



DAY OF

SILENCE

2003

Organizing Manual

Day of Silence  
project

GLSEN



# WELCOME

Welcome to the Day of Silence Organizing Manual! On behalf of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the United States Student Association (USSA) and the thousands of students whose leadership and participation have created the Day of Silence project, we'd like to thank you for your interest and involvement. With your help, the Day of Silence will continue to flourish as the largest youth-run action on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues in the country.

We have filled this manual with many ideas and tips to make your Day of Silence as effective as possible. Here, you'll find information on everything from fundraising and publicity to the nuts-and-bolts of getting your classmates, teachers and administration on board. Getting your school's administration to support your effort is particularly critical for high school organizers, but we've also identified alternative ways to participate if administrative support isn't likely. Also, there's information targeted both for high school and university organizing efforts (though we've even heard about middle school students organizing for the Day!), as well as plenty of suggestions that work in both settings.

We encourage you to use this manual in whatever way works best for you – you may pull ideas from a single section or take all in from cover to cover. The website, [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org), is another useful resource. We also encourage you to bring your own ideas and creativity to the table, so that your school's Day of Silence becomes something unique and works best for your particular school community.

Welcome aboard, and happy organizing!

The GLSEN Student Organizing Department

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## THE DAY OF SILENCE PROJECT

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For additional support and resources, please email us at [info@dayofsilence.org](mailto:info@dayofsilence.org).

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The experience, insight and leadership of the following leaders and supporters have contributed to the success of the project over the years.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL ENDORSEMENTS

Please visit the Day of Silence Project online @ [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org) for an up-to-date list of endorsing organizations.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following documents are available on the Day of Silence website: [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org). You can read them and adapt them, or even download the flyer, card and sticker for use in your own publicity strategy.

- Sample Strategy Chart
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Sample Press Release
- Sample Email for Recruiting Participants
- Sample Letter to Potential Ally Organizations
- Sample Letter to School Administration
- Sample Letter to Local Businesses
- Sample Guidelines for Participants
- Sample Flyer
- Sample "Speaking Card"
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# INTRODUCTION

- What is the Day of Silence Project?
- What can the Day of Silence Do?
- Why Silence as a Tactic?
- History of the Day of Silence Project

## WHAT IS THE DAY OF SILENCE PROJECT?

The Day of Silence is a day on which those people who support creating safe schools for LGBT people take a nine-hour vow of silence to recognize and protest the harassment, prejudice, and discrimination—in effect, the silencing—that LGBT people face. Instead of speaking, high school and university participants hand out cards or wear stickers or t-shirts printed with the following message:

**“Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth movement protesting the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and their allies. My deliberate silence echoes that silence, which is caused by harassment, prejudice and discrimination. I believe that ending the silence is the first step toward fighting these injustices. Think about the voices you are not hearing today. What are you going to do to end the silence?”**

But the Day of Silence Project is about more than being silent for a day. It’s about raising awareness around LGBT issues, making a visible personal commitment to justice and equality, and, potentially, organizing a larger campaign to promote safety and respect in your school and community.

## WHAT CAN THE DAY OF SILENCE DO?

The Day of Silence can be used as a tool to affect positive change—both personally and community-wide—that lasts far beyond the nine hours of the event. Depending on where you are, the makeup of your student body, the relationships between students and faculty, and other factors, the climate in your

school on LGBT issues could be incredibly hostile, incredibly welcoming or somewhere in between. Students might be forced to hide their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression because they fear physical or verbal harassment. They might be made invisible by school curriculum that makes no mention of LGBT people and events. Or your school might simply be a place where students, teachers and staff could learn more about diversity and acceptance. Regardless of what situation you find yourself in, the Day of Silence is an effort that can raise awareness on these issues, prompting people to talk and think about them.

It can also be a way for your group to position itself to create more long-lasting positive changes (and it is for this reason that we’ve included a full section on direct action organizing. If your school lacks a nondiscrimination or anti-harassment policy that makes mention of sexual orientation or gender identity, the Day of Silence could be a springboard for a wider campaign to create more inclusive policy. Or, if you want to get more LGBT history books into your library, you could position the Day of Silence as a strategy to demand greater inclusiveness.

