

BREAK

in collaboration with

NCCD | National Council on
Crime & Delinquency



We Deserve Better

A Report on Policing in New Orleans

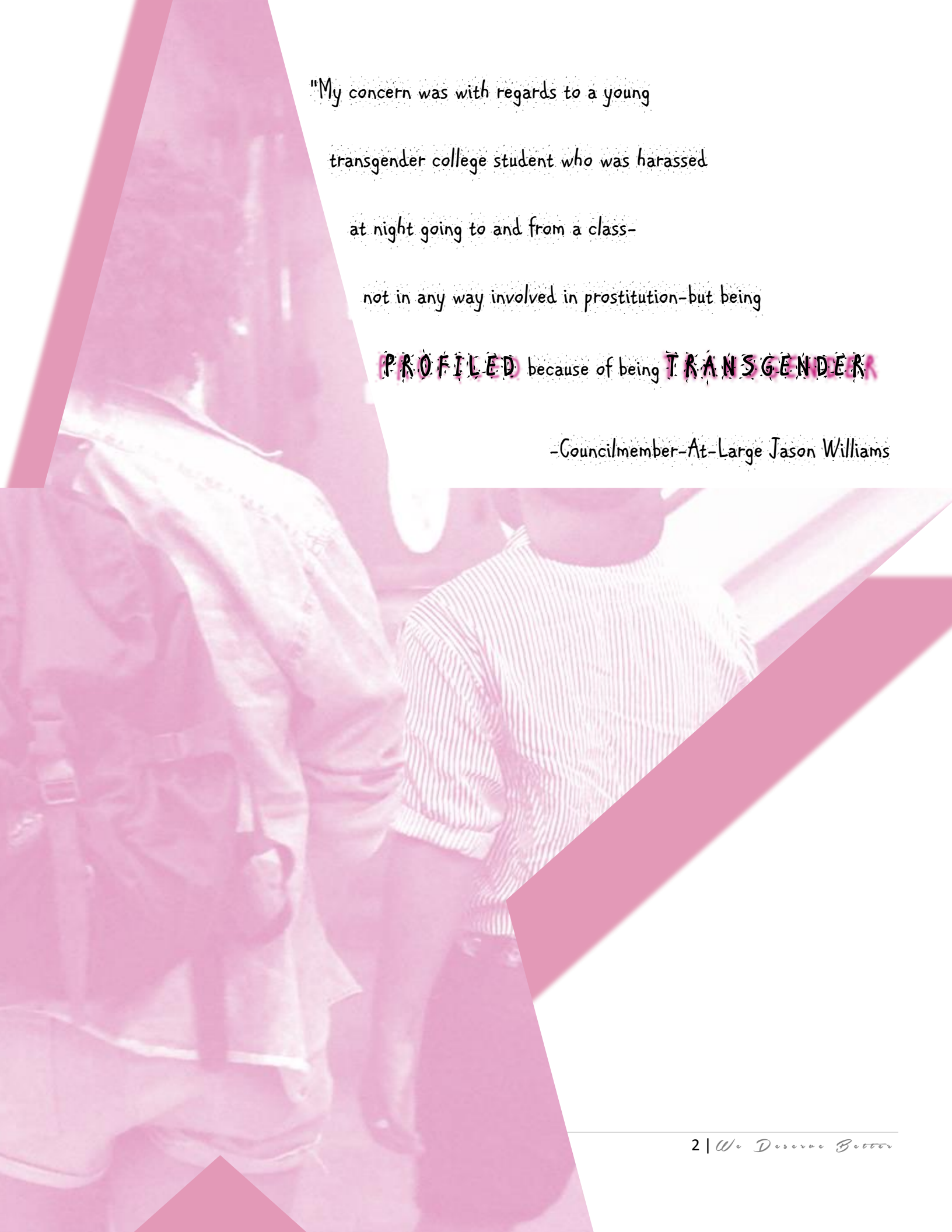
By and For

Queer and Trans Youth of Color

We Deserve Better

A report by the members of BreakOUT!

With support from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency



"My concern was with regards to a young transgender college student who was harassed at night going to and from a class- not in any way involved in prostitution-but being **PROFILED** because of being **TRANSGENDER**

-Councilmember-At-Large Jason Williams

Credits:

Report Editors:

Lhundyn Fernandez, Report Editor
Kaya Williams, Report Editor

Editing Support By:

Shaena Johnson
Nate Faulk
Ja'Leah Shavers
Wesley Ware
Lydia Pelot-Hobbs

Timeline Committee:

Lhundyn Fernandez, Giselle Brooks, Lily A. Sherry, Ciara Aaliyah Love,
Jonathan Willis
Supported by: Nate Faulk

Listening Committee:

Co'Bella Monroe, Lhundyn Fernandez, L'lerret Ailith, Bonnie Dobard
*Supported by: Derwin Wilright, Jr.,
Nate Faulk*

Next Steps Committee:

Lhundyn Fernandez, Sem'Miyah Breaud
Supported by: Nate Faulk

Introduction Committee:

Jonathan Willis, Diamond D'Maree
Supported by: Milan Nicole Sherry

Makin' It Pretty Committee:

Lhundyn Fernandez, Co'Bella Monroe, Bonnie Dobard, Akayla Franklin,
Keisha Cobb, Lily A. Sherry, Trinity Collins, Keira, Marion Jones, Kyron
*Supported by: Derwin Wilright, Jr.,
Milan Nicole Sherry*

Data Committee:

Diamond D'Maree, Jonathan Willis
Supported by: Milan Nicole Sherry

Data Analysis, Training, and Support By:

National Council on Crime and Delinquency
Angela Irvine, PhD, Director of Research
Aisha Canfield, MPP, Program Associate
Jessica Roa, MS, Senior Research Associate
Adore Scott, Research Assistant

Shouts Out & Appreciation To:

Women With a Vision

Human Rights Watch

BreakOUT! Core Member Leaders

BreakOUT! Staff

BreakOUT! Advisory Board

Young Women's Empowerment Project for ongoing inspiration

All the brave and resilient LGBTQ youth in New Orleans

who were willing to share their stories with us

This project was supported by the Sociological Initiatives Foundation.

Additional funding from Tides Out-of-Home Youth Fund, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice,
Criminal Justice Initiative of the Solidago Foundation,
Cricket Island Foundation, Foundation for a Just Society
Greater New Orleans Foundation
Hill-Snowden Foundation
Liberty Hill Queer Youth Fund
Trans Justice Funding Project

Copyright © 2014

About Breakout!

BreakOUT! is a youth-led, membership-based organization that seeks to end the criminalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth to build a safer and more just New Orleans. We build on the rich cultural tradition of resistance in the South to build the power of LGBTQ youth ages 13-25 and directly impacted by the criminal justice system through youth organizing, healing justice, and leadership development programs.

www.youthbreakout.org



About NCCD

NCCD is a nonprofit social justice research organization that promotes just and equitable social systems for individuals, families, and communities through research, public policy, and practice. We envision a just society in which people are safe and supported in their communities and treated with dignity by the systems that serve them. Our mission is to promote just and equitable social systems for individuals, families, and communities through research, public policy, and practice. For more than 100 years, our research has informed better system responses at all points of contact. We work to help protect children from abuse and neglect and to create safe and rehabilitative justice systems for youth and adults. Within these systems we also study the unique concerns of girls, LGBT individuals, and overrepresented racial and ethnic groups.

www.nccdglobal.org

NCCD

Executive Summary



WE DESERVE BETTER

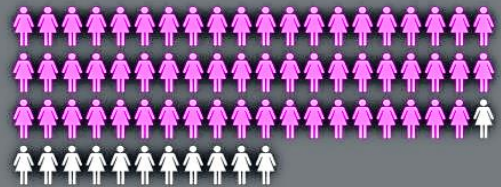
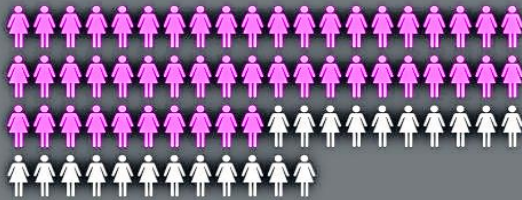
REPORT

2014

For the past year, BreakOUT! youth members have been collecting data and researching LGBTQ youth experiences with the New Orleans Police Department.

Transgender People* Called Slur by NOPD Compared to Cisgender LGBTQ

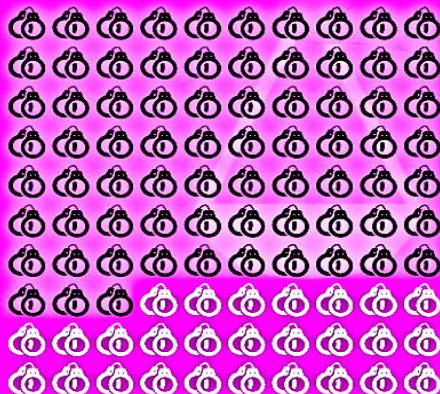
Transgender People* Asked for Sexual Favor by NOPD Officer



* Majority of respondents were transgender women with very few transgender men represented among the sample

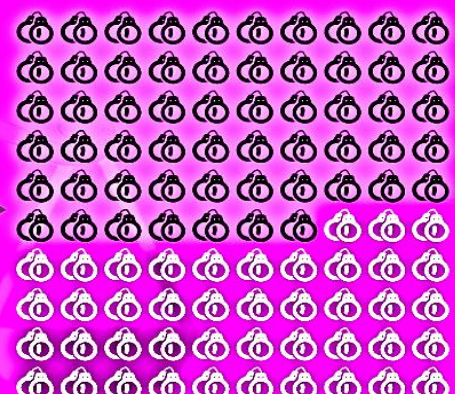
50% transgender respondents
22% cisgender (LGBQ) respondents

59% transgender respondents
12% cisgender (LGBQ) respondents



LGBTQ people of color who have been stopped by police compared to white LGBTQ people

87%



Transgender people who have been stopped by police compared to cisgender LGBQ people

Purpose

BreakOUT! created this report in an effort to:

- ★ Educate other young people on our experiences and work
- ★ Educate decision-makers in New Orleans on our experiences and work
- ★ Maintain pressure on the City to implement policing reforms
- ★ Measure the effectiveness of ongoing policing reforms
- ★ Document our stories and our strategies
- ★ Work with NCCD to learn research and data collection skills
- ★ Establish ourselves as the experts on our issues and solutions
- ★ Prove to ourselves we could do it

BreakOUT! also created this report to show how criminalization encompasses more than just policing. There's all sorts of things that lead people to be "criminalized," including homelessness.

