or gender identity.

Talking about LGBTQ Issues³⁵

When talking about LGBTQ issues like discrimination in employment and housing, marriage, bullying, and other topics, it is important to start by establishing a common ground and illustrating the concrete harms that are experienced by LGBTQ people.

You can emphasize common ground by:

- Using the language of shared values, hopes, and beliefs.
- Making it about people and their stories.
- Reminding people that LGBTQ people are neighbors, coworkers, and friends.

You can illustrate concrete harms by:

- Avoiding abstract “rights” and “discrimination” language.
- Making it clear that existing laws don’t protect LGBTQ people.
- Focusing on a few meaningful injustices and illustrating them with emotionally compelling stories.

You can learn more about how to effectively talk about LGBTQ issues generally and about specific issues at the Movement Advancement Project’s website on “Talking About LGBTQ Issues Series.”³⁶

BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

ALTHOUGH MANY LGBTQ PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE OF COLOR, and many people of color are LGBTQ, our organizations have often worked in separate issue silos that haven't fostered collaboration. There are systemic barriers that make collaboration challenging. White LGBTQ people may lack an understanding of structural racism and their own racial privilege. Heterosexual and cisgender people of color may lack an understanding of the lived experience of discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. All of us may suffer from implicit, unconscious biases that interfere with our desire to treat each other fairly and equally. Below, we name some common barriers that prevent us from effectively collaborating as we need to break the school-to-prison pipeline.

THINKING OF OUR OWN WORK WITH A NARROW LENS

Because many of our organizations have taken narrow views of what “our” issues are, many movement leaders and people in our communities are unfamiliar with the broader range of issues affecting our communities. Sometimes we think too narrowly about our work as being “anti-racism” or “anti-LGBTQ discrimination,” rather than more broadly as “anti-oppression.” When we take a step back and think more generally about who and what we are targeting in our work, there are many similarities among our movements—we often encounter the same discriminatory individuals, under-resourced institutions, biased courts, and policymaking bodies, broken systems, unfair social structures, and undereducated hearts and minds. And the communities we work with are often similarly disenfranchised for being different than the cisgender, straight, able-bodied, White, male image often privileged by these targets. The more we think of our work broadly as pushing back against these same targets, and the more we recognize the similarities of our constituents, the more we will realize the interconnectedness of our campaigns and struggles. In turn, we become more powerful and effective working together jointly rather than struggling separately.

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP:

BRINGING THE RACIAL JUSTICE AND LGBTQ MOVEMENTS TOGETHER IN ONE SPACE

From 2011 to 2013, the school-to-prison pipeline ActionCamps were a series of spaces throughout the country organized by Advancement Project that brought together and trained nearly 1,000 school-to-prison pipeline organizers and activists, the vast majority of whom were middle and high school-aged youth of color. At ActionCamp, attendees learned more about the school-to-prison pipeline, developed campaign skills, and discussed movement-building strategies as a way of bringing together various geographies, generations, and movements. As a formal member of the training team, the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, in particular, helped develop curriculum, run sessions about intersectionality, and bring new LGBTQ groups into the space.

ActionCamps explicitly brought together people from the racial justice movements and LGBTQ movements, incorporated both perspectives into the room, and created a safe space to learn more about each other's struggles and victories. In settings where various generations and ideologies were coming together, this was not always a simple task. Through its leadership, the ActionCamp training team collaboratively identified and worked through these issues, helping ActionCamps to become stronger and more informed as a result. As ActionCamps evolved, they became more intentional about preparing people for the challenges of working together, particularly by being upfront about their purpose as an anti-racist, anti-bullying, safe space for LGBTQ youth of color, as a venue for sharing introductory materials about LGBTQ justice and racism, creating collaborations on specific workshops on intersectionality, and ensuring the safety of all attendees.

ActionCamps helped attendees develop deeper relationships and more sophisticated understandings of how the school-to-prison pipeline affects a broad cross section of our community. Today's movement is stronger and more robust as a result.

Learn more at www.advancementproject.org.





POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP:

WORKING FOR SAFE AND JUST SCHOOLS IN NEW MEXICO

AMBER ROYSTER, Executive Director of
Equality New Mexico, on how her organization is working
at the intersections of LGBT equality and education justice:

There are so many facets of creating safe schools, and we are fortunate in New Mexico to have a number of people and organizations invested in this work. Right now, EQNM is most needed in the policy advocacy arena, so we are dedicating and seeking resources to support filling critical holes in our state's bullying prevention statutes, and to encourage early adoption of GLSEN best practices for trans* students in our public school systems—which we intend to eventually lead to a legislative effort to mandate adoption statewide.

