The Equality Ride is an ongoing campaign to visit colleges and universities in the United States that discriminate against LGBTQ students and faculty. We have added cultural institutions, houses of worship and local organizations – affirming and not – into the mix to make the Ride more comprehensive, strategic, and enduring.

The Equality Ride is the flagship project of Soulforce. Read more at www.soulforce.org.
Equality Ride By the Numbers

Days on the road: 61, March 3rd to May 3rd

Miles: 7,027

Cities on the official route: 11

Cities with additional events: 6

Number of Riders: 18
   People of color: 8
   Trans/Gender non-conforming: 8

Schools visited: 26, 11 with discriminatory policies

Student interactions: 23,000+

Service hours: 251 hours at 16 projects

Partnerships with local organizations: 58
   Affirming faith groups: 16
   Non-affirming faith groups: 3
   LGBTQ groups: 23
   Non-LGBTQ groups: 16

Value of in-kind donations: $36,092

Individual donations to Ride: $29,764

Foundation support: $179,100

Gifts from events: $6,035

Media stories: 150
   Print: 56, 7 student articles
   Television: 11
   Blogs: 79
   Radio: 4

The Route

Official stops:
Atlanta, Nashville, Chicago, Minneapolis, Oklahoma City, New Orleans, Dallas, Denver, Salt Lake City, Portland, and San Francisco.

Additional cities:
Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Kansas City, KS, Tyler, TX, Laramie, WY, and Abilene, TX.
Equality Ride After Five Years: Analysis and New Strategies

Why is this work valuable?

There are several answers. First, campuses like Pepperdine University and Notre Dame University, while anti-LGBTQ, enjoy mainstream positions. The Equality Ride makes it loudly evident to the public that even at top tier, nationally respected institutions such as these, LGBTQ people and their allies are barred from being active or visible, often pushed into “ex-gay” therapy, fired from their jobs, expelled, and excluded from the full educational experience. This has social and economic consequences for a lifetime.

Some schools are harsher than others in policy or culture, but a degree of erasure is taking place at more than 200 schools. They are not fringe spaces or cloistered anomalies. These institutions exist in every state and have enormous local, state, and national political significance; the politics of schools and seminaries tied to denominations mirror the larger political aims of their churches.

For example, the “Baptist Faith & Message” creed that was published within the Southern Baptist Convention in the 2000’s, while not officially adopted church-wide, became a de facto set of standards for educators, missionaries, church leaders, and state convention leaders. In Oklahoma, this new fundamentalist ethos became the litmus test for elected politicians. More moderate Republicans were aggressively pushed out in favor of candidates far to the right. This same standard – which includes LGBTQ discrimination and sexist gender roles – is also applied at Baptist colleges and universities. Oklahoma Baptist University, named a “Best in the West” college in 2010 by The Princeton Review, has adopted this platform too, which professors must sign to remain employed. Many are leaving and being replaced by staff far to the right.

The educational content and positions of social power that students are preparing for are concerning too. Equality Riders have sat in on sociology classes where racial segregation was touted. Many of the schools have graduate programs in Social Work, Psychotherapy, and Medicine; their graduates are future gatekeepers to the healthcare and social services that many LGBTQ people seek because of high homelessness rates, job discrimination, and social exclusion.

With respect to political clout, Dallas Baptist University produces more Senators, for example, than any other school in the country. Patrick Henry College, also divided by a mass departure of faculty over a lifestyle statement in 2004, has educated more White House interns than any other school. The student body numbers only 370.

We must go to these places to reach future religious, political, and cultural leaders before they have the power to spread oppressive messages and legislation. Straight, white, able-bodied men dominate the power structures of the schools, denominations, and many political sectors. We bring a to campus group of young people similar in age to the students but much more diverse in culture, gender, orientation, and class identities.

We create opportunities for growth on multiple levels. When working on campus and in the surrounding community, we create a conversation not just about homo/transphobia, but also about hegemony: how power is divided and routinely sequestered based on so many facets of identity, and how that affects our well-being, economic success, and family and community structures. Through the lens of gender and
sexuality, we bring forth a needed discussion about the common source of systems of oppression like racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, and classism.

*What have we accomplished in five years?*

In addition to breaking down the sweeping conversation of mechanisms of oppression into tangible, everyday conversations and panel discussions, we also shift the mindsets and build the skills of young people.