Lastly, we wanted to talk about our some of our new work to Starve The Beast- or "starving" the system by preventing arrests and incarceration. Our Know Your Rights work teaches LGBTQ young people and other community members how to protect their rights on the street and in court and hold the police accountable to implement reforms; our Building Our Power Institute is training the next generation of leaders educated on our movement history, political education, and youth organizing strategies to make change in our community; our GED program is curbing the school-to-prison pipeline and is tailored to fit the needs of our people; and our Healing Justice work, now called Healing As Resistance Together (HART), is helping us to maintain our resiliency through emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being .

Introduction from BreakOUT!

For the past three years, as a part of our We Deserve Better Campaign, BreakOUT! has been surveying young LGBTQ (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and queer/ questioning) individuals on their experiences and interactions with the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD). BreakOUT! understands that many trans women, including young trans women of color live below the poverty line. BreakOUT! is also aware that low-income communities of color face higher rates of policing and arrests.

Many transgender women, particularly transgender women of color, are negatively profiled in New Orleans. This particular population is generally harassed by police and arrested for prostitution, whether they are engaging in the sex trade, or not. Many people in New Orleans refer to this phenomenon as "Walking While Trans," similar to the notion of racial profiling in traffic stops being referred to as "Driving While Black."

LGBTQ people who are restricted from housing, education, jobs, and medical care may be forced to rely on survival crimes including trespassing, loitering, retail theft, involvement in the sex trades or street economies, and pick pocketing[w2].

Once arrested, transgender women are subjected to harsh discrimination, violence, sexual assaults, and harassment at the hands of police officers and correctional officers. Incarcerated transgender women at Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) are placed in sex-segregated facilities, prohibited from taking hormones, and stripped of gender-affirming clothing. Transgender women are often placed in harsher conditions than cisgender (or non-transgender) inmates, including solitary confinement and medical wards. The effects of institutional oppression, poverty, and criminalization are all barriers to the liberation of our youth.

Having completed surveys and gathered stories of LGBTQ youth in New Orleans, BreakOUT! is now in a position to inform others of the injustices and malpractices we've witnessed in organizing LGBTQ youth in New Orleans. We have strategically planned the best method to present the findings of our We Deserve Better Campaign, and decided to present our findings in this report! The We Deserve Better report chronicles stories, tragedies, deaths, statistics, actions, events, failures and successes of our We Deserve Better Campaign.

This report contains data drawn from surveys of LGBTQ youth describing criminalization, stories of Black transgender women from various backgrounds, a timeline of events for the campaign, recommendations from the community, and next steps for BreakOUT! This report was created to further our mission- to end the criminalization of LGBTQ youth in New Orleans!

This document is a manifestation of love, hard labor/research, bravery, and vulnerability of BreakOUT! members and the entire community. This report is a call for equal treatment and creating or strengthening support structures which promote mobility in the areas of safety, housing, health, education, and employment. We hope this report will help you rise to action- or at least support the young people who are organizing against forces which continue to exploit, harm, and overall enslave us in the criminal justice system.





Introduction

by the

National Council on

Crime and Delinquency

Maltreatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender nonconforming people by police has been documented in a number of reports around the country. Transgender women of color are particularly susceptible to harassment and abuse.*

This report by BreakOUT!, a group of LGBTQ youth in New Orleans who are impacted by the criminal/ juvenile justice system, shares new survey and interview data from New Orleans, LA that reinforces previous findings¹. BreakOUT! researchers found that current policing practices continue to implicitly and explicitly target LGBTQ people with a disproportionate impact on youth, people of color, and transgender or gender nonconforming people. Statistical analysis of 86 surveys shows that nonwhite, transgender women (compared with white, cisgender men and women) are far more likely to be approached, harassed, called a homophobic expletives, pressured to perform sexual favors, or stopped and treated like a sex worker by a police officer in New Orleans. Seeing the specific numbers is staggering. White and cisgender people—who are all lesbian, gay or bisexual—have starkly different relationships with the New Orleans police compared with transgender people of color.

Yet it's the interviews that were completed by BreakOUT! members that bring these numbers to life. The stories of Wednesday, Lee Lee and Tina bring make the terror of police encounters real. The stories illustrate an important lesson that BreakOUT! members want us to remember: They are not the "rats" that others have depicted. "We are surviving. We are resilient. We are creative and resourceful."

This report doesn't simply provide additional empirical evidence on the mistreatment of LGBTQ people by police. The process of collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data has helped build leadership and research skills within BreakOUT! members were the instrument developers, survey collectors, and data analysts. As such, this report positions BreakOUT! members, most of whom identify as African-American/black transgender women living in New Orleans, as the experts over their own experiences and lives.

Through this work, BreakOUT! will continue to show the human face of its members and put forth their recommendations and visions for a safer city. BreakOUT! will use the results compiled to identify strategic campaigns towards the reduction of police harassment and abuse against LGBTQ young people and towards safety for all.

* Galvan, Frank H., and Mohson Bazargan. 2012. Interactions of Latina Transgender Women with Law Enforcement. Policy Brief, Bienestar Human Services, Los Angeles, CA; Make the Road New York. 2012. "Transgressive Policing: Police Abuse of LGBTQ Communities of Color in Jackson Heights. New York, NY; Best Practices Policy Project, Streetwise and Safe, and Trafficking Victims Advocacy Project of the Legal Aid Society of New York. 2014. "Criminalization of Transgender, Transsexual and Gender Nonconforming People of Color." Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, New York, NY

“These are issues we face. Our lives are at stake. When we DEFEND ourselves, we are still

PUNISHED and we face murder charges.* As transgender women and gender non-conforming

youth, we can't win for losing. We worry about our SAFETY, our HEALTH.

The HIV rates are so high. There are HIV CRIMINALIZATION laws for those that are positive. The odds are stacked against us.”

“BreakOUT! is putting our SWEAT and TEARS into this

WORK to try to make a better New Orleans so

that we're not PROFILED by

the POLICE.”



* For more information on the criminalization of LGBTQ people for self-defense, see: <http://www.youthbreakout.org/content/breakout-joins-organizations-calling-charges-be-dropped-against-lgbtq-survivors-defending>

We Deserve Better Campaign

Timeline Highlights

This report is the end result of several years of hard work by BreakOUT! members and supporters. The following timeline shows some of the highlights of our campaign that supports this report.

It is important to note that organizing against police violence in New Orleans is nothing new and that we are humbled by the work of people who came before us, from the Black Panther Party defending the Desire Projects to those who organized in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

2011:

BreakOUT! Launches We Deserve Better Campaign

BreakOUT! officially “comes out” on International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia with 6 Founding Members, 5 Black transgender young women and 1 Black gay-identified young man. Thanks to Women With a Vision and other community partners, we host forums with the Department of Justice who is investigating the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) and conduct Know Your Rights trainings with the Independent Police Monitor. We begin to have weekly membership meetings and soon after, launch We Deserve Better, a campaign to end discriminatory policing practices in New Orleans, particularly against Black transgender young women and other LGBTQ youth.

“When we first came together as BreakOUT! in 2011, we did a Problem Tree activity. That surfaced a lot of issues and experiences at the hands of NOPD, and was really intense. But when something is a norm, you don’t know any better. It wasn’t until I became politically conscious through BreakOUT! that I started to realize that what I was experiencing was not okay...the way people were treating me just because I was a trans woman.”

2012: BreakOUT! Releases Guide to Help Keep LGBTQ Youth Safe on the Streets of New Orleans

The "BreakOUT! Guide to Street Safety and Preserving Your Rights with the Police" is a 4-page guide to knowing your rights with the NOPD. Unlike other "Know Your Rights" guides, the BreakOUT! guide recognizes the complexity and risk involved in advocating for your rights and is also a tool for member outreach and development. The guide includes information on preventing escalation, illegal searches, and other issues that may occur from harsh policing practices.



October 2012:

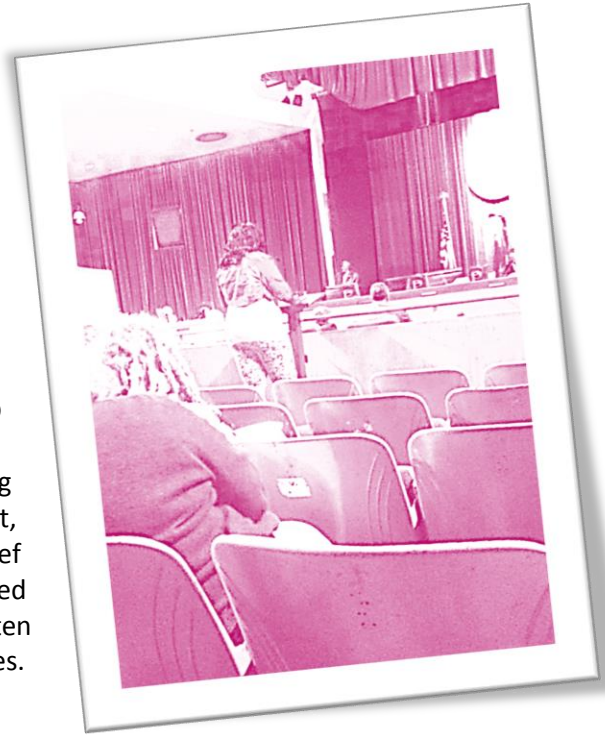
BreakOUT! Presents at the New Orleans City Council Criminal Justice Subcommittee Meeting

Courageous youth shared testimony on behalf of members who had been brutalized, targeted, and discriminated against by the NOPD and were afraid to attend. BreakOUT! receives verbal commitment to meet with NOPD prior to adopting any LGBTQ policies.