But, as our organizational focus has broadened to be more concerned with intersectional issues, we intend for our programmatic work to follow. In the case of safe schools, for instance, we have to address student and teacher bullying and abuse based on race and ethnicity, just as we do on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. We are concerned with the militarization of our schools through excessive law enforcement presence—we need counselors, not cops. And zero-tolerance policies are anathema to reducing school push out, so we have a lot of work to do at the local level to examine and remedy existing policies.

Restorative justice can't just be 'a part' of our safe schools work; rather, it is the crux. Not only does it reduce the subsequent harm of punitive 'justice,' it promotes a culture shift among our future generations for how we communicate, connect, and address conflict.

We have grown our partnerships with a multitude of organizations and coalitions that are concerned with safe schools. We are in close partnership with Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico, Southwest Women's Law Center, Strong Families New Mexico, UNM LGBTQ Resource Center, and Young Women United—all of which work directly with public school boards and administrators to encourage and advocate for safe schools issues. We also work closely with Santa Fe Mountain Center, the home of our state's GSA Network. We are fortunate that an Albuquerque Chapter of GLSEN has recently formed, and we have already begun collaborating on safe schools work.

Learn more at www.eqnm.org.

Sometimes, our focus can become too narrow even within movements. For example, the national push for marriage equality, while successful both in winning marriage for same-sex couples and changing the perceptions of LGBTQ people for many Americans, has overshadowed other issues affecting the LGBTQ community, especially those that most affect LGBTQ people of color. Issues such as education equity, employment rights, housing rights, voting rights, and ending the criminalization of young people still suffer much political backlash. LGBTQ organizations must find ways to navigate these challenging political waters; they must pay more attention to the broader range of issues beyond marriage equality that most affect and impact LGBTQ people of color.

The many efforts across the country to organize against police brutality, systemic reform of the criminal justice system, and to hold elected officials accountable for making these changes are brought by a wide range of organizations with diverse constituents of LGBTQ people, young people, and people of color. However, many of the mainstream organizations that traditionally work with these bases of people seem to be focused only on single-issue struggles. The narrow priorities of some social justice funders can also push organizations to pursue a single-issue strategy. In order to build a stronger, more inclusive movement, we must work to address racial tensions, discrimination, and ageism in our organizations and within our communities. We must also build a greater capacity in mainstream LGBTQ organizations and racial justice organizations to work with people of color, young people, and LGBTQ people. Most importantly, we must focus on

building the power and capacity of grassroots LGBTQ community organizations led by people of color. Far too often, smaller grassroots organizations led by directly impacted LGBTQ people of color are excluded from funder circles. To make this change happen, organizations and philanthropy will have to go beyond statements of support, and put these thoughts and philosophies into action. This shift happens when directly impacted LGBTQ people of color are at the forefront of the movement, occupy leadership positions, and have real structural and institutional impact in the work of an organization.

LETTING EACH OTHER DOWN IN CRITICAL MOMENTS

Throughout the history of our movements we have called on all our friends and allies to stand and fight with us at key moments. Just in this past year, we experienced moments like these for marriage equality and police brutality on a national scale, and with bullying, nondiscrimination, and the school-to-prison pipeline, among many other issues at the local level. Many times these calls have been heeded, and the additional capacity, solidarity, and support made us even stronger and more successful. At times, however, we have each had to stand alone and wonder why our allies and friends were not with us when they were most needed. A sense of being betrayed, ignored, or left behind can make it hard to establish the trust needed for true partnership. We must make it a priority to stand with and for each other, as this only makes us better and stronger.



POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP:

NORTH CAROLINIANS COMING TOGETHER FOR MORAL FREEDOM SUMMER

In 2014, the North Carolina NAACP State Conference and Youth and College Division joined together with LGBTQ partners to honor the 50th anniversary of Mississippi Freedom Summer by leading a massive grassroots organizing effort in response to the alarmingly regressive policies that were coming out of the state legislature, including the worst voter suppression law in the nation.