**“TODAY I PARTICIPATED in the Day of Silence, and I didn’t think that something that only endured that brief of a period of time, and an absence of something, no less, could impact me this much, causing me to re-evaluate the way I have learned to express myself.”**

**—ELIZABETH, INDIANA ACADEMY 1998**

## WHY SILENCE AS A TACTIC?

The Day of Silence enables participants to show, in a highly visible way, everyone they encounter, that they support LGBT rights. At the same time, it provides a space for personal reflection about the consequences of being silent and silenced, bolstering an inner determination to speak up. The Day of Silence moves the power of these personal experiences to a community-focused effort. It compels us to consider how we can make our own voices stronger and begin to stop silencing ourselves. By taking silence, a tool that traditionally has been used to deprive people of their voice and power, and turning it into an intentional group activity, participants in the Day of Silence truly make a powerful statement of resistance.



## HISTORY OF THE DAY OF SILENCE PROJECT

### 1996 **THE DAY OF SILENCE IS BORN.**

Students organized the first Day of Silence at the University of Virginia. With over 150 students participating, those involved felt it was a great success. The Day of Silence received extensive local press coverage and a positive response from UVA community members, motivating then-18-year-old Maria Pulzetti to take the Day of Silence national.

### 1997 **FROM ONE, TO ONE HUNDRED, NATIONAL DAY OF SILENCE TAKES OFF**

With a web page and much dedication, Pulzetti and then-19-year-old Jessie Gilliam developed the effort to be used in schools across the country. It was renamed the National Day of Silence, and that year nearly 100 colleges and universities participated. Some schools in Australia heard about the action and modeled a similar day for Australian schools.

### 1998 **THE DAY KEEPS GROWING, THE PROJECT BEGINS**

Pulzetti and Gilliam realized they couldn't expand the National Day of Silence alone, so they organized a team of regional coordinators who could assist schools better by understanding and working with local networks. Expanding from a one-day vow of silence to include additional actions and educational events, the Day of Silence Project was officially inaugurated. That year, for the first time in a recognized number, students in high schools joined the organizing efforts, helping double the number of participating schools to over 200.

### 1999-2001 **MORE PEOPLE, MORE TIME, A MESSAGE OF UNITY SETS IN**

Through the sponsorship of Advocates for Youth, Gilliam worked part-time over the summer of 1999 to maintain and expand the Day of Silence Project. For the first time in the project's history, a team of volunteers met for a weekend in Boston to discuss strategy and develop future plans towards assisting schools. The Day of Silence Project continued to support high schools, colleges and universities around the country with volunteers led by then-18-year-old Chloe Palenchar, the National Project Coordinator. Over 300 high schools participated that year.

### 2001 - CURRENT **DAY OF SILENCE PROJECT; STILL GROWING, STILL STRONG**

GLSEN National Student Organizer Chris Tuttle, Gilliam and Palenchar developed a proposal to provide the Day of Silence Project with new funding, staff, volunteers and an official organizational sponsor, GLSEN. To ensure its success, GLSEN developed a first-ever Day of Silence Project Advisory Board (which includes Pulzetti, Gilliam and Palenchar) to help build upon past successes, a Leadership Team of students to support high school organizers around the country, and a partnership with the United States Student Association, to ensure colleges and universities receive equal support for their organizing.

### TOMORROW **THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS**

Just imagine: thousands of students, from San Francisco, California to Irmo, South Carolina, united in a visible silence to create real change in local schools. Whether used to educate classmates on the damaging effects of anti-LGBT bias, or to demand passage of a statewide nondiscriminatory act inclusive of LGBT people, the Day of Silence is an awesome opportunity to create more inclusive school environments and make some noise.

### WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO END THE SILENCE





# **PARTICIPATING IN THE DAY OF SILENCE PROJECT**

- I. The Basics of Direct Action Organizing**
- II. The Day of Silence at Your School**
- III. How to Handle Roadblocks**
- IV. How to Build a Movement**

## I: THE BASICS OF DIRECT ACTION ORGANIZING

Some groups may wish to make the Day of Silence the centerpiece of a larger campaign to change their schools. Others may wish to maximize the interest and support generated by the Day of Silence by planning additional activities. This section provides an introduction to direct action organizing, a tool used by many student and community activists. Direct action organizing can help you to think about all of the people and factors that contribute to decision-making in your school, and how your group can exert an influence on all of them.