2013:

BreakOUT! and Allies Send Over 300 Emails to Mayor Landrieu, NOPD Chief

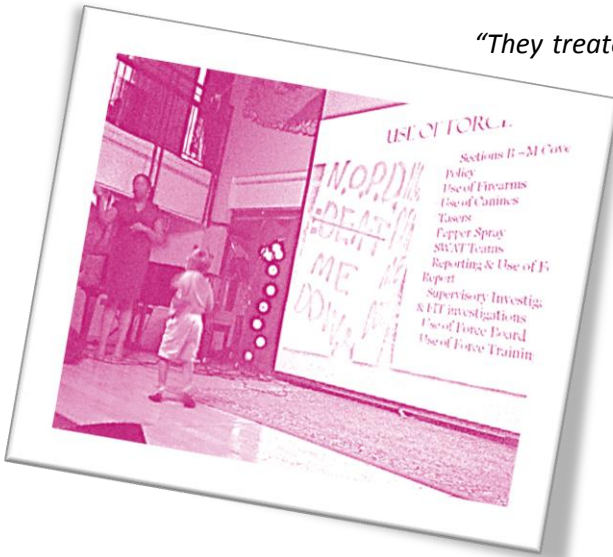
In January, 2013, upon hearing news that the NOPD was quickly passing policies to avoid the impending consent decree without community input, BreakOUT! and allies sent over 300 emails to Mayor Landrieu and Chief Serpas to demand they keep their promise to LGBTQ youth, which included holding meetings to discuss policies. BreakOUT! receives written commitment to meet with NOPD prior to their adopting any LGBTQ policies.



2013:

BreakOUT! holds “Stop the Frisk: Rally Against Racial and Gender Profiling”

In May, 2013, BreakOUT! and other sponsored a rally at NOPD headquarters to deliver a public statement, signed by over 15 community organizations to call for a public meeting to discuss drafting policies to end racial and gender profiling. Over 75 people attend, but the door is locked on the community.



“They treated us as if we were subhuman and not worthy of a response. We came peacefully to deliver this statement, which called on the NOPD to publicly discuss draft policies to end profiling. A locked door was the only response to the community’s outcry,” said Jada, a Latina transgender citizen who shared her story of being profiled and falsely arrested at the rally. Others at the rally also shared their stories of racial and gender profiling practiced by NOPD officers,” said Jada, a Latina transgender woman who shared her story of being profiled and falsely arrested at the rally.

2013: BreakOUT! Meets with New Orleans Police Department

After ignoring our call for a public process through the delivery of our statement, Stop & Frisk Affects Us All, BreakOUT! was invited to meet with the NOPD to go over a draft of the NOPD policy. Although we requested our community partners be invited to the table, our email went unanswered, prompting us to bring our friends to the closed door meeting with us. At the last minute, BreakOUT! was able to get a representative from the Congress of Day Laborers, STAND With Dignity, and someone from the Independent Police Monitor to attend with us.

2013:

BreakOUT! Celebrates Policy on the 44th Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, Launches Know Your Rights Strategy in Response [5]

BreakOUT! launched a new Know Your Rights strategy in response to the New Orleans Police Department's Policy 402 with ideas gathered from youth members and other youth across the United States! While we continue to engage with the Department of Justice as they implement the Federal Consent Decree, providing recommendations for an even stronger policy with true community engagement, and conducting community-based research to position ourselves as experts over our own lives, we are also educating our communities on their rights with law enforcement.



2014:

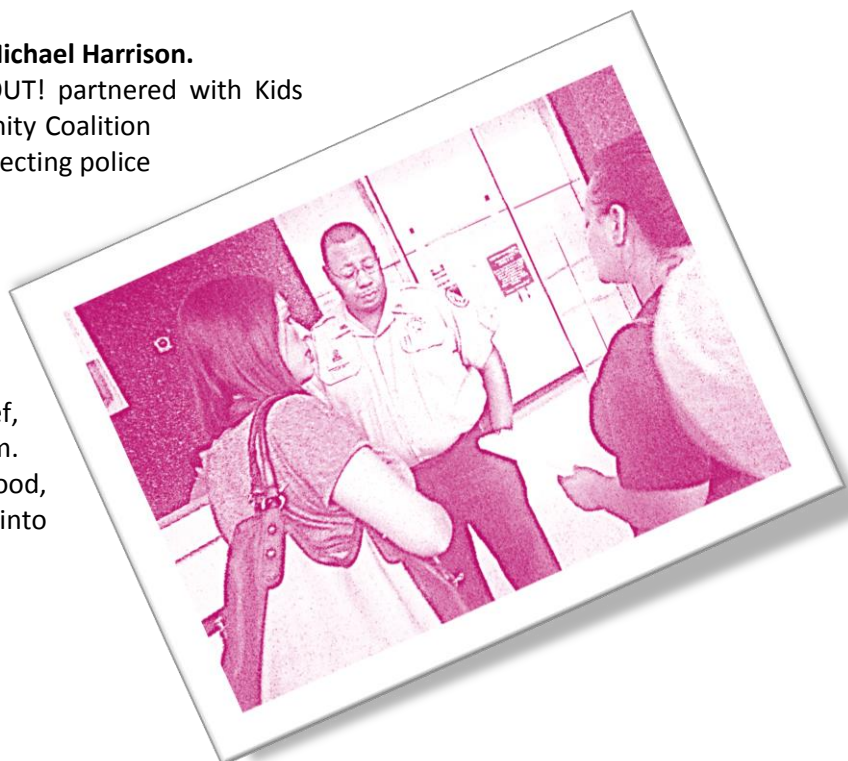
BreakOUT! Presents in City Council with Human Rights Watch, Women With a Vision

A coalition consisting of community partners and The Human Rights Watch presented the clear issues with creating and drafting policy which placed LGBTQ youth, people without homes, and many residents of New Orleans who deal with stigma at the cross sections of criminalization. Core Member Leader Lhudyn Fernandez strategically led BreakOUT! using the stories of police harassment and trans youth resiliency, as well as highlighting the inconsistencies and in HB 1158, constantly building to the expertise and power of our group. This sparked debate between city officials, police officials, and community members, later becoming part of a conversation on body cameras and the NOPD.

2014:

BreakOUT!, ReThink, etc. meet with new Police Chief, Michael Harrison.

Once again relying on our core value of unity, BreakOUT! partnered with Kids Rethink New Orleans, in addition to the Youth Opportunity Coalition to address the importance of community in out when selecting police department leadership and selection. With the previous Chief Ronal Serpas stepping down, we saw an opportunity for youth in New Orleans to have a voice in what the new Chief should be held accountable for! Over a series of four weeks, youth came together to share skills, practicing upholding their rights with NOPD in the street, building a shared vision for the NOPD Chief, and then presented said demands at a youth led forum. What resulted was a powerful collaboration of good food, good connections, and building of multiple movements into shared goals, youth input and visibility.



Methodology

BreakOUT! developed a short, easy-to-read survey that was distributed and collected by peer researchers from within the LGBT community in New Orleans. The survey contained demographic questions as well as categorical questions about how respondents were treated by police.

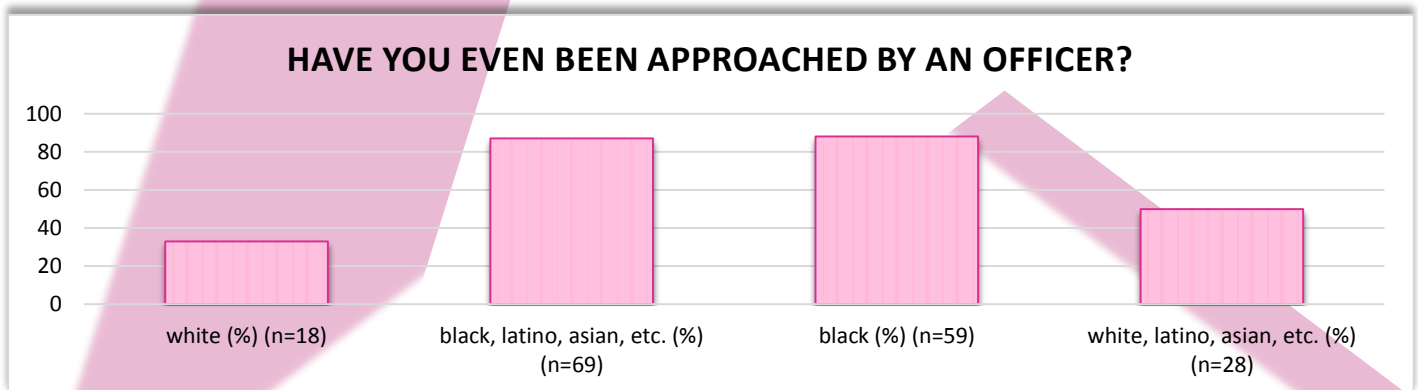
Why Peer Researchers? “We live it everyday. Our Black youth are being taken off the streets. The criminal justice system is working and doing what it was designed to do from the beginning. I have a family member doing 150 years in prison- it’s something that isn’t new to us. And we’re the experts on what needs to change.”

BreakOUT! members focused primarily on collecting surveys from Black transgender women. Surveys were collected at clubs and bars frequented by LGBTQ young people, on the streets, with partner organizations and agencies, and in other social circles of peers.



Analysis of the 86 collected surveys shows that:

- ★ Respondents varied in age from 15 to 66.
- ★ 26 (29.9%) respondents were male, 15 (17.2%) were female, 40 (46.0%) were transgender women, 3 (3.4%) were transgender men, one (1.1%) respondent identified as “third gender” and one (1.1%) respondent identified as “gender nonconforming male.”
- ★ 20 (23%) straight respondents (16 of these respondents also identify as transgender, third gender, or gender nonconforming); 21 (24.1%) respondents are gay; 5 (5.7%) respondents are lesbian; 6 (6.9%) respondents are bisexual; 4 (4.6%) respondents are queer; 1 (1.1%) respondent identifies as gay/queer; and 4 (4.6%) respondents identify as lesbian/queer.
- ★ 59 (67.8%) respondents are Black or African American; 18 (20.7%) respondents are white; 2 (2.3%) respondents are Native American; 7 (8%) respondents are mixed race, and one (1.1%) respondent is Latino.



“Race, power, and oppression is felt deeply by our youth.”