By the beginning of June, over 30 young people—primarily young people of color—had been hired to spend 11 weeks in 50 targeted counties across the state engaging in voter education, voter protection and voter registration. Some of these youth had done organizing before; others were brand new to the work. But all of them were angry at the direction they saw their state moving and excited to be part of a new “Moral Movement.” The project served as a model of intersectional issue-based organizing in the South by encompassing diverse statewide efforts, including racial justice and LGBTQ organizing. During Moral Freedom Summer, youth organizers of various backgrounds and intersectional identities were trained in history, the Forward Together movement, technical data, field work, and skills building.

Equality Federation worked with the NAACP and three LGBT partners (Equality North Carolina, Freedom Center for Social Justice, and Southerners on New Ground) to build a coalition and secure funding for this collaborative approach. The Moral Freedom Summer examples provide a model regarding how various groups can come together under a unified mission, vision, and movement.

The partner organizations had a critical role to play in both recruiting organizers and providing them with training. The result was that LGBT youth were an important part of the organizer cohort and all the organizers went into the field with a much better understanding of who LGBT people are and the unique issues that our communities face.

While Equality NC, Southerners on New Ground and Freedom Center were invaluable in bringing an LGBTQ perspective to the NAACP’s Moral Freedom Summer organizers and agenda, they played an equally valuable role in raising awareness among their own members about issues like voting rights, immigration and health care, which haven’t always been seen as priorities in the LGBTQ community.

Collaborations like this lay a strong foundation for work on other intersectional issues, including the school-to-prison pipeline.

Learn more at www.naacpn.org, www.equalitync.org, www.fcsj.org, and www.southernersonnewground.org.

FAILING TO FORM INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

People may also come to this work with different values and expectations around the role of young people in the work. Adult-led organizations may see young people as props to be used or helpless victims to be fought for, rather than as leaders in their own right. Adults may also assume that their own experiences in school make them experts, despite the fact that there have been dramatic, troubling changes in our education system in recent years. Youth-led organizations may feel that because they are most directly experiencing the harms of the school-to-prison pipeline, the organizing and advocacy experience of adult-led groups is irrelevant.

DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES WITH RELIGION

Different experiences with religion may also be a barrier to successful collaboration. Throughout history we have seen many wonderful examples of how religion and faith have broken barriers, and built bridges between and across our movements. However, many LGBTQ people have experienced spiritual violence at the hands of the faith communities where they were raised. While many LGBTQ people are religious, they may be hesitant to engage with groups that have a strong faith component unless they are certain they will be welcomed.

Recently in North Carolina, Dr. Reverend William Barber II of the North Carolina NAACP has championed the idea of “fusion politics,” which has brought together a broad array of advocates from across many different issue areas into a joint Moral Mondays movement, a powerful example of a movement infused with faith that welcomes LGBTQ people. Nevertheless, there are some religions and faiths that openly look down on LGBTQ people and people of color as part of their teachings, creating unsafe spaces. When we espouse those same teachings, adopt them, and put them into practice, this puts up walls and destroys bridges between us. While faith can inspire and empower us to work for a better world, we must also acknowledge the sometimes harmful role religion and faith can play as a barrier toward us working together more effectively.

THE LACK OF ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Organizational capacity can also be a challenge to partnership. Many LGBTQ and racial justice organizations are small, under-resourced, and operating with few or no paid staff. It can feel overwhelming to consider taking on an additional set of issues when groups are already feeling stretched and overwhelmed. Organizations can fall prey to the myth of scarcity, believing that being a good partner on new issues means taking away valuable funding and volunteer and staff time from their existing work. In countless experiences, we’ve seen that effective coalitions can be more than the sum of their parts, adding value for everyone involved.

BEST PRACTICES FOR COLLABORATION

IF WORKING ACROSS DIFFERENCE WERE EASY, more organizations would be doing it. Fortunately, there are many successful models of partnership and lessons learned to help organizations who are just starting out with this kind of work or planning to enter into new partnerships.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

It’s not just organizations driving collaboration, but individual people. Successful partnerships are much more likely to emerge when leaders are willing to take the time to make a personal connection. Because different groups have different priorities and perspectives, tensions and disagreements will always arise in coalition work. It’s much easier to navigate those challenges when leaders know and understand each other.