Because religion, or religious rhetoric, plays such a domineering part in the determining the oppression and opportunities of LGBTQ folks, we must prepare LGBTQ activists to take part in that discussion with ease. The Equality Ride does that through participant training and public workshops.

Soulforce uses its reputation for dialogue and its ability to mobilize support as a means to securing meetings with powerful administrators who, perhaps for the first time, must take seriously a group of youth with radically different ideas. When we visit campus, we often find scores of secretive allies and a few outspoken ones. Equality Riders show other young people *you have strength here*, something that many administrators or faculty would never do. What is special about the Equality Ride is that we put young folks at the center of difficult conversations and empower them to take part, Equality Rider or not.

Speaking to our success in a numerical sense, we have trained over 100 emerging young adult leaders through the Equality Ride. Nine schools have changed their policies for the better. Twenty-five schools and counting have some form of supportive student group, and at least 20 have LGBTQ alumni organizations. Those groups continue to publish open letters to campus, write articles in student newspapers, provide safe spaces for students, build relationships with faculty, and advocate for institutional change. Faculty members have demonstrated their allyship at a majority of schools we have visited (101 institutions total), and at least 2 administrations have repudiated their “ex-gay” therapy.

Since 2007, we have visited 4 Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Sometimes HBCU’s have institutional policies and sometimes they do not. We are committed to diversifying the racial make-up of our organization, program leadership, participants, and who benefits from our work. Due to the complex history of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and how that meets Soulforce’s history, we are particularly careful about our approach to negotiating with HBCU campuses. We work diligently to partner with student groups in order to have a direct invitation. Increasing diversity in terms of class, race, gender, ability, and sexuality will continue to be a measure of our success. Since, 2006, we have increased the percentage of Riders of color from 12 to 45% and the percentage of trans and gender non-conforming Riders from 6% to 45%.

*How will we ensure the greatest impact?*

Follow up at every school, past or future, will be scoped to the level of student engagement, geographic focus, and location of Delegates and former Riders who can assist with programming. Here are some options for follow up that may occur at multiple schools and in surrounding communities:
• Workshops on scriptural analysis hosted by coalitions of churches
• Symposia hosted in collaboration with local organizations
• Getting more physical resources into the hands of students and faculty on campus
• Educational events about “ex-gay” therapy
• Climate surveys to understand students’ needs and progress
• Regular contact with administrators on several promises made during the Ride to examine policy, language and student handbooks
• Hosting websites for alumni and student group websites to share resources, stories, and networks

How do other Soulforce programs work in concert with the Equality Ride?

Through the Delegate Program we train activists of all ages in a curriculum similar to the Equality Ride (community organizing, intersectional justice, fundraising, media relations, nonviolence, and project management). Delegates are skillful representatives of Soulforce who can teach workshops, inform Soulforce of local conditions, and implement their own programming where they live. Many Riders will continue their leadership development through the Delegate Program.

We also have the Symposium Series that addresses many of the same topics we discuss on campus during the Equality Ride. Symposia are held at welcoming institutions and are a great venue to invite students, faculty and administrators to from nearby discriminatory colleges. Here we are able to establish a positive atmosphere that accomplishes three things: 1) educates our allies in a broad social justice agenda, 2) increases awareness of Soulforce and invites new participants, and 3) bolsters the work of the Delegates and Equality Riders.

Both programs are growing our speakers bureau of people who can represent Soulforce and teach others through workshops, film screenings, conferences, and other events. We recruit new employees, board members, participants, and project ideas through all our programs.

City Reports

Each Rider is asked to organize the following in their chosen city:

• At least one visit to a school that has a discriminatory policy against LGBTQ people.
• A community service project.
• A community event bringing together different agencies and organizations for networking with members of the LGBTQ community.
• An art performance (theater, music, visual art, etc.)
• Social events connecting students from different schools, with a specific focus on connecting LGBTQ students on Christian campuses with their peers in the community and institutions.
• A public education event
• Presentations and panels at other schools and institutions
• Coalitions or co-hosted events with non-LGBTQ focused organizations
• Meals and events at affirming houses of worship
Atlanta

Schoolwork

We visited Carver College, an Historically Black College, because they have a discriminatory policy, but we were not allowed on campus. We held a vigil there and then had a meeting with the President, at which he requested resources to give to LGBTQ students in order to offer positive alternatives.