After collecting surveys, BreakOUT! members and staff partnered with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency to analyze the data. BreakOUT! and NCCD completed descriptive, analyses of variance, and binary logistic regression statistics tests to understand how the police in New Orleans differentially treat people across gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, and race. This partnership, as with other pieces of the research process, was designed to build BreakOUT! members’ research skills through the experience of meticulously collecting and analyzing data.



WAIT- whaaa? We learned that “descriptive, analyses of variance, and binary logistic regression statistics tests” are all ways that researchers use to figure out whether differences between groups are accurate or not, and to measure how much of an effect those differences have.

In addition, BreakOUT! members collected ten semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ individuals. These interviews allowed BreakOUT! members to ask questions supplementing the survey research while also allowing respondents to shape and inform the direction of the information being collected. Respondents were able to discuss issues BreakOUT! members had not previously identified, emphasize points BreakOUT! had not given as much attention to, and challenge assumptions of the research. This allowed the research process to be dynamic and responsive to participants. The interviews also personalized the survey data by illuminating the real impacts the NOPD practices are having on people’s ability to live full and dignified lives.



Summary of Data

New survey data* on how the New Orleans police treat LGBTQ people shows that there are dramatic differences across gender identity, gender expression, and race. When analyzing the 87 responses and comparing people of color** and white participants we see that LGBTQ people of color are far more likely to be harassed than LGBTQ white people. Specifically, we found:

- ★ **87%** of people of color respondents have been approached by police compared with **33%** of white respondents
- ★ **57%** of people of color respondents were harassed during the encounter compared with **6%** of white respondents
- ★ **43%** of people of color respondents have been called a homophobic expletive by police compared with **11%** of white respondents
- ★ **75%** of people of color respondents feel they have been targeted by police for their sexual orientation or gender identity or gender expression compared with **24%** of white respondents
- ★ **43%** of people of color respondents have been asked for a sexual favor by police compared with **11%** of white respondents
- ★ **52%** of people of color respondents have called the police and not been taken seriously compared with **11%** of white respondents
- ★ **42%** of people of color respondents have called the police for help and then been arrested themselves compared with **0%** of white respondents
- ★ **54%** of people of color respondents have been assumed to be in the sex trade (or a sex worker or “prostitute”) compared with **17%** of white respondents

When comparing cisgender and transgender respondents, we found that transgender people are far more likely to be harassed by police than cisgender (LGB) people. Specifically, we found:

- ★ **87% of transgender respondents have been approached by police compared with 66% of cisgender respondents**
- ★ **50% of transgender respondents have been called a homophobic or transphobic expletive by police compared with 22% of cisgender respondents**
- ★ **84% of transgender respondents feel they have been targeted by police for their sexual orientation or gender identity or gender expression compared with 45% of cisgender respondents**
- ★ **59% of transgender respondents have been asked for a sexual favor by police compared with 12% of cisgender respondents**
- ★ **64% of transgender respondents have been assumed to be in the sex trade or a sex worker compared with 26% of cisgender respondents**

From this data, we can confirm what we already knew from our lived experiences- that transgender people of color are experiencing discrimination from police in particular ways (both on the basis of gender identity or expression and race) and are more likely to experience police harassment than their cisgender or white peers.

**We only report those differences that are statistically significant ($p < .05$).*

**** A note on our breakdown of race/ethnicity** – For purposes of this report, since most respondents were either Black or white and few were Latin@, Native American/American Indian, or mixed race, we use the category “people of color” when we want to include those respondents but did not have enough respondents in either category to reliably break the data down further by race/ ethnicity. We recognize that more research needs to be done to accurately capture the experiences of people of color communities who are not Black/ African American.

Survey and Listening Project

We agreed that data is necessary to support our findings, however, **our survey respondents are not numbers or objects, and it is important that personal stories are told to illustrate the crisis of harsh and discriminatory policing in New Orleans.**

The stories of individual people bring these numbers to life. Below we share portions of our interviews that highlight the degradation experienced by BreakOUT! members and other transgender youth/ young adults in New Orleans.

The Stop: Targeting and Profiling

During the Super Bowl in 2013, police got on loud speakers and shouted at transgender women at night calling them “dudes” and obscenities.

In our research, BreakOUT! found that 87% of people of color respondents had been approached by a police officer in the past year, compared with 33% of white respondents, showing a disproportionate number of people of color experiencing police intervention in their daily lives. Further, when complicated by gender identity or expression, 75% of people of color respondents felt that they were targeted because of their gender identity or expression, compared to 24% of white respondents. When broken down by gender, 87% of transgender respondents had been approached by police compared with 66% of cisgender respondents. Of those, 84% of transgender respondents felt they had been targeted by police for their sexual orientation or gender identity or gender expression compared with 45% of cisgender respondents.

This suggests that transgender people of color are profiled in unique and particular ways- both for being people of color and also for being transgender or gender non-conforming.

Hey you! Yes, you reading this report! Have you ever been walking up the street and a police officer stops you and asks you what you're doing? And you tell them you're walking and they respond, "You're in a known prostitution area." Then they ask you to do something sexual for them and they say that if you don't, they're gonna lock you up! I'm pretty sure that for most people, the answer is no. But for us young ladies, it's everyday life.

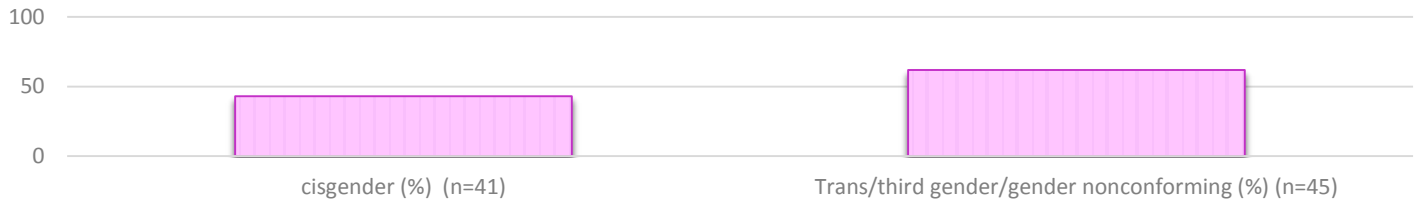
Police are trained to look for things that go against the norm. Things that might be unusual or “suspicious.” Things that might cause problems.*

Transgender people, by our very nature, are seen as being against the norm.

But really, it all comes down to gender norms. When you're transgender you're pushing against gender norms.

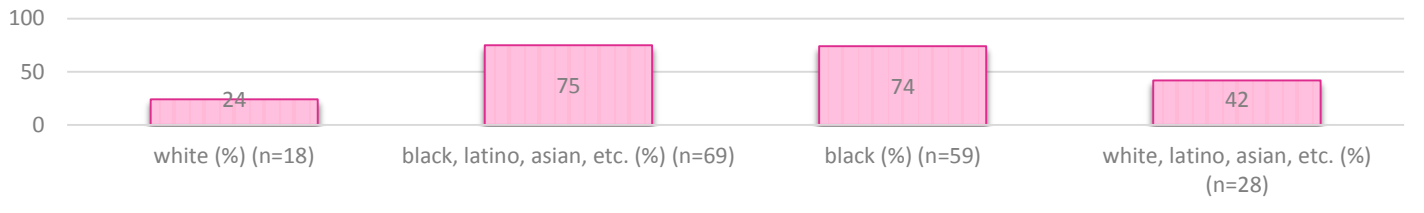
Whether police realize they're doing that or not, we think that's one reason why we get stopped a lot- especially gender non-conforming youth of color.

WHEN YOU WERE STOPPED BY NOPD, DID THEY GIVE YOU A REASON FOR STOPPING YOU?



Wednesday**, 20, informed BreakOUT! that NOPD always stops her for no reason. She has consistently experienced harsh treatment by NOPD officers. Wednesday says that when one of the officers that usually harasses her sees her walking, “He stops me just to %*@ with me.” Wednesday said that NOPD officers would talk negatively about her to others in her presence. When she attempts to correct the officers, they respond with, “What is your punk ass gonna do about it?”

DO YOU FEEL YOU WERE TARGETED FOR YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY?



DO YOU FEEL YOU WERE TARGETED FOR YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY?

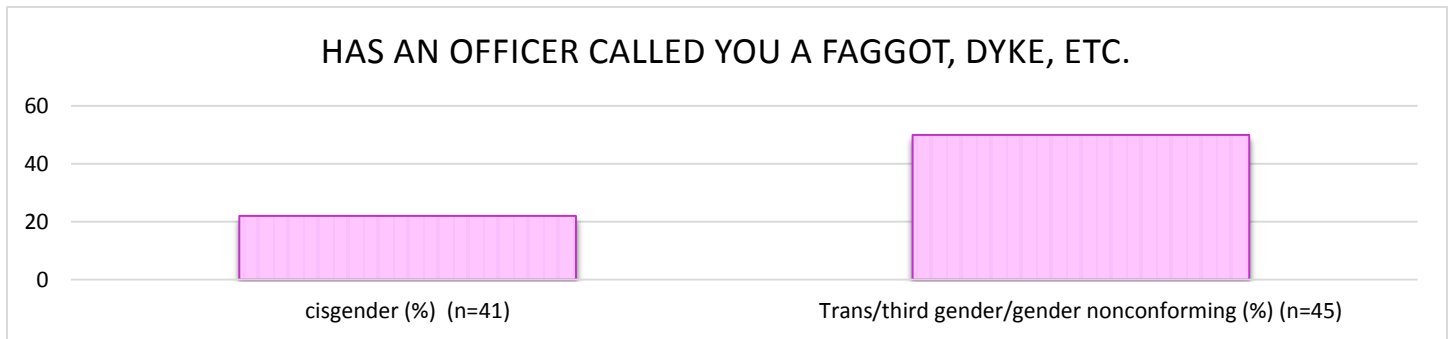


* For more information, check out the book *Queer (In)justice!*

** All names have been changed to protect the identity of our members and constituency.

Jee, 21, Black and transgender, informed BreakOUT! that one night after she had just moved to New Orleans, she was in the French Quarters walking down St. Louis St. when a car pulled on the side of her and asked her to “come here.” Jee said that she was initially nervous because she didn’t know the man. However, Jee decided to go to the car and talk to him.