One simple way to start building a relationship is simply to show up at another organization’s meetings and events. For example, an organizer with an LGBTQ advocacy group wanted to incorporate education justice work into their own schools organizing, so they started by simply showing up at a local, African-American-led education justice group’s meetings, listening, and offering to help. They didn’t start by asking for things for their own organization, but spent the time getting to know the group and the issues they were working on. After a few meetings, the education justice group asked if they would do a presentation about how the school-to-prison pipeline was affecting LGBTQ students, and an ongoing partnership was formed.

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP:

SHARING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE GAME OF K-12 LIFE

In 2015, Advancement Project and Gay-Straight Alliance Network collaborated to release *The Game of K-12 Life*, a free youth and community-friendly workshop resource designed as a fun way to facilitate a discussion around the school-to-prison pipeline. In the game, players take on the identity of a student with a unique identity and background, which may be a White student, a Black student, a queer student, an undocumented student, or a student with a learning disability. Participants follow what happens to these individual students when they encounter behavioral challenges throughout their school career, and how their odds of survival can vary depending on their identity. *The Game of K-12 Life* also includes a free expansion pack for communities to design their own student identities and outcomes to make them fit with their unique local situations.

The Game of K-12 Life is available to download for free at <http://tinyurl.com/gameofk12life>.

By taking the time to learn about each other and not opening the conversation with an immediate request for them to work on your own priorities, you build trust and create a foundation for deeper, lasting partnerships.

GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE AT THE TABLE

Invest your time and energy early on in figuring out who you should reach out to as you take on a new piece of work. Make sure you're including people from all of the affected communities—we must prioritize building their knowledge, skills, leadership, and power. On school-to-prison pipeline work, this would likely include students, parents, communities of color, LGBTQ communities, and immigrant communities.

To get the right folks together, you may have to change how you operate. Holding meetings during the workday might exclude young people, who need to be at school, and parents, who need to be at work. Having meetings in a part of town that isn't accessible on public transit may keep people without cars from participating. Holding meetings in English without translation may exclude leaders in immigrant communities. Think about the unintentional barriers to participation you may create.

BRING YOUTH- AND ADULT-LED GROUPS TOGETHER

Successful work on education justice has to have young people engaged. The most effective partnerships recognize and welcome young people as powerful leaders in their own right, while also tapping into the expertise, resources, and relationships that adult-led groups can offer.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Many LGBTQ organizations haven't developed a strong understanding of race and privilege. Many racial justice organizations don't have a deep knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity. As these groups come together, it helps if both groups are willing to take the time to educate themselves. While there are great opportunities to learn by working together, investing in training yourselves on the basics helps avoid causing unintended offense, and shows the respect and commitment your organization has to partnership.

When you do make a misstep and offend a partner, own it. Acknowledge it, apologize, and figure out what else you need to learn to avoid making similar mistakes in the future.

HELP YOUR PARTNERS DO THEIR HOMEWORK

Understand that your partners are on a journey, and support their work to learn about your community and your issues. That doesn't mean you don't push them when they make a mistake, but do what you can to help them understand not just the policy but the culture they're engaging with in a new way.

ASSUME BEST INTENTIONS

Working from the assumption that your coalition partners have good intentions is important for any coalition effort, but even more so when working across difference. When there are problems, take a deep breath and try to figure out why they happened without assuming your partners purposely undermined your work or your relationship. Sometimes misunderstandings are the result of unclear expectations or cultural differences in your organizations.

GET CLEAR ON EXPECTATIONS

When you decide to take on significant work in partnership, make sure everyone is clear on what's expected. For larger projects, having a written memorandum of understanding that spells this out can be helpful. It doesn't have to be legalistic; just the process of getting your expectations in writing can be invaluable, and will help avoid disappointment and frustration in the future. Some topics you may want to work on with your partners include:

- **Goals:** What are you trying to achieve? What compromises are and are not acceptable?
- **Roles:** Who's doing which pieces of work? Who represents each partner at coalition meetings? Who's paying for which expenses?
- **Process:** How will decisions be made? What kinds of decisions need to be made by the full group, and which can be delegated to a steering committee or a specific partner? How often will you meet? How do you hold each other accountable?
- **Communications:** Who speaks for the coalition? Does the coalition have a public identity, or do groups speak for themselves? How will credit be shared with the media, funders, and your own constituents?

BE WILLING TO STEP BACK

Sometimes, one organization or another just isn't the most effective messenger for a particular audience, or lacks the skills to do a specific piece of that work. When you find your group in that situation, be gracious about stepping back and letting your partners take the lead. You'll get your moment in the sun, and we can all share the victory when you win.

