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## Building the Sisterhood: Learning Exchange 1

Mar. 10, 2014 ? Morgan Keenan

In January, [Missouri GSA Network](#) <sup>[1]</sup> had the privilege of kicking off a series of learning exchanges between LGBTQ, racial justice, and educational justice youth organizations across the country. We traveled south on 55 to visit with an amazing organization, [BreakOUT!](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, which fights the criminalization of LGBTQ youth of color in New Orleans.



This relationship and work stemmed from the #GSAs4Justice organizing we did in the fall with the national GSA Network for the [Dignity In Schools Campaign](#) [3]'s [National Week of Action on School Pushout](#) [4]. Following that powerful week of action, we formed a GSAs4Justice committee to continue our work on school pushout.

Once in New Orleans, one of the things that struck our group right away upon meeting the crew from BreakOUT! is the Sisterhood and feeling of family that was so pervasive in the work of organizing. Taking care and loving each other is at the center of the work and has to be there.

Our GSAs4Justice Committee Chair, Ka?Milla, said, "it was powerful for me to connect with some of the girls like me from BreakOUT!, and now, I feel I have an idea for the structure for the Missouri GSAs4Justice committee to be built upon." Andivar, a Vashon High GSA Leader, put it simply: "The members of BreakOUT! are so sweet."

All that being said, don't get it twisted: sweetness wasn't all that we experienced in the Bayou. Building power for trans\* women of color is large part of the success of BreakOUT!'s organizing. "I learned a lot about their organizing model and we are already thinking about how we can create similar pipelines of leadership in our organization," said Sterling Waldman, Missouri GSA Network's Board Chair. "I feel like I really connected with the Youth Organizers. Their positive energy is infectious."

With the tools, skills and relationships gained on this trip, members from Missouri GSA Network are excited to create amazing change in our region. Our struggles do not happen in silos. Neither can our work towards justice.

*Morgan Keenan is the founder and director of Missouri GSA Network, a member of the National Association of GSA Networks.*

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#### **Links**

[1] <http://www.missourigsanetwork.org/>

[2] <http://www.youthbreakout.org/>

[3] <http://www.dignityinschools.org/>

[4] <http://gsanetwork.org/weekofaction>