The man asked her if she wanted to hang out with someone who is familiar with the city. Jee said that she didn’t think anything of it and agreed, but that within a few seconds, several uniformed officers came out of nowhere and arrested her for Solicitation for Crime Against Nature. Jee said that the officers called her names like he/she, shim, and a crossdresser. Jee said that she never felt so embarrassed in her life. Jee was 21 when this happened and sat for 90 days in Orleans Parish Prison.



New Orleans, LA is the incarceration capital of the world. Louisiana incarcerates people at a rate higher (per capita) than anywhere else in the country- and our country has an incarceration rate higher than anywhere else in the world.

The Wear Out: Harassment During Police Encounters

Some people assume all transgender women are sex workers or in the sex trade. But that's only ignorance of our society. Further- not all transgender women want to be looked at as sex symbols! Just how not all cisgender woman want to have children, be tired in a house cooking, cleaning, and watching Oprah 'til their husband comes home everyday- we don't all want to be seen as sex objects!

But lots of the harassment we experience from police is based on that- the assumption that we are all in the sex trade or that we all want to be seen as sex objects or that we want to be yelled at or “cat-called.”

Our research showed demonstrated differences between race and gender identity as related to profiling of transgender women as being involved in the sex trade or a sex worker. While only 26% of cisgender respondents had been assumed to be in the sex trade, over half (64%) of transgender respondents reported being profiled as being a sex worker. Likewise, 54% of people of color respondents had been assumed to be in the sex trade compared to only 17% of white respondents.

Lee-Lee is a young Black transgender woman who moved here for college and is a Sophomore at a local university. She is also a BreakOUT! member. In March 2014, Lee-Lee was leaving a BreakOUT! meeting at around 9:00 at night. Lee-Lee lives in a dormitory on her school campus and was walking back to her home

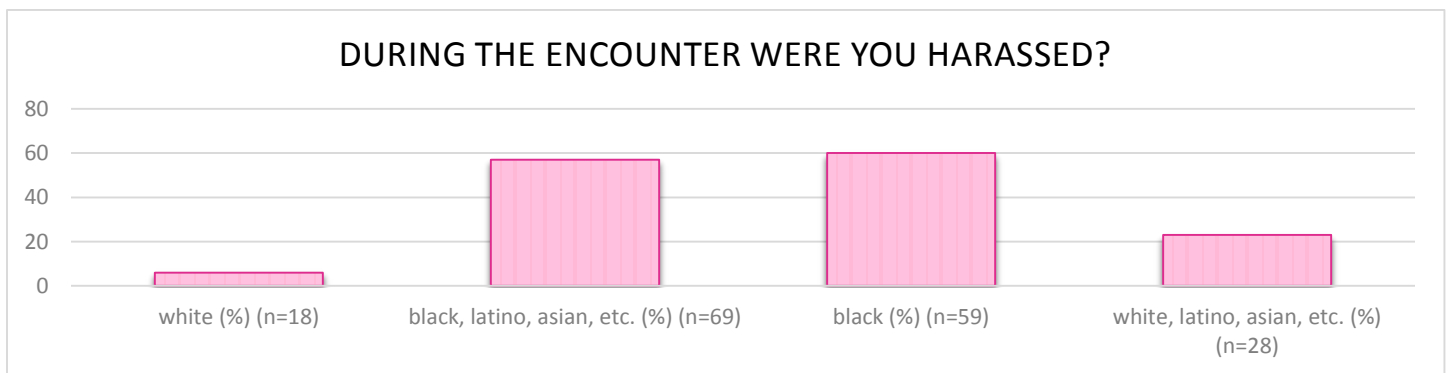
“As I was walking down the street, I noticed a white car inching toward me. I moved toward the side of the road to let the car go by but the driver rolled his window down. I immediately noticed he was a police officer by his uniform and NOPD emblem on his shirt. He had on his uniform but was riding in an unmarked vehicle at the time.

He looked at me and said something I didn’t understand so I asked him to repeat himself. He said, “What’s your sexy ass doing out? Where are you going?” I told him that I was heading to school and started walking again and he yelled, “You’re fine as F%\$!”

I started walking a little more briskly. Usually, I ignore men that approach me like that but how do you interact with a man with authority? It’s not unusual for men to stop, cat call, and degrade transgender women on the street but I’d never had an encounter like that with a police officer. Would he be angry if I rejected him? He could easily have forced me to have sex with him and who would have believed me if I told anyone--- a transgender woman of color in New Orleans?

As I was walking, I heard the cracking of rocks behind me letting me know that the car was moving. I let out a sigh of relief and continued on my way but to my right, the same car pulled up beside me again. The officer was following me.

The officer continued to yell sexually explicit things to me so I started to jog a little bit. He yelled “Where are you going?! HEY!” and I realized I was doing the wrong thing.



The officer continued to yell sexually explicit things to me so I started to jog a little bit. He yelled “Where are you going?! HEY!” and I realized I was doing the wrong thing.

You can’t run from the police!

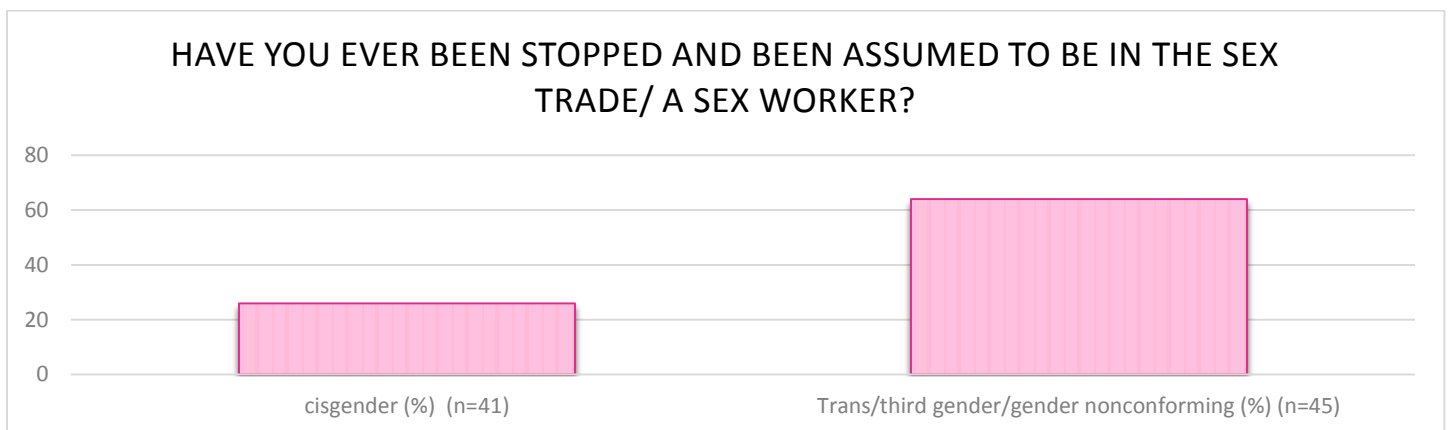
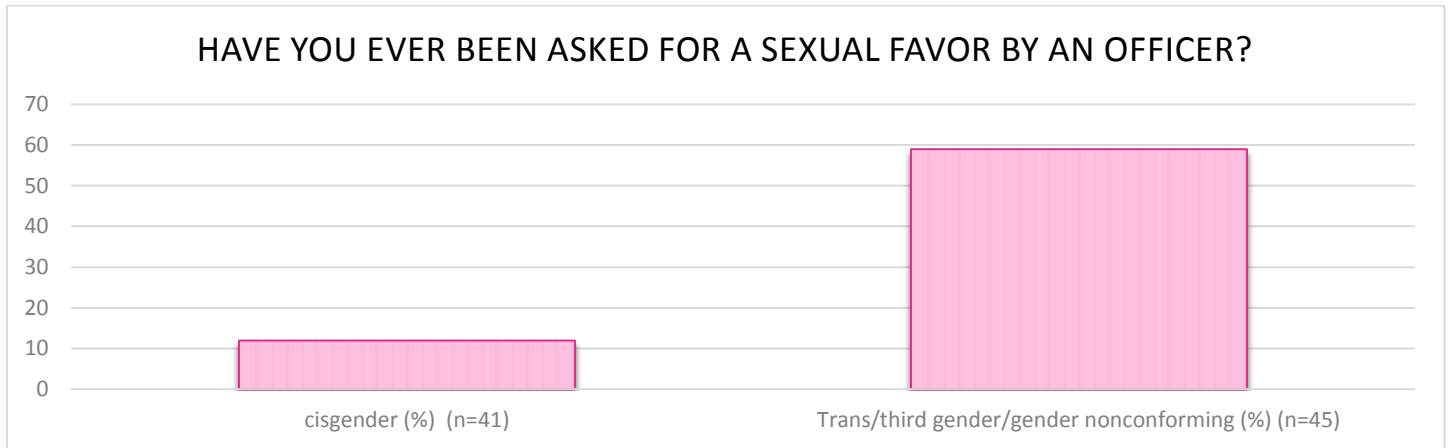
I pulled out my phone and turned toward the main road and called someone from the meeting who jumped in his car and rode to find me. I ran to an abandoned mechanic yard and the officer pulled off just as my friend drove up.

Prior to this, my only run-in with the police was when I was robbed a year ago. When I called the NOPD for help, the officers saw that I was transgender and refused to investigate the crime, accusing me of being a sex worker.

I continue to feel less and less protected by the police but now, not only do I feel unprotected, I feel threatened. I can walk in an area with cops on every corner and rather than feeling safe, I am in fear of losing my life, my dignity, or my freedom.

My story is only a small part of what the larger transgender community goes through, especially Black transgender young women and other LGBTQ youth of color.”

Lee-Lee’s story needs to be heard and so do the stories of countless other LGBTQ youth in New Orleans.