WORKING TOGETHER, BETTER: TOOLS FOR COLLABORATION

SHARED SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE TALKING POINTS

THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE AFFECTS all students, but has unique impacts on LGBTQ students, students of color, and LGBTQ students of color. In order to talk about these impacts in an effective and consistent way, we have developed these shared talking points:

Research shows that students of color and LGBTQ students are more likely to be disciplined than their White, non-LGBTQ peers. Students with intersectional identities, such as Black transgender youth or gay undocumented youth, are at an even greater risk.

Explicit and implicit biases affect all students; because they are so often marginalized, stereotyped, and targeted, LGBTQ students, students of color, and LGBTQ students of color are especially affected by these biases, resulting in them being particularly pushed out of school for vaguely defined behaviors and minor incidents.

LGBTQ students, students of color, and LGBTQ students of color are also uniquely impacted by school issues such as being called disrespectful, violating dress codes, being a victim of or perpetrator of bullying, and dealing with police in schools. In order to solve these issues, we must create sensible policies that take into account the distinct needs of these populations, prioritize getting to the root of problems, and offer specific, appropriate solutions that keep students in school and on a pathway to success.

Adopting a positive school climate, such as through alternatives to suspension like restorative justice, is an effective way of creating a safe and welcoming school for all students, especially LGBTQ students, students of color, and LGBTQ students of color.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO FIGHT PUSHOUT

THE FOLLOWING ARE RECOMMENDATIONS for youth, teachers, school administrators, and policy makers regarding how they can dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline in their communities.³⁷

YOUTH

1. TAKE THE PLEDGE: Join the movement against criminalization! Youth across the nation are pushing back against harsh disciplinary policies and practices of schools that target LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming youth of color. Sign up your GSA in a statement against the criminalization of queer and trans youth of color, and get updates and resources to fight the criminalization of youth:

<http://unite.gsanetwork.org/petitions/on-ferguson-calling-gsas-to-action>.

2. BECOME A GSA FOR JUSTICE: Join the growing movement of LGBTQ youth activists who are advocating for a broad range of social and educational justice issues. Educate yourself, your GSA, and your school about how to create meaningful change! Find more resources here:

<http://www.gsanetwork.org/gsas4justice>.

3. FIGHT FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: #GSAs4Justice and youth across the nation are demanding solutions—not suspensions! Work with your GSA advisor and other student groups to demand your school adopt the best practices for restorative justice as recommended by the AFT and NEA. Start a campaign here: <http://unite.gsanetwork.org/efforts/push-for-restorative-justice>.

TEACHERS

1. SUPPORT ALTERNATIVES: Alternatives to exclusionary and punitive discipline exist! Explore “Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships & Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools,” a new guide from Advancement Project, the AFT, the NEA, and the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign at <http://www.otlcampaign.org/restorative-practices>.

2. DO YOUR HOMEWORK: When you have disciplinary discretion, challenge yourself to find creative solutions that don’t deny LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming youth of color educational instruction time.

ADMINISTRATORS AND POLICYMAKERS

DEVELOP, PASS, AND IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES that create a safe, welcoming environment that keeps LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming students of color in school. Revise school discipline policies to adequately address the unique needs of gender-nonconforming and queer youth of color. These policies and practices include:

- 1. IMPLEMENT THE GUIDANCE:** Full implementation of the recent Department of Education and Department of Justice Guidance on School Climate and Discipline.³⁸ The guidance acknowledges the existence of the school-to-prison pipeline as it affects students of color and LGBTQ students, and provides best practices to create a positive school climate. These best practices include appropriate consequences for misbehaviors, limiting the role of law enforcement, and the need for community involvement.
- 2. ELIMINATE ZERO TOLERANCE:** Eliminating zero tolerance policies and the use of out-of school suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests for minor infractions.³⁹
- 3. CURB UNNECESSARY DISCRETION:** Curbing the use of discretionary and biased “catch-all” discipline categories such as willful defiance,⁴⁰ insubordination, disobedience, and disrespect. These discipline categories disproportionately affect students of color, students with disabilities, gender-nonconforming students, and LGBTQ students. Policies that clearly delineate the appropriate commonsense responses to minor student misbehaviors can ensure that all students are treated fairly, and students are not pushed out of school when minor incidents occur.⁴¹
- 4. LIMIT THE ROLE OF POLICE IN SCHOOLS:** Creating agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), which appropriately limit the role of police in schools and keep LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming students of color safe.⁴² These agreements must include clear language that limits the use of school-based arrests and referrals to the juvenile justice system to behavior that poses a serious, ongoing threat to the safety of students or staff. They must also include opportunities for community stakeholder input, data collection, training, and accountability.
- 5. CREATE POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATES:** Creating positive school relationships and climates through alternatives such as restorative justice practices.⁴³ Restorative practices can help educators understand the root causes of student misbehavior, provide opportunities for appropriate student, educator, and community accountability, and give educators and students an opportunity to build positive, productive relationships.
- 6. ADDRESS BULLYING:** Addressing bullying⁴⁴ by doing the following:
 - Passing statewide legislation that accurately defines bullying, delineates the appropriate responses to bullying, trains staff on how to handle bullying, and ensures the creation of a safe, positive school climate.⁴⁵
 - Requiring that educators effectively intervene to prevent bullying.
 - Requiring reporting of bullying to appropriate school officials and a prompt, thorough investigation.
 - Emphasizing age-appropriate responses and interventions that focus on education, support, and remediation rather than on exclusionary measures and referral to law enforcement.
- 7. REALLOCATE FUNDING:** Reallocating funding dedicated to school police, security officers, metal detectors, and surveillance cameras to support staff such as guidance counselors, social workers, psychologists, restorative justice facilitators, and nurses. These support staff members can directly address LGBTQ students’ academic, behavioral, health, and personal needs.

CONTINUED

ADMINISTRATORS AND POLICYMAKERS

8. REQUIRE TRAINING: Requiring training for all school administrators, teachers, police and security officers,⁴⁶ school staff, and expulsion hearing officers on the following topics: the mental health challenges, strains, and duress endured by LGBTQ and gender- nonconforming youth of color; the adverse consequences of exclusion from school; effective classroom management techniques; adolescent development and relationship-building; conflict resolution, restorative justice, and other disciplinary alternatives; and student engagement through challenging and culturally relevant curricula.

9. CREATE SAFE SPACES: Creating safe spaces in schools for LGBTQ and gender- nonconforming youth of color through:

- Establishing and implementing an anti-harassment policy that includes actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and presentation.
- Training staff to intervene when they hear slurs or negative comments based on sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, or presentation.
- Supporting Gay-Straight Alliance clubs and other similar clubs.
- Providing identifiable resources where students and their parents and/or guardians can find information or support regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Introducing a curriculum that embraces family diversity, and includes LGBTQ people and information about sexual orientation and gender identity.

10. COLLECT DATA: Collecting school discipline data, including referrals to law enforcement and school-based arrests, disaggregated by offense, age, gender, grade, race/ethnicity, disability, school, teacher/school staff, and outcome. Data should also be used to measure program success, diagnose areas of improvement, and develop alternative programs tailored to the identified disciplinary issues.

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP:

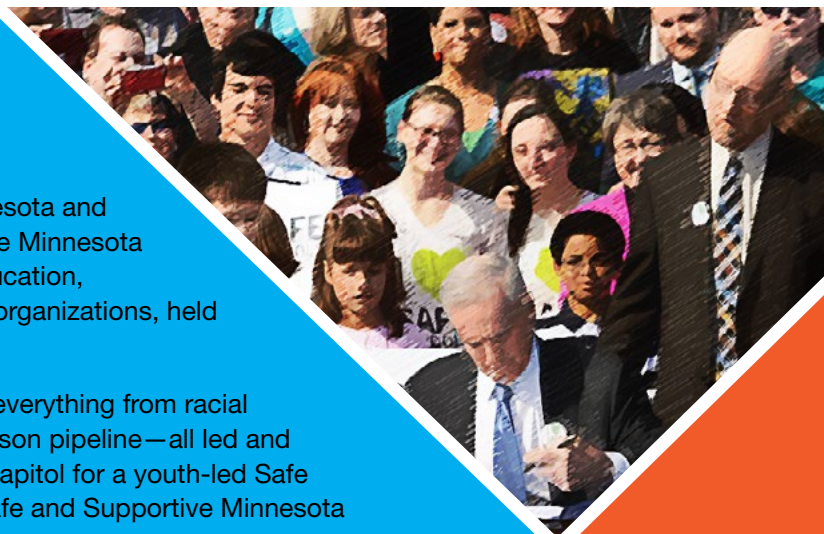
USING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TO MAKE SCHOOLS SAFER IN MINNESOTA

In March 2014, Equality Federation member OutFront Minnesota and Out 4 Good, the state's GSA network, in partnership with the Minnesota Safe Schools for All Coalition, a group of more than 140 education, disability, youth, religious, parent, LGBT, and social service organizations, held the 2014 Youth Summit on Safe Schools.