We had students at Emory University, an affirming school, participate in making squares for an AIDS quilt that we later presented to the ministry program at University of Georgia. A student group at University of Georgia asked us to help facilitate dialogue with the ministry program, which had been a negative presence for them on campus. They also asked that we help them in seeking a policy change to include gender identity and expression.

Off Campus

We hosted a roundtable about, for, and by the Black LGBTQ community at a local church, visited the King Center, met with Muslims for Progressive Values to discuss race, faith, and LGBTQ issues, and attended Shabbat at a synagogue.

Memorable Experience

Atlanta was one of the more racially diverse experience on the Ride. For the first stop, it was meaningful to have a visit to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Center and explore some of the roots of Soulforce. We made a few connections with folks in the Black community that are essential to nurture, especially those from the program we hosted called From the Mountaintop: A Dialogue about Black LGBTQ Folks of Faith.

Nashville

Schoolwork

We visited Lipscomb University and Trevecca Nazarene University because of their anti-LGBTQ policies. Here is an example from Lipscomb:

“All students should practice the highest standards of modesty and sexual morality. Sexual immorality of any kind including homosexual behavior, whether intercourse is or is not involved, will be subject to discipline. Spending the night with a member(s) of the opposite sex, and/or being in any state of undress with members of the opposite sex—even if acts of sexual immorality have not occurred—are also actionable offenses.”
At Lipscomb we took a campus tour and participated in two panel discussions, four classroom visits, a worship service and several shared meals. Later we had an off-campus ally meeting. At Trevecca, we held a panel discussion that was open to the entire student body and then shared dinner with administrators and select faculty, staff, and students. We also held an off-campus screening of *Pariah* for students. Overall we had 720 participants in our activities.

We also visited **Belmont University**, which changed their policies in the last year, granting official club status to the Belmont Bridge Builders. We visited Belmont to acknowledge and celebrate this progress and to support them in next steps (e.g. further inclusion of transgender and gender non-conforming people).

**Vanderbilt University** has an established LGBTQ Student Life Office; in recent months, however, there has been a lot of tension between the LGBTQ community and more conservative Christian groups on campus. We offered LGBTQ students resources and held a networking event attended by students from Lipscomb, Trevecca, Belmont, Vanderbilt, Vanderbilt Divinity, and a few community members.

**Off Campus**

We led a workshop on nonviolence with members of the Just Us monthly Pride Circle meeting, the only LGBTQ youth support group in Nashville. There were approximately 25 youth in attendance.

**Memorable Experience**

Since our visit, both Lipscomb and Trevecca have been going through a period of re-evaluation of their policies and language regarding LGBTQ people. They are ripe for student-led groups to form. This will likely happen because of the networking event we hosted: 4 schools, each at different places on the path toward reconciliation, were able to learn from and inspire each other.

**Chicago**

**Schoolwork**

We visited **Wheaton College** in 2006 and again this year. They do not have a written anti-LGBTQ policy but they remain the #1 anti-gay school by many college reviews and a school with no official protection for LGBTQ students. Their provost Stan Jones is a very strong advocate for “ex-gay” therapy. No one on campus doubts that LGBTQ are not welcome in the school’s theological parameters; a student from Wheaton inspired the very first Equality Ride.

We went to chapel service and had lunch with administrators. Then we held informal dialogue with students on campus and attended a second meeting with administration, faculty, and students to discuss policy and campus climate.

**Moody Bible Institute** was our second school visit. Though they have no official policy per se, if students are found out to be LGBTQ or allied, they can be forced into “ex-gay” therapy or expelled. The school was on spring break, but they voluntarily worked with us to host a gathering of students, administrators, and faculty that lasted approximately two hours with 20-30 Moody people in attendance.
Off Campus

We ate dinner with the Urban Village Church, served breakfast at the Night Ministry (a shelter for homeless youth), partnered with the Center on Halstead to host an event titled “Just in Case the World Doesn’t End: A Social Justice Symposium for the Year 2012”, and organized a evening poetry performance.

We also screened *Love Free or Die* and had dinner at the Marin Foundation, which “builds bridges between the Christian and LGBTQ communities.”

