



PRESS RELEASE

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"The youth organizing work we do at FIERCE is really special: we are organizers who make real changes in our lives and community. The work we do in NYC can help break barriers and inspire LGBTQ youth of color and their allies everywhere. That's why we are making herstory with our first-ever Youth of Color Organizing Summit at Creating Change!"

-- Ash Hammond, FIERCE National Committee

LGBTQ Youth Converge in Dallas, TX for FIERCE's First National LGBTQ Youth of Color Organizing Summit & Release of National Report at Creating Change Conference

FIERCE Youth Leaders facilitate interactive trainings on the fundamentals of youth organizing, including political education, effective base-building and campaign strategy development.

(Dallas, TX) This week, dozens of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth of color gathered for the first-ever LGBTQ Youth of Color Organizing Summit at Creating Change. The Summit, organized by FIERCE as part of its emerging National Program to build a broader LGBTQ youth movement, included workshops on the fundamentals of youth organizing* created and facilitated by FIERCE members—LGBTQ youth of color between the ages of 13-24.

In addition to the Summit, FIERCE is also releasing findings from *Coming Out, Stepping Up: Organizing to build the power of LGBTQ Youth*—a new national report on the state of LGBTQ youth organizing and recommendations for how to build a more strategic and powerful LGBTQ youth movement that is for and by LGBTQ youth. Today, Saturday, February 6, FIERCE member leaders Ash Hammond and Rudy "Elegost" Rosado will speak on the LGBTQ youth of color plenary, *Young Leaders Speak: Out Loud and Proud*, moderated by Kai Wright. They will present key findings and recommendations from *Coming Out, Stepping Up* and share their own experiences organizing LGBTQ youth of color in New York City.

The Summit, which was held on Wednesday, drew over 30 LGBTQ youth from 11 different organizations across the country to help build their youth organizing skills through interactive workshops and trainings on:

- How to Build a Membership Base
- Planning a Winnable Campaign
- Youth Organizing: Lessons from the field
- Building, Exercising & Sustaining Power: FIERCE's Organizing Model
- Addressing Power Dynamics: Creating Effective Youth / Adult Partnerships
- Creating a National Strategy: the Future of LGBTQ Youth Organizing

According to Ahkia Daniels, a member of GenderJUST, "The LGBTQ Youth of Color Summit is going to help LGBTQ youth in Chicago gain more knowledge on organizing and how to create real change in our city."

"The Summit provided a critical opportunity for us to share our experiences and explore ways that we can build our power and win more victories for our communities," stated FIERCE Member Rudy "Elegost" Rosado. "We want a stronger youth-led movement to address the needs facing

LGBTQ youth today, particularly when it comes to access to housing, safe public spaces, and services.”

According to *Coming Out, Stepping Up*, LGBTQ youth, particularly youth of color, experience increased rates of homelessness, transphobia and violence and decreasing access to social services. Recommendations from the report call for the LGBTQ movement to invest in youth organizing* as an essential strategy for change, especially amongst LGBTQ youth of color.

“A majority of LGBTQ youth organizations do not have the capacity to develop effective youth organizing strategies,” stated Glo Ross, FIERCE Movement Building Coordinator. “At the same time, LGBTQ organizations with the most resources and capacity are not prioritizing the issues effecting LGBTQ youth. This is where our National Program strives to make the most impact.”

FIERCE’s National Program seeks to address the gap in LGBTQ youth leadership by helping to build the capacity of organizations to do more youth organizing work. FIERCE is also calling for increased resources and funding from the mainstream movement to support a national LGBTQ youth strategy that goes beyond youth advocacy and direct services.

In addition to organizing the Summit and participating in the *Young People Speak: Out Loud Proud* plenary, FIERCE member leaders and staff helped lead a day-long institute with the Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth (BAGLY) and the National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC) called *Best Practices for Queer Youth Work: Transforming Strategies for Youth Participation*.

“It’s so important for LGBTQ youth to share organizing strategies with other organizations because we have to take advantage of this moment,” said Derrick Shenault, a GenderJUST member. “The Youth of Color Organizing Summit and Creating Change are just the beginning. Now we must keep the momentum going.”

To download a free copy of *Coming Out, Stepping Up* and find out more about FIERCE, visit <http://www.fiercenyc.org>.

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Founded in 2000, FIERCE is a membership-based organization building the leadership and power of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth of color in New York City. We develop politically conscious leaders who are invested in improving ourselves and our communities through youth-led campaigns, leadership development programs, and cultural expression through arts and media. FIERCE is dedicated to cultivating the next generation of social justice movement leaders.
<http://www.fiercenyc.org>

* As defined by *The Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing*, youth organizing is “an innovative youth development and social justice strategy that trains young people in community organizing and advocacy, and assists them in employing these skills to alter power relations and create meaningful institutional change in their communities.”