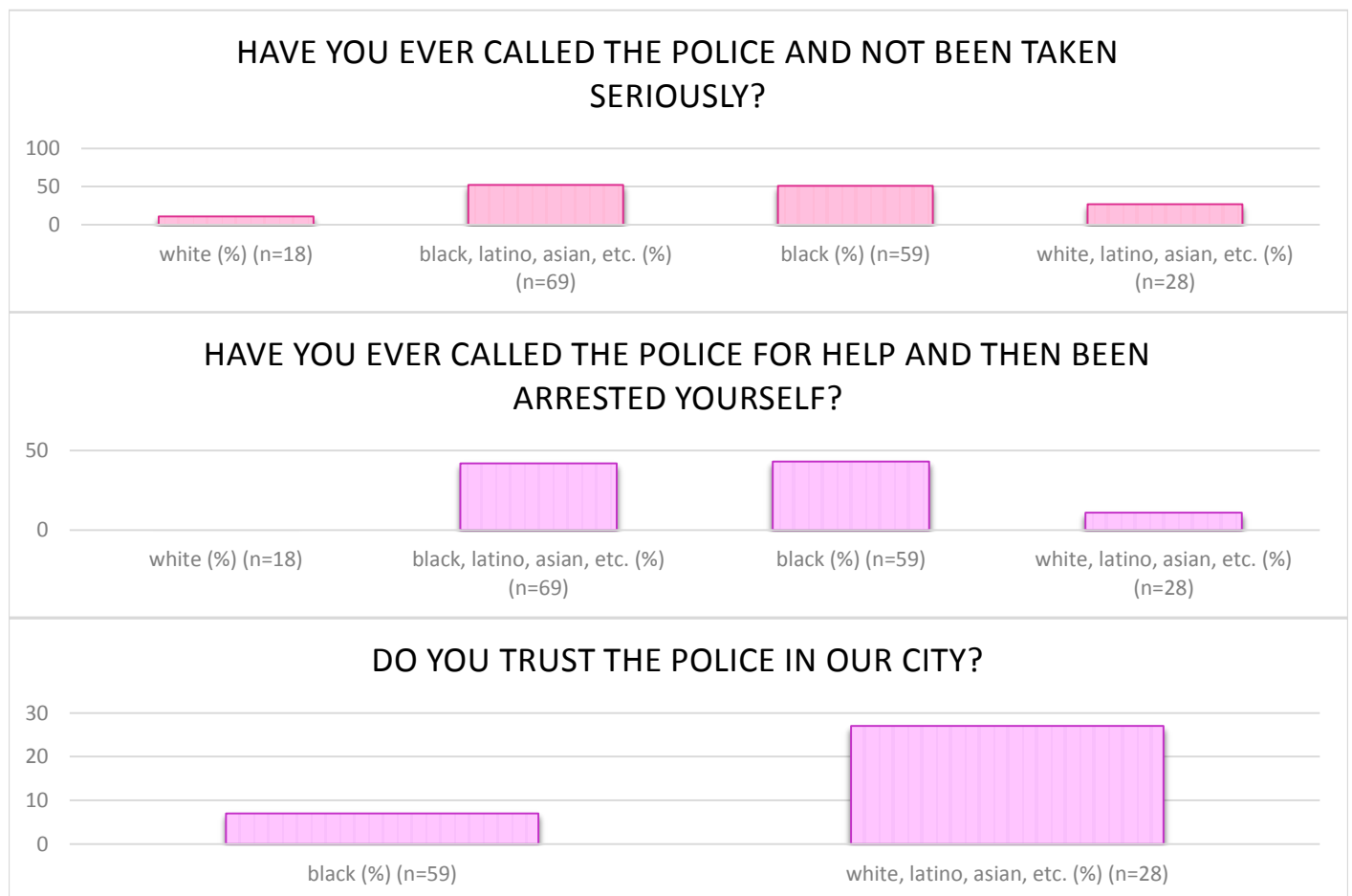


Where Do We Go for Help? Calling the Police for Help

Over half of our people of color respondents (52%) had called the police and not been taken seriously compared with 11% of white respondents. And 42% of people of color respondents have called the police for help and then been arrested themselves, compared with 0% of white respondents.

When asked, “Do you trust the police in your city?” 89% reported no, even if they’d never experienced police harassment before.

Tina says one evening she was walking to the store when two NOPD officers stopped her. When she asked why they stopped her, they responded, “we know what you’re out here doing so come get your booty selling ass over by the hood of this car and give me your ID.” Tina said she felt so disrespected and surprised that all she could do is stand there and look at them. Tina says that she gave the officers her ID and they began to run her name. After her information came back clear, the police let her go but while Tina was walking away the police yelled out a few more rude things to her. Tina says when she went into the store and came back out the NOPD officers were still sitting in the parking lot of the store. Tina then proceeded to walk back and she notice that the officers were following her. Tina says she was so nervous and that she just knew they were about to mess with her again but she made it back safely. Tina says she doesn’t have any advice to give to the NOPD anymore because she believes that they are going to do what they want to do anyway and said, “I’m so over it.”



Not Your Rats.

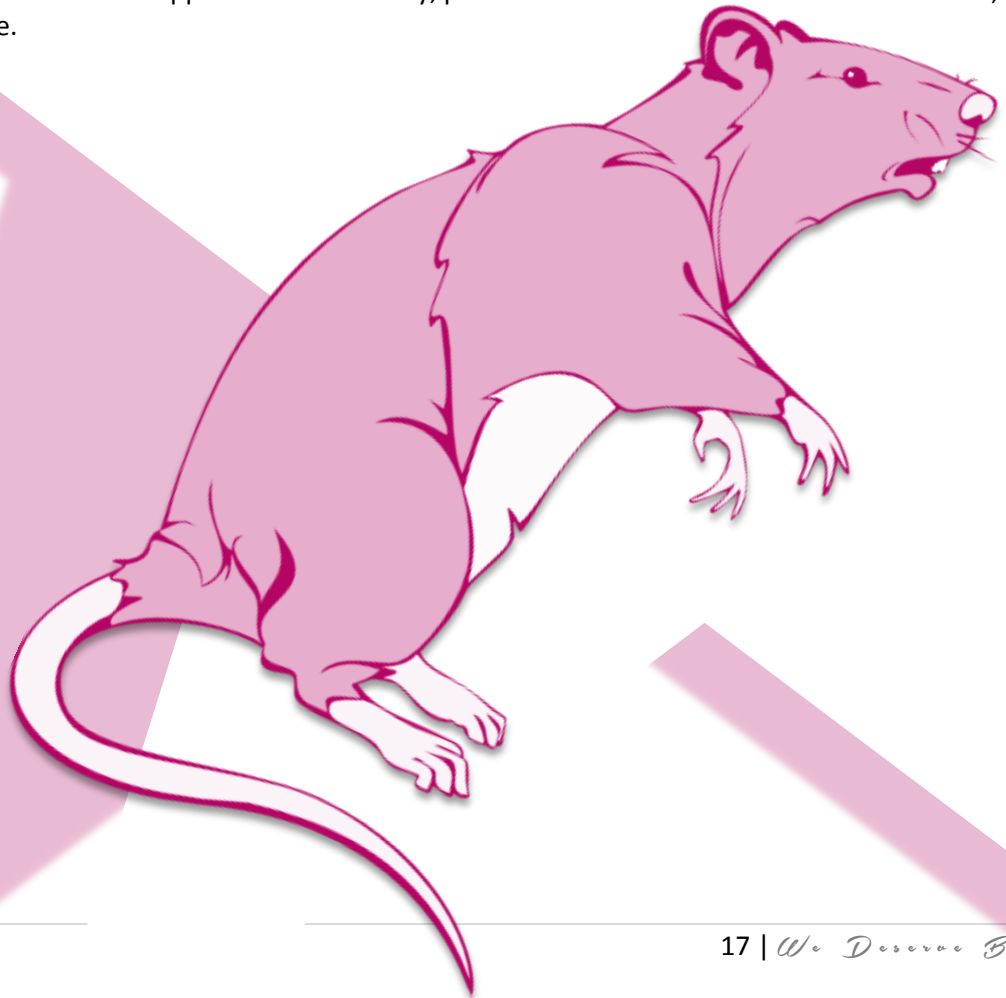
Recently, we saw something written about us from someone who was supposedly an ally and wanted to support us in our work. She said we were living on the streets like rats.

We're using this platform to tell the City of New Orleans that *we are not your rats.*

We're doing the best we can in a City that has provided us very few resources. We are surviving. We are resilient. We are creative and resourceful. We have each other's backs.

We can tell you exactly what is wrong in this city and exactly what needs to change. We can "power map" the city players and decision-makers and tell you how our struggles are linked to other struggles for self-determination. We can tell you about historical resistance to policing in LGBTQ and people of color communities. We can stretch a dollar. We can sit through the funeral of one of our friends and not say a word about the fact that the preacher keeps calling her "he" and the family dressed her in a suit. And if the preacher walks away from the funeral when he finds out who is in that casket, we can stand up and conduct the funeral ourselves. We don't want your pity.

One of our real allies, a mentor and member of our Advisory Board, Deon Haywood, once told us that every day we wake up, we should look in the mirror and be proud- because we have survived another day. And when we have one another for support and community, plus the recommendations as laid forth below, we believe we can thrive.



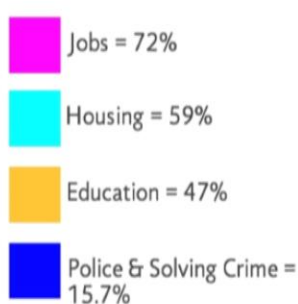
Next Steps

For us, marriage equality is at the bottom of our list. How can I worry about marriage, when I have all these other issues to worry about? When I have to worry about just surviving?

When it comes to LGBTQ youth, the issues *get real*, especially with transwomen. As a youth-led organization, we focus our energy on transwomen of color, because we think that wins for transwomen of color will lead to wins for all us. If transwomen are able to get jobs and walk down the street without harassment or discrimination, we know that doors will open for others.

There are obvious things that will help reform the NOPD, like implementing the consent decree. While we discuss some of those below, we also want to use this opportunity to talk about other contributing factors to police harassment and criminalization in our communities.

WHAT DO LGBTQ YOUTH IN NEW ORLEANS NEED TO FEEL SAFE?



LGBTQ youth in New Orleans need a combination of job training, employment opportunities, stable housing, educational services, and other opportunities to feel safe.

72%



Percentage of respondents who said that job training and employment opportunities would make them feel safer.

59%



Percentage of respondents who said that housing opportunities would make them feel safer.