Meaningful Experience

This stop provided the opportunity to follow up at a school we had visited in the past and support the students who, since our first visit, had started a pro-LGBTQ campus group and an alumni group, OneWheaton. We also were better able to connect students with off-campus resources like the Marin Foundation, which will assist with long-term change.

Minneapolis

Schoolwork

The Equality Ride first visited North Central University, an Assemblies of God institution (one of the fastest growing international, Pentecostal denominations) in 2006. That first year, we held a sit-in because armed guards locked us out. Since then, we have received multiple emails from current students and alumni describing the hostile climate toward LGBTQ people, so we decided to return.

We started our NCU visit with a silent vigil, intending to move into a sit-in direct action. But we were well received by scores of friendly students who brought us coffee and were sincerely interested in our visit. This was a vast improvement over the school lockdown of 2006. Because of this, we decided that a sit-in would not be productive. We discussed policy and scripture with over 200 students for several hours. Riders also chalked the sidewalks and left Easter eggs containing affirming messages around campus to be found by students.
Later that day we held a rally across the street from NCU featuring several local performers, artists from the Ride, and three LGBTQ-identified NCU alumni. About 80 NCU community members attended the rally.

Off Campus

We hosted an open mic at a café where students could join us and learn more in a safe environment. About 10 students came to the event. The Riders worked on a service project in support of the Free CeCe Committee, which has organized around a young transgender woman of color who was a victim of a hate crime yet charged with murder. Riders also appeared on Fresh Fruit Radio, the longest running queer radio show in the country, held a roundtable discussion with local politicians regarding the CeCe McDonald case, volunteered at Q-Quest Queer Youth Festival, and attended a benefit for the Ride at a local supporter’s home.

Memorable Experience

North Central University has changed by leaps and bounds but still has far to go. Students recognized us from watching the documentary, Equality U, about the Equality Ride. They were eager this time to open up their Bibles and talk with us. One person returned a couple hours after her first conversation to tell us: “I’ve never met people so excited about scripture, and I’ve never been told that God loves me as I am.” Clearly, we bring a very different tenor and commitment to discussing scripture than many students are used to. Several NCU students are still in contact with Riders and have new support systems off campus with the churches and organizations that participated in our Minneapolis activities.

Oklahoma City

Schoolwork

We chose to visit Southern Nazarene University because 3 of their students contacted us. These students wrote us long e-mails, or had already submitted essays and articles to their school paper about feelings of isolation and loneliness due to the anti-LGBTQ culture on campus. During our visit, we joined students and administrators for light refreshments and introductory conversations. Then three of our Riders and two faculty members participated in a panel discussion about policy. The student body generously attended the event. This led into dinner and informal dialogue with students, faculty, and staff.

Oklahoma Baptist University was our second school because of their policy, “ex-gay” therapy requirements, and the fact that many denominational and political leaders graduate from OBU.
We have visited here 2006 and 2007. First we found their promises and contractual negotiations disingenuous, then they banned us from campus. This year we held a direct action, which included 6 riders with shirts that identified them as LGBTQA. They were cordoned off with caution tape and held about 5 balloons each with a name and age of someone who has committed suicide or was murdered because of their LGBTQ identity. There were approximately 200 OBU community members present at the demonstration throughout the day. We also met with their Public Relations Director, the Dean of Students and the Director of Spiritual life.

Off Campus

We held a press conference with three local newspapers and Fox News. We also hosted an off-campus meeting with students at a coffee house with a very good turnout. We later volunteered for a service project at Other Options, which serves HIV positive individuals. The Riders hosted a panel discussion and worship service at the Church of the Open Arms and a workshop at Mayflower church with students from the schools we had visited on how to build an LGBTQ-straight student alliance.

Memorable Experience

The response from schools, particularly administrators, was encouraging. On the Southern Nazarene University campus there was an overwhelming want and need to continue the conversation. One particular administrator from SNU was especially supportive and willing to make this happen.

New Orleans

Schoolwork

Here we went to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Their president Charles Kelley had signed his name to the Southern Baptist Convention document defining marriage as a union between man and woman, and this denominational stance serves for all its affiliated educational institutions. We also have been in contact with an alumnus from NOBTS who spoke about his negative experience as a closeted student on campus.

