



PRESS RELEASE

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Media Contact:
Ellen Vaz: 646-336-6789, ext. 209
646-709-2064 (cell), ellen@fiercenyc.org

FIERCE Applauds District 3 City Council Candidates' Commitments to Include a 24-hour LGBTQ Youth Center on Pier 40

FIERCE calls on candidates to prioritize their commitments to LGBTQ youth if elected and take immediate action to ensure the West Village remains a safe space for the community.

(New York, NY) On Friday, August 28, 2009, FIERCE hosted a forum for District 3 City Council Candidates to specifically address concerns facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth. Speaking before a full house at FIERCE's Chelsea office, City Council Candidates Yetta Kurland and Maria Passannante-Derr reaffirmed their commitments to include a 24-hour LGBTQ youth center in the redevelopment of Pier 40 and vowed to restore city funding for LGBTQ youth services if elected.

Candidate Yetta Kurland also committed to increasing public access and community uses, as well as public oversight of developments, on the Hudson River Park. "We need to move development into a community-based model," Kurland stated. She later added that development shouldn't happen until the community has been able to fully vet it beyond the Community Board level. "It's important to reach outside of Community Boards when we talk about community, to be inclusive and make sure that everyone has a seat at the table."

Likewise, Maria Passannante-Derr added that she "firmly believes that developers have an obligation to the community to provide for long-term and short-term community needs—schools, education facilities, and the proposal for a 24-hour center for LGBT youth." FIERCE commends both candidates for their significant commitments to LGBTQ youth and looks forward to working with them to advance these commitments.

Once viewed by elected officials and residents as an organization with little political power to impact change in the West Village, FIERCE now stands as a firm and influential stakeholder. "Almost a decade since FIERCE was born, LGBTQ youth have shifted from being perceived outsiders to active community members who fearlessly work for a better West Village for everyone," stated Executive Director Rickke Mananzala.

"The success of the FIERCE Friday Forum illustrates our growing power and influence in West Village politics," added Elegost Rosado, Active FIERCE Member and Forum Moderator. "Even though most FIERCE members can't vote for District 3 candidates, it is clear that FIERCE and LGBTQ youth are recognized as voices that matter. We demonstrated our power tonight."

Incumbent candidate, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn was unable to attend the event due to a scheduling conflict, but sent the following statement:

“FIERCE has grown to be an important and respected advocacy group with members regularly attending numerous Community Board 2 and various waterfront group meetings. Most recently we have worked together on a number of issues, including ... strategizing around the future of Pier 40 and the need for LGBTQ dedicated space, particularly on the weekends and evening hours... I look forward to continuing to work with you on issues important to all LGBTQ youth throughout New York City.”

Quinn publically committed her support for the inclusion of LGBTQ-youth facilities on Pier 40 during a Democratic Primary Debate hosted by *Gay City News*, *Chelsea Now* and *The Villager* on August 13.

Disappointed by Quinn’s absence from the forum, FIERCE is currently seeking a meeting with her to discuss the organization’s *Our S.P.O.T. (Safe Place to Organize Together) Campaign*, which includes a [plan for a 24-hour LGBTQ youth center](#) and [policy recommendations](#) to keep the West Village waterfront a safe space for the entire community.

“If re-elected, one of the first things on Quinn’s agenda should be a direct, face-to-face meeting with FIERCE,” stated Desiree Marshall, Lead Organizer. “It is crucial that Quinn work directly with LGBTQ youth of color and endorse our policy recommendations that prioritize the creation of public space, preserve community uses, increase community decision-making power, and stop over-development in the Hudson River Park. If our elected officials, including Quinn, refuse to fight for these legislative changes, the LGBTQ youth center, schools, athletic fields, and other community uses desperately needed on the waterfront could be easily flanked by private mega-development projects,” concluded Marshall.

To learn more about FIERCE’s campaigns, visit <http://www.fiercenyc.org/index.php?s=94>

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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>