Students met in St. Paul for a day filled with workshops on everything from racial justice in education to advocacy to ending the school-to-prison pipeline—all led and organized by students. Participants then took a trip to the Capitol for a youth-led Safe Schools Rally, and visits with legislators to talk about the Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools Act.

A month later, just after midnight on Wednesday, April 9, the Minnesota House of Representatives passed the Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools Act by a vote of 69 to 63. Many of the students who were part of the summit were also present for the passage and signing of the bill. The law is important because it shifts from a zero tolerance approach that mandates suspension or expulsion of students to a restorative approach that focuses on repairing harm and preventing recurrences.

Learn more at www.outfront.org and <http://equitydiversity.mpls.k12.mn.us/out4good>.



RESOURCES

Want to learn more? Here are further resources on the topics covered in this report.

LGBTQ YOUTH AND SCHOOL PUSHOUT

This series of reports from GSA Network and Crossroads Collaborative finds that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, gender-nonconforming youth, and youth of color not only face bullying and harassment from peers, but also harsh and disparate discipline from school staff, relatively higher levels of policing and surveillance, and blame for their own victimization.

<http://www.gsanetwork.org/Pushout-Report>

GAME OF K-12 LIFE

This game/workshop by Advancement Project and GSA Network is an easy, fun way to experience what the school-to-prison pipeline is like for various students, and comes with a customization expansion kit to make it specific to your community.

<http://tinyurl.com/gameofk12life>

TWO WRONGS DON'T MAKE A RIGHT: WHY ZERO TOLERANCE IS NOT THE SOLUTION TO BULLYING

This report from Advancement Project, Alliance for Educational Justice, and GSA Network looks at opportunities to address bullying and harassment without resorting to harsh discipline policies that push young people out of school.

<http://www.advancementproject.org/resources/entry/two-wrongs-dont-make-a-right-why-zero-tolerance-is-not-the-solution-to-bull>

BEYOND BULLYING: HOW HOSTILE SCHOOL CLIMATE PERPETUATES THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE FOR LGBT YOUTH

This report from Center for American Progress examines the effects of harsh discipline policies on LGBTQ youth.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2014/02/27/84179/beyond-bullying/>

TALKING ABOUT LGBT ISSUES SERIES

This resource from Movement Advancement Project helps better understand key issues of importance to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

<http://www.lgbtmap.org/effective-messaging/talking-about-lgbt-issues-series>

GET YR RIGHTS NETWORK

This resource from BreakOUT! and Streetwise and Safe, provides tools for young people to know their rights and advocate for themselves.

<http://getyrrights.org/>

CONCLUSION

THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE IS A NATIONAL CRISIS as we see young people—especially those who are LGBTQ or of color—pushed out of our education system and into prisons and poverty. While this report focuses on the big-picture effects of the pipeline and the critical, collaborative strategies needed to effect change, we can't lose sight of why this work matters. We do this work because we see the faces of the individual young people whose lives and communities are being harmed every day by this broken system.

In this moment, as the #BlackLivesMatter movement is advancing a national conversation about race, and the work of LGBTQ organizations is advancing a national conversation about sexual orientation and gender identity, it has never been more important for LGBTQ communities and communities of color to chart a course forward together.

They are why we call on activists and organizations—adults and youth, LGBTQ, people of color, and allies—to come together now. Building on the remarkable success stories we've shared, and using the hard-won best practices we've documented, we can end the school-to-prison pipeline, ensure that young people have the chance at a future they deserve, and strengthen the communities we all call home.

For those who are new to this issue, we invite you to join us and our remarkable local partners in this work. For those who are already working hard to dismantle the pipeline, we invite you to continue strengthening and expanding your coalitions and building power in partnerships.

TOGETHER, WE BELIEVE THAT WE WILL WIN.



ENDNOTES

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