Only 16%

of respondents said that more police and solving crime would make them feel safer.



* Several respondents chose more than one option, making our percentage total greater than 100%.

BREAKOUT!

BreakOUT! "We Deserve Better" © 201

I. FULLY IMPLEMENT THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CONSENT DECREE WITH THE NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT AND SOLICIT FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE ADOPTION OF NEW POLICE POLICIES.

On July 24, 2012, the NOPD entered into a consent decree in federal court that outlines a long list of changes to bring the NOPD's policies and practices up to constitutional standards. The consent decree requires the NOPD to make serious changes to their handling of: officer use of force, crisis intervention, stops, searches and arrests, interrogations, bias-free policing (and particularly policing free of gender and racial bias), community engagement, recruitment, officer training, performance evaluations, secondary employment, police misconduct, and transparency.

Sound like a lot?? It is! You can read all 124 pages on our website at www.youthbreakout.org

Thanks in part to the hard work and advocacy of BreakOUT! members, the Consent Decree also specifically requires that the NOPD develop policies and training materials to ensure that police officers don't discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, disability, *gender identity, or sexual orientation.*

But even implementing parts of the consent decree will take mobilizing and organizing our communities to maintain public pressure and hold the NOPD accountable. We can't count on the NOPD policing themselves and one day, the Department of Justice will leave and the NOPD will be out from underneath the consent decree.

While the NOPD was adopting policies as part of the consent decree, they adopted Policy 402, which tells police officers how they have to treat members of the LGBTQ community. You can read the policy in the appendix, along with our proposed policy we gave to the NOPD. While Policy 402 is a great start, there are still revisions to be made. The NOPD should be going to the community for feedback on these policies, as well as any other policies that impact New Orleans residents. After all, we are the experts on what's going on and what we need to feel safe in our City and with the people who are supposed to protect us.

We have to walk the streets of New Orleans, so we know what we need to stay alive.

We hope that the Consent Decree will not be a stopping point, but a launching point for community engagement, oversight, and policing reforms in New Orleans.

The case of Armand Bennett

Even with all the police reforms supposedly happening in our city, police violence is still happening. In August 2014, Armand Bennett, a young Black male who was unarmed, was shot in the head by an NOPD officer as she was approaching his car during what was supposed to be a routine traffic stop. She intentionally turned off her camera before shooting him. Those facts alone show that her actions were premeditated. The definition of premeditated murder is, "the crime of wrongfully and intentionally causing the death of another human being (also known as murder) after rationally considering the timing or method of doing so, in order to either increase the likelihood of success or to evade detection or apprehension."

According to this recent news about Armand Bennett, coupled with the recent killing of Mike Brown, officers can kill you today and come up with a story tomorrow justifying why they killed you. What is going on in Ferguson is not just happening in Ferguson. It's happening all over the United States.

Luckily, in this particular case, the young man did not lose his life.

Even more appalling about the shooting of Armand Bennett is the fact that the incident was intentionally kept from the public. Only when a reporter tracked down this story, did the NOPD make any comment. What's even crazier is that when the NOPD Superintendent Ronal Serpas apologized to the public, he called the failure to disclose the shooting, "A complete snafu," which was an insult to the public's intelligence.

This story is all too common in a city with a history of police mistreatment of its residents and we LGBTQ youth see the connections between the de-valuing of Black youth lives and the de-valuing of the lives of transgender youth of color.

★ **BETTER TRAINING FOR NOPD OFFICERS.**

In terms of training and preparation, the NOPD should constantly be meeting with community members and leaders. If someone doesn't live in New Orleans or doesn't understand experience of a certain community, it could be hard for them to relate and navigate what safety means for a particular people or area. Plus, someone who knew more about me and saw me as a human being would think twice before they tased me, shot me, or even cat-called me. NOPD has shown BreakOUT!'s We Deserve Better video at their training academy before, highlighting reasons many LGBTQ youth fear and mistrust the NOPD. Unfortunately training is not consistent, and judging how we are treated in the streets, we know that more can be done to build rapport and performance with our people! The NOPD should continue to pass policies mandating specific training, including as relates to the transgender community, alongside other issues, and should assess if these trainings are having a positive impact in the community.

★ **BETTER POLICIES FOR OFFICER CAMERAS IN-CARS AND ON UNIFORMS.**

According to Interim Police Superintendent Michael Harrison- as reported in a public federal court hearing on the use of cameras as relates to implementation of the Consent Decree in September 2014- only 68% of in-car cameras are working; 18% are not working; and 14% are not installed. Plus, on a random day in August 2014, they checked 30 random officers and only 49% were recording on their body-worn cameras (BWC) when they were supposed to be. In September, it was 62%.

★ **ACKNOWLEDGE THE HARM YOU HAVE CAUSED.**

We want police officers who actually care. This requires the NOPD to acknowledge the harm they have caused, the trust they have broken, and actively move forward to heal this. This could look like a variety of things. The point is, we want our police officers to have a stake in our community and a stake in us.

★ **STOP COLLUSION BETWEEN NOPD AND IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT.**

BreakOUT! is always working to understand the world around us and the links between our movements. When we sit down with our undocumented brothers and sisters through our Vice to ICE work with the Congress of Day Laborers, we quickly realize how all of us are prevented from moving safely and freely in our own city for fear of law enforcement. With police profiling of Black transgender women as sex workers and Latino communities profiled as undocumented, we see that the criminalization of identity and survival impacts all of us- and for those of us whose lives are at the very intersections of race, immigration status, and LGBTQ-identity, the need to be in solidarity is more important than ever. With whether it is "Driving while Latino" or "Walking while transgender," we know that our successes are dependent on one another. That is why we support the call to end NOPD collusion with ICE and for the NOPD to work with the community to adopt policies to ensure the safety of all of our communities.



"If we know, then we must fight for your life as though it were our own—which it is—and render impassable with our bodies the corridor to the gas chamber. For, if they take you in the morning, they will be coming for us that night." - James Baldwin



II. MOVE LOUISIANA STATE TROOPERS OUT OF NEW ORLEANS.

On June 29, 2014, nine people were injured in a shooting on Bourbon St. in New Orleans. That shooting on Bourbon St. created a wave of media attention on crime and violence in the French Quarter. This wave of media attention included several op-eds that focused on the need for more policing in the French Quarter. Because the French Quarter is home to many celebrities and affluent New Orleans residents, Mayor Mitch Landrieu announced that he would “beef up” police presence in the French Quarter to keep them and the tourists safe. As a result, Landrieu brought in 100 state troopers to patrol the streets of the French Quarter in addition to the NOPD.*

According to the news, Louisiana State Police Superintendent Colonel Edmonson said, “I told the [NOPD] chief this morning, if he needs the cavalry, we're coming. We will be here.”** And within 8 weeks, they had already responded to over 1,600 calls for service made over 500 arrests in the French Quarter.***

It is not every day in New Orleans that we wake up and hear about a shooting on Bourbon Street. We do, however, wake up to local news about two females being shot in New Orleans East, a man being shot and killed in the Ninth Ward, and females being murdered in Uptown New Orleans. The media did not argue for more police presence to protect the people in these neighborhoods. The mayor did not announce that he would “beef up” police presence in these areas to keep the people in these areas safe.

Why was the media reaction different for those different areas? State troopers weren't called in for these other areas of town. The Bourbon Street shooting was the perfect opportunity to get more law enforcement in our city. But what does that mean for the people of color here in New Orleans? That means more policing, profiling, and arrests, which doesn't make us safer. The rest of the population have become vulnerable “targets” for hyper policing.

Further, the state troopers do not operate under the same rules as the NOPD and don't receive the same training. They don't have the same experience with people, are not under a Consent Decree, and don't have the oversight mechanisms that the NOPD does, so it feels like a lot of our work is just in vain.

We don't need more police presence in our city. Move the State Troopers out of our city!

IV. REPEAL HB 1158.

In 2014, Representative Austin Badon sponsored a Louisiana House Bill that outlaws panhandling. HB 1158 criminalizes solicitation, making it a misdemeanor punishable with a maximum fine of \$200 and up to six months in jail. The primary target of this bill is those who are or are perceived as homeless or sex workers. Since the passing of the bill, Representative Austin Badon has been praising the bill's efforts to reduce the number of “poor” people on the streets.

* Landrieu asks for state police in New Orleans, Sept. 19, 2014 [The Advocate](http://theadvocate.com/news/neworleans/neworleansnews/9610602-123/another-clip-shows-person-of) accessed at: <http://theadvocate.com/news/neworleans/neworleansnews/9610602-123/another-clip-shows-person-of>

** WWLTV accessed at: <http://www.wwltv.com/story/news/local/2014/09/08/14788404/>

*** Ibid.

IV. DEVELOP LGBTQ-SPECIFIC HOUSING PROGRAMS IN NEW ORLEANS.

The reason why many LGBTQ youth and young adults are walking the streets at night is because they are homeless. Some are kicked out because their families are not accepting of their sexual orientation or how they identify or express their gender. If the kids had a place to call “home,” there wouldn't be on the streets. That's why it needs to be a priority for the City of New Orleans to have housing for our homeless LGBTQ youth.

A survey conducted by the National LGBTQ Task Force in 2011 and published in the report *Injustice at Every Turn* found that individuals who identified as transgender experienced a rate of homelessness nearly twice as high as the national rate. Within that, transgender people of color were identified as at a disproportionate risk for homelessness. Overall, the survey found that those individuals who had experienced homelessness were 2.5 times more likely to have been incarcerated than those who had not, and over four times more likely to have relied on sex work as a source of income.

The city has homeless shelters, but they are not always welcoming to transgender people. The shelters that do exist are not really comfortable, and you can't be yourself in them. And sure...you are good at night, but where do you go in the day?

According to our research, there are just a handful of other homeless shelters in New Orleans who will accept transgender women and house us appropriately but most of them are almost always full.

BreakOUT! has been working with our city's **only youth shelter** to improve their services for LGBTQ youth. But even though they will never turn a youth away, they are operating at well-above capacity and this doesn't even include the young adults who are too old to receive their services.