### ***UNDERSTANDING RELATIONS OF POWER***

“Strong people don’t need strong leaders.” Fundamentally, Ella Baker’s words speak to the power of direct action, grassroots organizing to involve not just one or two prominent leaders but large numbers of people in the community to bring about social change. Miss Baker, as she was known by students with whom she worked, was an organizer of the Civil Rights Movement who also advised a multi-racial group of students, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The group organized lunch counter sit-ins, “freedom rides” in which white and black bus riders integrated commercial bus lines by riding them together, voter registration drives and “citizenship schools” in which Southern black people and others were educated about organizing, voting and power.

**Organizing** is our ability to change our communities: to identify problems and develop solutions, to bring **people** together, to plan strategies and campaigns, to hold elected officials and corporations accountable to the communities they serve. It is rooted in the power of people. Individuals working together as a group and/or community have the power to bring about change. Ella Baker’s words do not say that leaders are not important; they do say that people are. Using organizing as a tool means that we need to be reaching out and involving as many people as possible to take small actions but sometimes big risks. Our teachers, fellow students, administrators, families, school boards and other community members need to understand our needs, concerns and, most importantly, our voices and power. The Day of Silence uses silence to demonstrate the importance of voices and our power to demand safer, more equitable schools. Success in organizing depends upon our ability to bring people together and to hear everyone’s voice; the more diverse our voices, the more successful our work will be.

Organizing compels us to consider the power and privilege that certain groups of people and types of behavior hold in our communities. When we think of anti-LGBT bias in schools, we often think of name-calling, unsafe classrooms and hallways or exclusion of LGBT people and history from the curriculum. It’s important to remember that people experience anti-LGBT harassment in schools most often because they do not fit expected gender roles, or because they are open about their sexuality. When “girls” act like “boys” or “boys” act like “girls,” or when people are visible about their LGBT identities and relationships, some people perceive these transgressions of sexual orientation and gender “norms” as threatening to their own gender identity, sexuality, or entire worldview. That worldview often sees women, people of color, LGBT people, young people, poor people, and people with disabilities as having less value, and therefore less power. We need to move our thinking to the next level and recognize the broader and deeper connections between anti-LGBT bias and other oppressions.

Organizing helps us to recognize the role we can play in changing the power dynamics in our communities. To build safe schools, we need to educate people about gender and sexual orientation. At the same time, we need to build the skills and power of LGBT people and allies to speak and act in their local communities, in order to bring about meaningful change. The Day of Silence strengthens individuals, as they realize their own power, and groups, as they use their collective power to demand change.

### ***LEARNING THE STEPS OF DIRECT ACTION ORGANIZING***

Direct action organizing is based on some very simple ideas:

- A. **Every problem has solutions.**
- B. **A committed group of people who care have the power to make solutions happen.**
- C. **And working together these people can alter relations of power.**

In order to get from point A to point B, the people in the group need to evaluate the situation surrounding the **problem**, by asking themselves the following ten questions:

### 1. WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

As you know, the **problem** that the Day of Silence Project seeks to change is the silence faced by LGBT people and their allies. In every school and community, this silence may manifest itself in more specific **problems**, such as the lack of LGBT-inclusive nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies, the exclusion of LGBT people and history from the curriculum, the absence of support and advocacy services for LGBT youth, the lack of consequences for name-calling and many other problems. A **problem** is simply the situation that is wrong or needs to be changed.

For example, a **problem statement** would be: "Anti-LGBT verbal harassment is pervasive in our school." Let's call that "Problem 1." Or, "LGBT students don't feel supported by the counseling staff at our college." That's "Problem 2."

### 2. WHAT ARE SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM?

In direct action organizing, every group effort, or **campaign**, should focus on one **problem**, with the understanding that most **problems** contain, or are connected to, other **problems**. Once your group has identified the **problem** it wants to focus on, the next step is brainstorming possible solutions.

In order to brainstorm solutions, you need to think about why the **problem** exists, in specific terms. Continuing with problem 1, why is harassment tolerated? Sometimes, teachers don't intervene because they simply don't recognize harassment; they've internalized the idea that bullying and teasing, or being bullied and teased, is just part of growing up. Sometimes, LGBT teachers who aren't "out" in school are afraid to intervene, out of concern for their own safety and job security. Most of the time, teachers don't intervene because they don't know how; perhaps there's no official school policy regarding anti-LGBT harassment and how to respond to it, or, if there is, teachers haven't been trained in how to follow it.

