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TEACHFORAMERICA

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TEACH FOR AMERICA LAUNCHES NATIONAL LGBTQ INITIATIVE

Initiative Will Foster Dialogue and Awareness about LGBTQ Issues in Support of Our LGBTQ Students; Advance Partnerships to Support LGBTQ Corps Members, Alumni and Staff; Highlight Teaching as Critical Career Path for LGBTQ Community

New York, NY (October 9, 2014) — Teach For America (TFA) today announced the launch of its national LGBTQ initiative to support LGBTQ students and create safe classrooms for them to learn; bring educational equity to the forefront of conversations within the LGBTQ community; expand the impact of LGBTQ students, corps members, alumni, and staff; and help demonstrate teaching in high-need schools as a career pathway for those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning. The initiative offers a way to think about identity in broad and intersecting ways where discussions of race and class can be LGBTQ inclusive, given that low-income LGBTQ youth of color face [higher rates](#) of truancy and dropouts, suicide, bullying, homelessness, and are overrepresented in both the [foster care](#) and [criminal justice systems](#).

“We believe that an equal and excellent education means that schools embrace and support all students with the dignity and respect they deserve, including those who identify as LGBTQ,” said Tim’m West, youth advocate, former educator and managing director of the initiative. “Teach For America is only one part of the larger movement to foster dialogue and awareness about LGBTQ issues in our schools and classrooms. Together, in partnership with communities and organizations in the regions we serve, we can support more diverse talent in the classroom, while meaningfully and authentically addressing issues that affect LGBTQ youth and families.”

According to a [study](#) by the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), a partner of the LGBTQ initiative, nearly 8 out of 10 lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender students report being harassed at school. Other studies have found that LGBTQ youth also make up a [disproportionate amount](#) of student suspensions or expulsions.

“Through our extensive research and over two decades of experience in the field, GLSEN understands deeply the many barriers that exist for LGBTQ youth in our schools. We celebrate their resilience and leadership as we work with them to overcome those barriers,” said Eliza Byard, GLSEN executive director. “GLSEN has partnered with TFA since the 1990s, and we are thrilled to see them launch this new initiative to fully embed LGBT issues throughout the life of the organization and the work of their corps members in schools from coast to coast. It is a huge step forward in our allied efforts to foster respect for all in all of our schools.”

Teach For America serves students who represent the growing diversity of the nation’s classrooms. Over 80 percent of students at the more than 3,000 public schools partnering with the organization identify as African American or Latino and more than 75 percent are eligible for the federal lunch program. TFA believes that great teachers come from all backgrounds, but teachers who [share the backgrounds and experiences of students](#) can have

an additional impact in and outside the classroom. Half of TFA's new teachers this year identify as people of color, 47 percent come from a low-income background, and more than one-third have some professional or graduate experience. TFA also believes all students deserve a safe space to learn – free of physical or emotional violence, and full of opportunities to live fully into their potential. According to a 2013 survey, more than 850 corps members self-identified as LGBTQ.

“Recognizing and valuing diverse sexualities and gender identities and expressions in the classroom is integral to fostering and supporting whole and empowered students. We have evidence that, when supported, LGBTQ youth are conscientious leaders, curious students, and are fully prepared to positively impact their schools and communities.” said Samantha Master, youth and campus engagement manager for the Human Rights Campaign.

Teach For America also partnered with The Trevor Project and GLSEN on the [S.A.F.E. Project](#), which provides resources to help teachers create learning environments that are safe and affirming for all students. The organization is also pleased to partner with the Center for Black Equity, Campus Pride, and an array of diverse LGBTQ community stakeholders for regional and national advocacy.

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About Teach For America

Teach For America works in partnership with communities to expand educational opportunity for children facing the challenges of poverty. Founded in 1990, Teach For America recruits and develops a diverse corps of outstanding college graduates and professionals to make an initial two-year commitment to teach in high-need schools and become lifelong leaders in the movement to end educational inequity. Today, 10,600 corps members are teaching in 50 urban and rural regions across the country while more than 37,000 alumni work across sectors to ensure that all children have access to an excellent education. For more information, visit www.teachforamerica.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Tim'm T. West

Tim'm has 20 years of experience advocating for youth – especially youth of color and LGBTQ youth. After graduating from Taylor High School in rural southwest Arkansas, he attended Duke University and while there, served as both Black Student Alliance President and acting President of the LGBTQ organization. Tim'm graduated from Duke but spent two semesters at Howard University through an exchange program. After Duke, Tim'm completed an MA in Philosophy and Liberal Studies at The New School for Social Research, and later, an MA from Stanford in Modern Thought and Literature. After Stanford, he helped open a public charter school, Oakland School for the Arts, where he was Department Chair of English and Literary Arts, Lead Academic Teacher, as well as the PTA liaison. A curriculum specialist, Tim'm was celebrated for developing strategies for teachers to talk about the intersections of gender, race, and sexual orientation in core curriculum. Tim'm later taught 9th – 10th grade English at Caesar Chavez Public Charter high school for Public Policy in DC, was Assistant Varsity Basketball Coach, and served as advisor for the school's first GSA. Most recently Tim'm served as the Director of Youth Services at the Center on Halsted, the Midwest's largest LGBTQ community center, where he was instrumental for creating measurable outcomes for youth and young adult achievement and transformation. An author, poet, and Hip-Hop artist in his own right, he is the proud parent of a young actress and poet who teaches with Youth Speaks in San Francisco, CA.