Since we were not allowed onto campus, we held a direct action outside their main gates where several Equality Riders stood on one side, dressed in all black with blindfolds, and held a sign that read “NOBTS ADMIN AND STAFF”, while on the other side more Equality Riders wore shirts that read “I am (L/G/B/T/Q/A)” and held a sign that read “This is what it looks like to be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Ally on your campus.” There were a few Riders who guarded the driveway, handing out “citations” to passing cars stating that the NOBTS community had been guilty of committing spiritual violence and outlining preventative steps for the future. There was also someone reading the citation with a bullhorn for people on campus to hear.

Off Campus
We met with the Queer Student Alliance, Unity, at University of New Orleans for coffee and discussion on intersectional justice and ways to organize that include all identities. At APEX, a Christian youth center serving predominantly youth of color, we watched the film *Wade in the Water, Children* about the aftermath Hurricane Katrina. The next day we participated in a service project at APEX to help clean their renovated chapel. At the end of the evening we provided an LGBTQ safe spaces workshop that led into a dinner of jambalaya for 85 people.

We also volunteered at Project Lazarus, an affordable housing program for people living with HIV/AIDS. We gardened, cooked, and had conversations with residents. A board member at Project Lazarus hosted a fundraiser for us at the Marigny Opera House.

**Memorable Experience**

The best part about this stop was the creativity – choosing a clever but honest response to the lack of hospitality from the school, the ways local organizations put Riders’ willingness to serve to good use, and the impromptu candlelit fundraiser thanks to the a lightning storm. We gave more than we received in New Orleans, which is how good organizing and good guests ought to be.

**Dallas**

**Schoolwork**

We went to **Dallas Baptist University** with a genuine invitation for the second time since 2008. As mentioned, DBU produces more Senators and political leaders than any other school in the nation, so seeing a policy or cultural shift here would have great affect across the country. When we began this work in 2006, most schools did not have policies regarding either transgender people or student organizing. Dallas Baptist University now has both:

*“It is the policy of Dallas Baptist University that student organizations which are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transgender in nature are expressly prohibited.”*

While on campus, we had lunch with the administration, a formal discussion, a workshop, informal dialogue with DBU students, and then a closing discussion with the vice president and other leaders. In all, we had 190 participants.

We had dinner and a Q & A session with students at **Southern Methodist University**’s Perkins School of Theology and then a queer bible study at the Wesley Center on their campus. SMU does not have a policy and is a more progressive Christian school, but their practice and culture both have room for growth.

**Off campus**

We volunteered at Planned Parenthood of North Texas and the North Texas Food Bank. Dinner was held in our honor at two local churches, and we attended a service at the Cathedral of Hope.
Memorable Experience

While the stop at Dallas Baptist University was very positive and they are open to hosting more LGBTQ speakers, being of service really stands out from the Dallas stop. We gain allies, connections, and future partners when we give our time and energy to other groups. It was beneficial for both the Riders and the local Dallas community when we spent a day packing hundreds of boxes with food and household goods!

Denver

Schoolwork

Colorado Christian University was our primary campus. Though we were on campus for a full day of activities in 2006, we were not allowed to step foot on their grounds this year. CCU probably has the harshest policies out of all schools visited.

Employee Guidelines:

“Members of the CCU community are expected to refrain from engaging in, advocating, teaching, supporting, encouraging, defending, or excusing homosexuality, transvestitism, transvestite behavior, transgenderism and transgender behavior.”

Student Handbook:

“Sexual Misconduct” includes any consensual sexual behavior that occurs outside of the covenant of marriage. This includes sexual intercourse, cohabitation, public displays of affection, intimate contact, homosexuality, pornography, and actions (for example spending the night with someone of the opposite sex) that may lead to situations of temptation, regret, and immoral conduct.”

Five Equality Riders, Bibles in hand, walked onto campus to study with students. They were arrested, given citations, and released. This event was preceded and followed by conversations with students. To spark discussion, Equality Riders divided into two groups. One group had a feast of free food and drink. The other group had fasted for 30 hours and handed out paper plates asking CCU to break the fast by inviting us onto campus. The contrast between the two groups symbolized the spiritual starvation of LGBTQ students occurring on campus. Our time on public sidewalks in front of CCU was followed by a couple of hours at Village Roaster, a nearby coffee shop. We interacted directly with about 150 CCU students.