Now, think about solutions that might address these **problems**. What would really improve the situation? Continuing with Problem 1, training all teachers in how to respond to harassment might help to solve the **problem**. Passing an anti-harassment policy that includes protection for students based on their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression might help to solve the **problem**. Creating a standard disciplinary procedure for harassment, and making sure that everyone in the school knows about it, might help to solve the **problem**.

Considering Problem 2, why might LGBT students feel unsupported by counselors? Perhaps the college hasn't made training in LGBT student support a job requirement or preference in hiring counselors. Perhaps there is a perception among college administrators that there aren't enough LGBT students to warrant hiring someone who specializes in supporting LGBT students, or taking the time or money to train the existing counselors.

Now, think about solutions that might address these **problems**. What would really improve the situation? Passing a hiring policy that requires counselors to have training in LGBT student support might help to solve the **problem**.

Holding mandatory annual trainings in LGBT student support for existing counseling staff might help to solve the **problem**. Officially including LGBT student support in the list of counseling services offered by the college might help to solve the **problem**.

All of the potential solutions are known as **issues**, or demands. A **campaign** that works to achieve an issue is known as, you guessed it, an **issue campaign**. Issue campaigns are the engine that drives direct action organizing.

### 3. WHICH SOLUTION WILL YOU PURSUE? WHY?

Of course, all of the possible solutions, working in harmony, would be ideal. But for the purposes of your **campaign**, you should pick one solution to pursue. This means that you should pick the solution that has

"DURING MY SILENCE people responded in completely different ways. One person stopped me, and thanked me for what I was doing for all the people who weren't able to. Another person told me that I was a pitiful excuse for a human being. I decided that the thank you was what was really important."

the greatest potential to solve multiple **problems**, while at the same time recognizing that every solution you brainstorm might still only partially solve the **problem**.

One of the most important criteria for choosing an **issue** is that it be worthwhile. People should feel that they are fighting for something they feel good about, and something that merits the effort. Think about how the following criteria contribute to the worthiness of your **issue**. If your **issue** can achieve as many of the following results as possible, you probably have a very worthwhile **issue**.

**Result in a Real Improvement in People's Lives.** If you can see and feel the improvement, then you can be sure that it has actually been won.

**Give People a Sense of Their Own Power.** Your group and supporters should feel that the victory was won directly by them. They should feel that they have the power to effect change, to be heard and to be taken seriously by the rest of your school community, especially those in authority.

**Alter the Relations of Power.** Building a strong group creates a new power dynamic; in other words, the needs and concerns of your group are more likely to be consistently taken into account, rather than taken for granted, by others with power. This is because you've shown people that you have the ability to mobilize support and resources.

**Be Winable.** The **problem** should not be so large or the solution so remote that your group gets overwhelmed. Your group's members should be able to see from the start that there is a good chance of winning, or at least that there is a good **strategy** for winning. (Do we ever fight for unwinnable **issues**? Yes. We do work to end **problems** that seem to have no end, but we always try to break them down into winnable **issues**, even if the victory is small compared to the whole **problem**.)

**Be Widely Felt.** It's helpful if many people in your school community feel that this is a real **problem**, and agree with the solution. If your school is unsupportive of the needs of LGBT students, however, then what's more important is that the people in your group agree about the **problem** and the solution. That way, even if you're fighting an uphill battle, you'll be unified in doing so.

**Be Deeply Felt.** People should not only agree, but also feel strongly enough to do something about it. If many people agree about the **issue** but don't feel strongly, it will be difficult for you to generate the enthusiasm and commitment needed to fuel your work. It's important to note that what is widely and deeply felt changes over time. Sometimes there needs to be a period of education before people can truly decide where they stand on an **issue**.

**Be Easy to Understand.** A strong **issue** should not require a lengthy and difficult explanation. The test: a flyer should be able to explain the **issue** in one paragraph.

**Have a Clear Target.** The **target**, or **decision-maker**, is the person who has the power to give you what you want. If you can't figure out who the **target** is, you need to do some more research before pursuing your **issue**.

**Have a Clear Time Frame that Works for You.** An **issue campaign** has a beginning, a middle, and an end. With a strong **issue**, the critical times in the **campaign** can be controlled so that they come when you can mobilize the most support.

**Be Non-Divisive.** Pick unifying **issues**. Avoid **issues** that divide supporters who should be working together. Don't pit friend against friend, teacher against student, identity/affinity group against identity/affinity group.

