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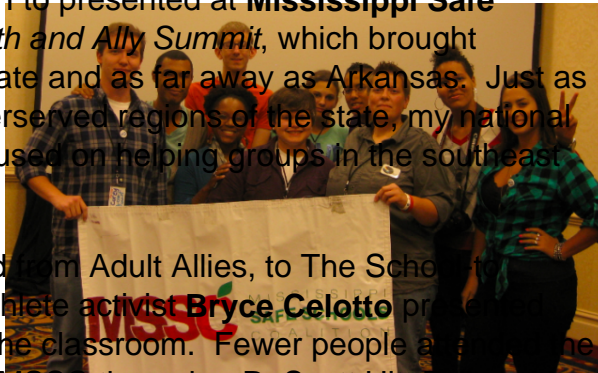
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Mississippi: A Hotbed of GSA Activism!

Oct. 21, 2011 ? Geoffrey

Where can you learn about the school-to-prison pipeline, watch awesome performance artists, attend a workshop on trans inclusion in sports, and meet some amazingly courageous LGBTQ youth activists? Mississippi, of course!

I just returned from a trip to Jackson, Mississippi where I presented at **Mississippi Safe School's Coalition's (MSSC) 4th Annual Queer Youth and Ally Summit**, which brought together around 50 diverse activists from all over the state and as far away as Arkansas. Just as GSA Network's CA programs focus resources on underserved regions of the state, my national work as Racial and Economic Justice Manager has focused on helping groups in the southeast of the country.



The topics of the workshops at the Q&A Summit ranged from Adult Allies, to The School-to-Prison-Pipeline to Facilitation & Workshop Creation. Athlete activist **Bryce Celotto** presented two workshops on transgender inclusion in sports and the classroom. Fewer people attended the summit than in the past, but **Anna C Davis**, who staffs MSSC through a R. Scott Hitt Fellowship, felt that this contributed to its success. ?This year I was able to speak (at least once) to every person that attended,? Anna explained. ?Smaller numbers means that we can focus more on how to work with these groups to further the goals of the organization and of the Safe Schools movement.? **Corey Faucheax**, a Queer Youth Advisory Board (QYAB) member, added, ?While I was somewhat disappointed because we had a lower turnout than we've had in past years, I was pleased to see that the majority were first-time attendees. I'm glad we were able to reach out to new people, and hopefully new communities.?

My primary workshop was on the *School-to-Prison Pipeline and LGBTQ youth*, which addressed the extremely high and disproportionate rates that LGBTQ youth of color are being disciplined and incarcerated, particularly in MS. Corey who attended my other workshop on *Anti-Racism and Racial Justice* said: ?I learned a valuable lesson about the privileges I've taken advantage of throughout my life without having realized it.. I'll continue to stay mindful of the influences of oppression that are ever-present and try to correct my family and friends when they propagate ideas of White power.?

In addition to my workshops and several others on GSA organizing, performing artists **Genesis Be** and **Auzriel** held an amazing workshop on youth in arts activism. Genesis Be, creator of [Strive Till I Rise](#) Auzriel's video at NYC Pride told me: "Young people everywhere are searching for alternatives in media. A new day has dawned and there is a global movement of open-minded and freedom-seeking youth. Strive Till I Rise is one of many vehicles that will help to bring about change." Auzriel who recently released ?What U looking At??, was impressed by the summit: "I was inspired at the MSSC summit by the youth who attended and their level of intelligence and interest in the serious topics that were being discussed. It was refreshing to see that the youth in this country do care about their future here and want to be an active participant in creating positive change."

R. Ashley Jackson, a founding member of MSSC said of the arts workshop: "It is important to continue to have the arts activism portion of the summit. We've had something art related overtime, but this time i realized it was really key to helping youth engage in the movement in different ways than just being 'professional' and/or 'political'."

Overall, the spirit of LGBTQ activism and resistance is strong in Mississippi and queer youth and allies are continuing the hard work of making it better for youth there. **Audri Ingram**, the youngest QYAB member, summed it up best: "The Q&A summit was amazing this year. We had people who are so psyched about getting involved and I am more than happy to be working with a new group of youth who want to make a change in their communities."



More about MSSC: <http://www.mssafeschools.org/> [2]

More about Genesis Be and Strive Till I Rise music videos: <http://strivetillirise.com/strive-music/>

[3]

Links

[1] <http://www.strivetillirise.com>

[2] [http:// www.mssafeschools.org/](http://www.mssafeschools.org/)

[3] <http://strivetillirise.com/strive-music/>