



Join FIERCE in Proclaiming October LGBTQ Youth Empowerment Month!

Now is the time to take action with LGBTQ youth leading the fight for our safety, our community, and our lives!

Over the past several weeks, we've felt the impacts of one tragic event followed by another. We've experienced the heartbreak and sadness of losing youth members and leaders of our community to suicide, bullying and harassment. We've experienced outrage and fear caused by homophobic anti-gay attacks on our community in New York City. These recent incidents highlight serious issues that countless LGBTQ youth face everyday. We know that for every one story heard on the news, there are dozens more that go unreported to police, unnoticed by school officials, and ignored by the media.

At the same time over these past few weeks, we've also experienced the resiliency and strength of our community as we've organized and turned out to vigils and community actions and mourned our losses together. We've created and received messages of hope from LGBTQ community members, allies, public officials and even celebrities. Together, we've raised the nation's awareness to issues that impact us, but we must keep pushing—now is the time to take action and demand changes that address the full scope of issues impacting LGBTQ youth.

We need solutions that go beyond messages of hope. We need concrete changes that positively impact the daily lives of LGBTQ youth, particularly youth of color whose voices and needs go unheard far too often. We need our government officials to pass policy changes that ensure safe spaces in our schools and jobs, increase funding for LGBTQ youth services and prioritize creating more safe spaces for LGBTQ youth to congregate and organize together in order to take leadership in our efforts for safety and respect.

As much as we are advocating for youth, we must also empower youth to create the changes they need. We must honor LGBTQ youth voices that are leading change efforts locally and nationally. We need adult allies to work with us on strategies for changing how society treats us, including creating spaces for youth to tell our stories and share our ideas for change. We also need the media to cover our stories positively and accurately.

To date, the public response to recent tragedies has largely focused on addressing bullying and harassment of LGBTQ youth in their schools. Addressing bullying in schools is an essential component to tackling the issues we face. However, it cannot be the only solution on the table. Bullying and harassment are issues that LGBTQ youth face in all facets of their lives, not just between individuals on the street or in schools. LGBTQ youth also face horrific abuse and neglect in juvenile detention facilities and sadly, in institutions that are supposed to support us and keep us safe. We need solutions that address the full spectrum of problems that lead to isolation and violence against our community. This includes addressing LGBTQ youth homelessness, lack of safe spaces, and cuts in services.

Many FIERCE members have stated that one of the main reasons they get involved as community organizers is to meet other youth who are going through the same things they are going through and to work to put an end to the challenges that they face. For the past 10 years, FIERCE has been working on these issues with LGBTQ youth of color leading that work –

whether it's organizing to stop the harassment and violence against youth or fighting to secure safe spaces for LGBTQ youth, such as our current campaign for a 24-hour LGBTQ youth center.

FIERCE will continue to build support among elected officials so they can meet the dire needs of our community. We envision a city that puts a seat at decision-making tables for LGBTQ youth. We envision our communities as ones that value and celebrate our fabulousness. We know from experience that solutions to our problems are far more effective and long lasting if we are meaningfully involved in shaping them. We call on our public officials and allies to prioritize LGBTQ youth voices in local and national policy change efforts to address the problems we face.

-- **FIERCE**

SUPPORT FIERCE BY URGING THE MAYOR TO ISSUE AN OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION NAMING OCTOBER AS LGBTQ YOUTH EMPOWERMENT MONTH IN NEW YORK CITY!

LGBTQ Youth Empowerment Month is dedicated to honoring LGBTQ youth leadership and supporting the work LGBTQ youth are doing to transform their communities and their lives. In light of the tragic events that have taken place this month and since Coming Out Day is October 11, we want this October and all future Octobers to be a time we lift up and support LGBTQ youth leaders. We intentionally chose LGBTQ Empowerment Month rather than awareness month. Empowerment means being seen, heard, and having the power to make the changes we need immediately.

TAKE ACTION NOW!

Step One: VISIT <http://www.FIERCENYC.org> to endorse this statement and build support for LGBTQ youth!

Step Two: CALL ON YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS TO ENDORSE THIS STATEMENT.

Let them know that you support making October LGBTQ Youth Empowerment Month. Ask them to endorse this statement and call on Mayor Bloomberg to issue an official proclamation naming October as LGBTQ Youth Empowerment Month. We're also calling on the Mayor's Office to publicly present the proclamation at FIERCE's press conference on October 21st from 3-4pm at City Hall.

STEP THREE: JOIN FIERCE ON THE STEPS OF CITY HALL THIS THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2010 FROM 3:00-4:00PM as we hold a press conference to respond to the recent LGBTQ youth suicides and anti-LGBTQ attacks in New York City.

To LGBTQ Youth: Now is the time to organize together to build a stronger LGBTQ youth movement! If you are an LGBTQ youth of color between the ages of 13-24 in New York City, come to FIERCE and find out how you can make a difference.

If you are an LGBTQ youth outside of New York City, we encourage you to organize other youth to have your elected officials declare October LGBTQ Youth Empowerment Month, or other ideas that help you build the power you need to create change.

Visit us online at <http://www.fierceny.org>.