**Build Leadership and Membership.** People should be able to contribute to your work at various levels of involvement and leadership. In addition, your **issue** should lead your group forward in its work, rather than leading you into a rut, which could cause you to lose members and supporters.

**Set You Up for the Next Issue.** **Issues** are like playing pool—each shot has set you up for the next one. In addition to thinking about future **issue** directions, consider the skills the group will develop in the **campaign** and the contacts it will make for the next one.

**Be Consistent with Your Vision.** The **issues** you choose to work on should reflect your vision for an improved school community.

#### 4. WHO HAS THE POWER TO GIVE US WHAT WE WANT?

Continuing with the previous examples, your local school board, district administration or school administration may have the power to approve mandatory teacher training. Your college administration,



or the Department of Student Services, may have the power to approve counselor training. But it's not enough to know the name of the public body or office that has the power to implement your solution. People, not institutions or boards, make decisions. **The actual people who have the power to make the decision, such as a specific school board member, school principal or college Dean, are the people you need to influence.** If you can't figure out who the person with the power is, you either need to do more research, or you really don't have an **issue**, since there is no solution to a problem if there is no one with the power to solve it. The person with the power to give you what you want is known as the **decision-maker**. The **decision-maker** becomes the target of your **issue campaign**.

## 5. WHO IS LIKELY TO SUPPORT OUR SOLUTION? WHY?

A small but deeply committed group of people (like you) needs to care about the issue enough to stick with it in order to see it through. Even more importantly, a larger number of people need to care about the **issue** enough to support it and work on it over the long term, if necessary.

Your group should begin by brainstorming a list of all of the people who are directly affected by the **problem**. Start with yourselves, and then branch outward. Returning to Problem 1, who is affected by anti-LGBT harassment in your school and the teachers' lack of response to it? Everyone, you could argue, because it affects the entire school climate; at this point, however, you should be more specific. Make a list of the people in your group, any other "out" LGBT students, and your friends. Add to your list "out" LGBT teachers, teachers who already respond to harassment, and teachers with whom you have good relationships. Add supportive administrators and staff. Add family members and community members. These people are all directly affected by the **problem**, either because they get harassed or people they care about get harassed. In Direct Action Organizing, your supporters are known as your **constituents** and **allies**.

**The question to ask yourselves now is: Would these people support this issue, our proposed solution to the problem?** The answer to your question should be "**YES**." If the answer is "Maybe" or "I Don't Know," you should take the time to ask people how much they care about your issue before you commit to working on it. Ask if they'd be willing to attend a meeting about the issue, if they'd be willing to make phone calls, if they'd be willing to get their friends and family to write letters. **Never assume support, and never assume opposition. The only way to know what people think is to ask them.**

If the answer to the above question is NO, think about how you can reframe your **issue** without compromising it, so that people would support it. This is known as "cutting" an **issue**. Returning to Problem 2, let's say that your **issue** is "The college should sponsor mandatory annual trainings in LGBT student support for existing counseling staff." If your fairly certain that a mandatory training won't be supported, you could instead propose a voluntary training. Or, you could make the acquisition of LGBT support resources for the counselors' offices your issue.

## 6. WHO IS LIKELY TO STAND IN THE WAY OF OUR SOLUTION? WHY?

Next, your group should brainstorm a list of all of the people who are likely to stand in your way. This list should include teachers, counselors and administrators who've denied you their support in the past, or who've expressed bias against LGBT people. It should include peers, relatives, school board members and people in the community who have shown intolerance of LGBT people, or opposition to initiatives supporting LGBT students. The people who oppose your issue are known as, you guessed it, your **opponents**.

## 7. WHOSE OPINION ARE WE NOT SURE ABOUT? WHY?

Remember, the best way to learn people's opinions is to ask them. Just because you don't know someone's opinion, doesn't mean they don't have one. You should always begin by asking; it may seem like a lot of work, but it actually will save you time and energy later on.