We found out that there are 1,305 shelter beds in the City of New Orleans, consisting of 15 safe haven beds, 684 transitional beds, and 606 emergency shelter beds. But there are 1,981 homeless people in New Orleans. There is not sufficient data collected on the specific number of homeless youth between the ages of 10 and 29 in New Orleans.

We believe that money should be shifted from more police to providing more housing opportunities for youth in our City.



* National Alliance to End Homelessness, accessed at: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/blog/entry/how-many-people-are-experiencing-homelessness-in-your-community#.VD78sSldX4Ams>

** Williams Institute, 2012

V. DEVELOP JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LGBTQ PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY YOUTH AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE OF COLOR.



For young LGBTQ people of color that don't have financial stability, the struggle is real.

When people turn to the streets for survival, they are targets for violence or get sucked into criminal justice system.

If we had more jobs in New Orleans that would hire LGBTQ people- especially transgender and gender non-conforming youth & young adults of color- not as many young people would be on the streets.

There must be more equity within the existing job programs for youth in New Orleans. All too often, youth are invited to organizations and programs for job training programs, but those programs do not remotely fit the actual needs of the youth. Although youth are taught

“hard” skills in these job training programs, hard skills alone will not guarantee employment, especially for transgender or gender non-conforming youth. Job training programs must take the necessary steps to holistically assist youth in gaining employment.

These programs must also take into account that the youth are not the only ones who are in need of training or technical assistance. Because Louisiana is a “Right to work” state, businesses are not required to adopt non-discrimination policies to protect queer and transgender youth. Job training programs must partner with businesses to ensure that all youth have the opportunity to gain meaningful employment. These programs must also acknowledge the fact that most of the employers they partner with only offer minimum wage paying jobs, with minimal available hours to work. This is not an indicator of success in assisting youth in gaining employment.

VI. END THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE AND CREATE MORE SAFE AND AFFIRMING EDUCATIONAL PROVIDERS FOR LGBTQ YOUTH IN NEW ORLEANS.

We know from our peers and members at BreakOUT! that LGBTQ youth of color, especially transgender and gender non-conforming youth, are disproportionately pushed out of the school system.

In fact, a recent study found that LGBTQ youth were disproportionately expelled or suspended from school, in addition to being more likely to be stopped by police and arrested and convicted in juvenile court.*

LGBTQ youth, particularly gender-nonconforming girls, are up to 3x more likely to experience harsh disciplinary treatment by schools than cisgender, straight youth.

Further, as with racial disparities in school discipline, higher rates of punishment do not correlate with higher rates of misbehavior among LGBT youth.**

All too often, LGBTQ youth are pushed out of the classroom as a result of a hostile school climate.

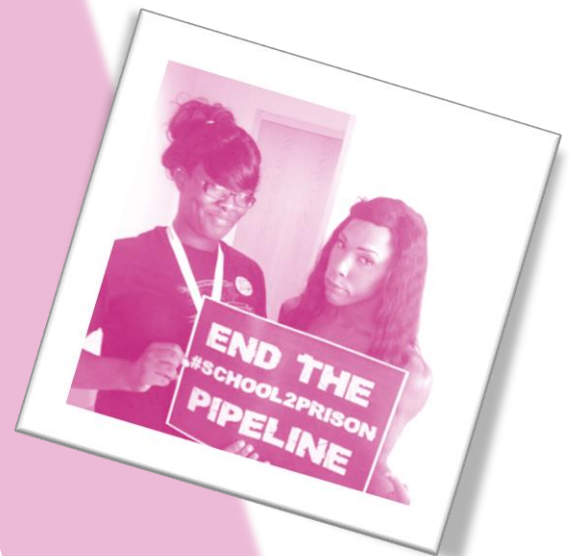
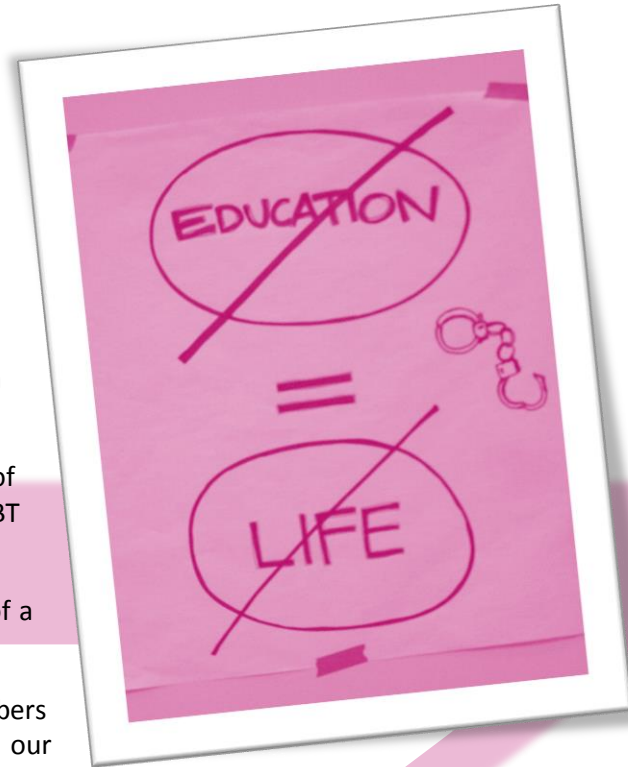
BreakOUT! has heard the same story over and over again from our members about their experiences in school- which resulted in the majority of our members eventually being pushed out of school and having to obtain their GED.

BreakOUT! will be starting a GED program soon to help curb the school to prison pipeline but what is really needed is an end to the school-to-prison pipeline and safer, more-affirming school climates for everyone.

* Journal of Pediatrics, "Criminal-Justice and School Sanctions Against Nonheterosexual Youth: A National Longitudinal Study"

Available at: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2010/12/06/peds.2009-2306.abstract>

** Center for American Progress, "Beyond Bullying
How Hostile School Climate Perpetuates the School-to-Prison Pipeline for LGBT Youth"



Appendix

Policy 402

We Deserve Better Survey

Definitions



We Deserve Better! Survey

Within the LGBTQ community a lot of us experience problems with the New Orleans Police Department. (NOPD) In fact, the U.S. Department of Justice released an investigative report of the NOPD, which named discrimination and bias towards LGBTQ individuals as one of their top concerns. We need to keep pressure on the NOPD if we want them to do the right thing!

Name (Optional): _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Sexual Orientation: _____

Race: _____

Within the past 12 months:

1a. Have you ever been approached or stopped by a NOPD officer? YES or NO

1b. Did they give a reason for doing so? YES or NO

2. During the encounter did you experience harassment, violence, or misconduct? For example did the officer call you something outside of your chosen name or touch your genitals to figure out what your body was like?

YES or NO

Explain: _____

3. Has an NOPD officer ever called you a "faggot, dyke, he-she, it, punk," or any other derogatory term based on your gender expression or sexual orientation? YES or NO

4. Do you feel that the NOPD targeted or profiled you because of your sexual orientation or gender expression? YES or NO

5. About how often are you harassed by an NOPD officer?

- A. every other day
- B. every other week
- C. every other month
- D. every other year

6. Have you ever been asked by an NOPD officer for a sexual favor? YES or NO

7. Have you ever felt that your life was in danger because of an NOPD officer?
YES or NO

8. Have you ever called the police and they did not answer or take your call seriously?
YES or NO

9. Have you ever called the NOPD for help but they ended up arresting you instead?
YES or NO

10. Do you trust the police in our city? YES or NO

11. What do you think will make LGBTQ young people in New Orleans safer?

- A. Improving educational opportunities
- B. Housing opportunities
- C. Job opportunities
- D. Solving crime and more police
- E. Other: _____

12. Have you ever been stopped by an NOPD officer who assumed that you were a sex worker/prostitute? YES or NO

Do you want to be on our mailing list?

NAME:

EMAIL:

PHONE NUMBER:

FACEBOOK:

TWITTER:

Definitions

“BreakOUT! exists to work on EDUCATION. Especially that transwomen are not men, are not ‘he’ or ‘it.’ It has been important to educate community.”

Consent Decree is a legal document that outlines the terms of an agreement between two parties in court. In the case of the New Orleans Police Department, the Consent Decree outlines what changes the NOPD has to make. A **Court Monitor** checks in with them about their progress and reports to the **Federal Court Judge**, who makes sure they’re doing it right. The Department of Justice is the federal department that sued the NOPD.

Crime Against Nature is a Louisiana law that says that this is the “unnatural carnal copulation by a human being with another of the same sex or opposite sex or with an animal.” The “crime against nature” law subjects adults engaged in consensual oral or anal sex to up to five years in prison and fines of up to \$2,000. However, the US Supreme Court has ruled that anti-sodomy laws are unconstitutional, leaving Louisiana’s laws somewhat unenforceable.

Solicitation by Crime Against Nature is a Louisiana law about asking someone to perform a Crime Against Nature for money or compensation, similar to prostitution, but just for anal or oral sex. It used to be that being convicted of this was a felony and meant that you would have to register as a sex offender. The organization Women With a Vision and lawyers from the Center for Constitutional Rights changed this though through the No Justice Campaign!

Gender identity is how someone identifies their gender. While a person’s sex is generally assigned at birth as male or female, a person’s gender identity is their own understanding of their gender, and does not have to fit into the male/female binary. One’s gender identity might be man/boy or woman/girl, and it also might be genderqueer or transgender, to give just a couple examples.

Gender expression refers to how a person embodies (or expresses) their gender identity - how they talk about their gender, how they dress, and how they perform different “gendered” roles.

LGBTQ is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning/ Queer.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual are examples of sexual orientations, but being trans is about gender identity. Trans people can identify as straight, lesbian, gay, or something else entirely!

Sexual orientation is a term that generally refers to who a person is romantically, emotionally, or sexually attracted to. Some people are attracted only to people of one gender, others are attracted to two genders, and others don’t really care that much about the gender of their partners or are attracted to people of all sorts of different genders.

Cisgender (or non-transgender) refers to people whose gender identity and gender expression are the same as the biological sex assigned to them at birth.

Transgender refers to people whose gender identity and/or gender expression are different from the biological sex assigned to them at birth.

Transgender women (or transwomen) usually identify as both transgender and as a woman and **transgender men (or transmen)** usually identify as both transgender and as a man.

