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BREAKOUT! WINS UNPRECEDENTED VICTORY FOR LGBT YOUTH IN DOJ CONSENT DECREE

BreakOUT!, an organization that fights the criminalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth in New Orleans, LA, applauds the Consent Decree between the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) released today. The legally binding document, which comes after a 2011 federal investigation of the NOPD that named discriminatory policing toward the LGBT community as an area of top concern, marks the first time the DOJ has gone this far in outlining concrete measures to address profiling and discrimination against the community, making for an unprecedented victory for the LGBT community who experience discriminatory policing. The Consent Decree is the product of the courage of women and LGBT people, including *BreakOUT!* youth members, who came out to tell their stories and share their visions for a reformed police department, says Director Wesley Ware.

BreakOUT! worked with the Department of Justice and other community stakeholders to bring attention to the experiences of the LGBT community in New Orleans, in particular African American LGBT youth and young transgender women who are impacted by the criminal or juvenile justice system. As a result, the investigation's Executive Summary states, "...transgender women complained that NOPD officers improperly target and arrest them for prostitution, sometimes fabricating evidence of solicitation for compensation." It goes on to say, "Indeed, community members told us they believe some officers equate being African American and transgendered with being a prostitute."

Since this time, *BreakOUT!* has been involved in a campaign called "We Deserve Better" to get a model LGBT-specific policy in the Department as well as training based on nationally recognized best practices. The campaign also produced a video of LGBT youth talking about their experiences with the NOPD that is currently being shown in officer trainings (viewable at www.youthbreakout.org)

The campaign will now be won through the implementation of a Consent Decree issued today that will mandate that the NOPD develop an LGBT-specific policy and strengthen trainings for officers. Among other provisions in the 124-page document are:

- Sexual orientation or gender cannot be used as probable cause for a stop or arrest.
- The NOPD must adopt policies to ensure that transgender people are referred to by their preferred name and appropriate gender pronoun.
- Transgender people will not be subjected to overly invasive searches due to their gender identity or to solely to determine their anatomy or genitalia.
- Same-gender searches are to be done in accordance with gender identity.

BreakOUT! Director, Wesley Ware, says that *BreakOUT!*'s LGBT youth members will be vindicated through proper implementation of the Consent Decree. "This win does not come in a vacuum and is instead a direct result of the courage of LGBT youth speaking up and sharing their stories to say, 'We Deserve Better.' We look forward to working with the Department to ensure that these policies are implemented."

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