We also visited University of Colorado at Boulder, a welcoming public school. We met with students, staff, and community members and joined them for a meal and conversation. The adventure in Boulder was planned and sponsored by a longtime donor and supporter of Soulforce.
Off Campus

We had a cabaret event at Mercury Café, a networking fundraiser at Hamburger Mary’s, a service project at a medical clinic for the uninsured, two non-affirming church visits, and two potlucks with affirming churches. One of the greatest successes of the Equality Ride was in Colorado Springs. After many years of relentlessly calling upon Focus on the Family to understand and repent, we secured a meeting with them. For all our events, we had over 400 participants.

Memorable Experience

Equality Riders held a meeting with Focus on the Family staff, which was nothing short of monumental. After almost a decade of demonstrations and entreaties, Soulforce was finally welcomed inside the Focus on the Family compound to discuss language, safety, and integrity for LGBTQ people. They are open to future meetings and continued conversation about their messaging. For this meeting, we created the Family Values photo album with LGBTQA people across the country proclaiming their values, which will be a useful tool in other campaigns.

Salt Lake City

Schoolwork

No schools were on the planned route for Utah this year. We did not go to Brigham Young University, which we visited in 2006 and 2007, due to the progress on campus led by students. Student groups were formed following our original visits.

Off campus

Instead of visiting a college, our focus in Salt Lake City was supporting local groups and meeting with Mormon (LDS) Church leaders to discuss their stance on “ex-gay” therapy and ask that all their educational institutions’ policies align with stated church doctrine - which, by the letter, creates space for LGBTQ identities. The was the first time Mormon Church officials had agreed to give an LGBTQ group the liberty to publish in the media the fact that there was a meeting and the content of that meeting.
We took up the LDS Church’s invitation to attend the broadcast of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. We also held a rally across the street from the LDS Office Building, a screening of Love Free or Die about Bishop Gene Robinson, two dinners with local churches, and a fundraiser at a local bar.

Memorable Experience

So many unprecedented events: gathering with church officials in full agreement that we could speak of the meeting, providing Mormon Riders the chance to tell their stories, and advocating on behalf of LGBTQ youth and adults who have taken their lives with church leaders. The variety and number of local organizations and businesses – over a dozen – that supported and participated in our work in Salt Lake City was a testament to how intensely they want change.

Portland

Schoolwork

The school visit was to George Fox University, our second since 2007. This is the only Quaker school in the country with an objectionable policy. Members of the newly formed LGBTQ alumni group, OneGeorgeFox, have numerous stories about discriminatory treatment. Common Ground, a student group formed after our first visit, was denied official club status by the administration, despite being the largest student group on campus with over 75 members.

Faculty contacts have described how they feel hesitant to come out as supportive because they fear they may be fired. “Ex-gay” speakers have been invited to speak in chapel services and are even represented among the faculty.

We provided a four-hour study break for GFU students, which involved setting up coffee and snacks in the Cap & Gown Room on campus. Students stopped in throughout the day for conversation and food. About 100 students participated. We then had a luncheon with faculty and administration.

At Portland State University, a welcoming school, Riders presented a workshop on intersectional justice and hosted a Q & A session about the work of Soulforce. At Lincoln High School, a public school, Riders had lunch with the student LGBTQ group.

Off campus

Equality Riders met with George Fox University students at an off-campus coffee house to continue the conversations, encourage student leaders, and provide a networking opportunity for current GFU students and alumni. Six OneGeorgeFox members and 30 students joined us. Later in the week, Riders had a lunch specifically to get to know OneGeorgeFox members.

Central Lutheran Church hosted us for dinner in Portland. In return, we hosted a workshop for them on inclusive language, gender identity and expression, and sexuality as it is addressed within their
congregation. The Metropolitan Community Church of Portland also hosted us for a meal and then an event titled *By Way of Sorrow: Honor our Lost and Make it Better*, in which we all shared stories, poetry, and songs about suicide victims.

Riders volunteered at the Cascade AIDS Project, helping to set up their annual art auction and banquet. We also helped install 12 garden beds in residential neighborhoods with Growing Gardens. Projects like these build allies in unexpected ways and create organizational partnerships that strengthen our future work.

Finally, Equality Riders spent an evening at the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center, where we shared a meal and mingled with youth, followed by a public screening of *Equality U*. Equality Riders make incredible role models as they volunteer, talk with youth, and share their stories.

**Memorable Experience**

In Portland we are able to match up our resources with local needs in wonderful ways. New initiatives such as Common Ground and OneGeorgeFox are in need of the support and encouragement that we helped facilitate through networking and social events. We were also able to voice students’ concerns to the administration and faculty, offering new perspective to the discussion. Students gained resources from their conversations with Riders both on- and off-campus, and a few even ventured to Portland to engage in community events! Our visits to Lincoln High School and the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center were similar, in that we talked with students one-on-one and offered them valuable information for entering into dialogue with their peers, families, and religious community about spirituality, gender, and sexuality.
San Francisco

Schoolwork

The end of the Equality Ride occurs at a time of year when most schools are in exams. Both Patten University and William Jessup University are currently negotiating contracts with Soulforce for fuller opportunities to visit their campuses in Fall 2012.

Mills College, an affirming school in Oakland, invited Soulforce and students from nearby discriminatory schools to their campus for a full day of workshops, dialogue, and Bible study. Approximately 45 people attended.

Off Campus

San Francisco was about celebration and work. Corpus Christi, a play about sexuality, Jesus, and modern ideas of masculinity, held a special performance in Soulforce’s honor. We hosted a benefit at the LGBT Center of San Francisco, well attended by local Soulforce supporters, youth, and people new to our work. An exciting piece of news was that May 1st was declared Soulforce Equality Ride Day in the state of California! The Church of Uncommon Hope welcomed us into their congregation for a sending service on our last night together. And finally, the Equality Ride completed its journey with a Soulforce Symposium panel on intersectional justice at Stanford University, followed by a spoken word event showcasing Riders and students.

Memorable Experience

The panel at Stanford University stands out as a moment that puts a fine point on what the Equality Ride achieves. Students invited us to campus to talk about LGBTQ communications and leadership, and we stretched that space to include an analysis of “who gets the microphone” in a movement that contains many of its own oppressions and bright young stars. The panel worked in collaboration with two local organizations, Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training and School of Unity and Liberation, both people of color led groups. The panel, like the Equality Ride, embodied young adult leadership, organizational collaboration, artistic expression, and radical truth-telling.
The Equality Ride is a traveling, evolving, learning experience for young adult leaders who are asked to carefully define their intentions, their audience, and their own power. They go on to do amazing things…run for political office, serve with other non-profits, start their own organizations, and disseminate what they have learned with us.

Here are some examples of what young adult alumni of Soulforce have accomplished:

- State Field Director of Wisconsin at Service Employees International Union
- Graduates of Yale Divinity, Harvard Divinity and United Theological Seminary
- Communications Officer at International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organization
- Online Strategies Manager at GLSEN
- Director at Labrys, the LGBT Organization of Kyrgyzstan
- LGBTQIA Community Coordinator at Oberlin College
- Law Graduates of Georgetown, University of Minnesota, and University of California
- Co-Founder of Human and Equal Rights Organizers in Arizona
- Northern California Program Coordinator at GSA Network
- HIV Tester at Gay and Lesbian Latino AIDS Education Initiative (GALAEI)
- Special Projects Intern at LYRIC, an LGBTQ youth center in San Francisco
- Lead Advisor at Salvation Army Booth Brown House, a transgender homeless shelter
- Pastors in the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church
- Editor of Q-Notes
- Program Assistant at Transgender Ministries at Metropolitan Community Churches
- Social Worker at New Orleans Public Defenders
- National Campus Organizer at Planned Parenthood Federation of America
- Worker at 3rd Street Youth Center and Clinic
- Organizer at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
- Founders of statewide youth GSA networks in Tennessee and Georgia
- Teacher with Teach for America
- Executive Director at LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania
- Communications Program Director at Campus Pride
- Program Manager at Stonewall Community Foundation of New York
- Candidates for State Assemblies in New York and Wisconsin
Soulforce is a social justice non-profit that works to end the political and religious oppression of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people through relentless, nonviolent resistance. Read more about the Equality Ride and our other programs at www.soulforce.org.