There is another group of people, however, and that's the people in the middle. Maybe, at some point, you've thought of them as the people who "just don't care." Well, maybe they don't care because no one's ever asked them to care, or educated them as to why they should care. **It's important to remember that the number one motivation for people to take action is their own self-interest.** If you can show people the benefits they will gain from supporting your **issue**, you can turn them into **allies**. On the other hand, if you alienate people by never asking their opinion, or making assumptions about them, you can turn them

into **opponents**. In Direct Action Organizing, and in politics in general, it's the people in the middle that everyone fights over. They can be swayed, which is why they're often known as the "movable middle." Your group should brainstorm a list of people you're not sure about. Then, divide up the list and have everyone take responsibility for a part of it. You are about to embark on a fact-finding mission. It's best to assign people the names of individuals they know or with whom they share some connection, no matter how loose. People are much more likely to have an opinion on an issue when they know or recognize the people working on it.

## 8. WHAT DETAILS AND FACTORS IN OUR OWN GROUP DO WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT?

When planning an **issue campaign**, it's easy to focus on everyone else—what your **allies** and **opponents** think, how to reach your **target**, and how to build others' interest and support for your issue. It's important both for the health of your group and the success of your **issue campaign**, however, to think about the group itself.

Begin by making a list of your group's strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps you have a lot of people who are great at doing behind-the-scenes work, but not so many who feel comfortable in the spotlight. Perhaps you've got a couple of people with boundless energy, but most of your members are on the verge of burnout because of their other commitments. Perhaps you have some people in your group who don't get along very well. Perhaps your group isn't very inclusive or diverse, or perhaps it is. All of these factors need to be taken into consideration. They're known as **organizational considerations**.

Another list you should make is a list of the ways in which you want your **issue campaign** to strengthen your group. Do you want to increase your membership? Learn new skills? Double your contact list? Raise money? These factors are also **organizational considerations**.

## 9. WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH WITH THIS SOLUTION?

In Direct Action Organizing, what you hope to accomplish in your **issue campaign** is known as your goal(s). Another way to think of **goals** in this context is "What are our **demands**?" It's useful to separate out your long term, intermediate, and short term **goals**, in order to maximize your group's time and energy, gain a clear understanding of how your activities connect to one another, and build participation and interest from your initial victories.

"PEOPLE REFUSE TO OPEN their eyes to the problems that surround this issue. When a person says that they never notice a problem with LGBT people being forced into silence, they are choosing to be blind to it. This Day is a definite eye-opener."

### LONG TERM GOALS

A **long term goal** is the vision or ideal you have for what your school should look like and how it should treat your **issue**. It can also be helpful to break down that long term goal to something you don't think you can accomplish in the next year but are aiming for in your **campaign**; for example, a **goal** to have every single administrator, faculty member, and support staff member in your school trained in how to support and advocate for LGBT students.

### INTERMEDIATE GOALS

Your **intermediate goal** is your **issue**, the thing you want from your **target** that you will build the **campaign** around. It should be concrete, so that everyone knows what constitutes a victory. While you ultimately want safety, respect, and support for all LGBT students, by setting intermediate **goals**, you have concrete steps—such as mandatory staff training—to work toward your vision.

### SHORT TERM GOALS

A **short term goal** is the first step of your **campaign**, and leads directly to your intermediate **goals**. It should be something you are fairly certain you can win, but that will require your group to mobilize large amounts of people to build momentum in your **campaign**. Examples of short-term **goals** would be to obtain a meeting with your principal or superintendent, to get support from the teachers' union, or to hold meeting for family members.



## 10. WHAT SPECIFIC STEPS DO WE NEED TO TAKE TO ACHIEVE OUR SOLUTION?

Using your short term goals, you can begin to group some of the short term **goals** together or break them out into different **strategies**. One **strategy** could be educating **allies**; another might be specifically mobilizing parents or other identity groups. A **strategy** is a larger scheme of activities that form the basis of your **issue campaign**. Some **strategies** include voter registration and mobilization, electoral politics, statewide referendums, issue education or lobbying elected officials. Depending on your **issue campaign**, you may wish to use more than one **strategy**.

Once you've identified your **strategy/strategies**, you should brainstorm a list of possible steps that your group could take to support it. Returning to the previous examples, let's say that one of your **strategies** is to meet with your **targets** in order to educate them about your **issue**. You plan to meet with your principal, to discuss anti-bias teacher training, or your Dean, to discuss LGBT student support training for college counselors. What specific steps can you take to make that meeting happen successfully? Do you need to do research so that you can show your **target** evidence that anti-LGBT harassment exists in your school, or that LGBT students feel unsupported by the counseling staff? Do you need to find information about trainers and training resources that have worked in other schools? What about contacting the **target**? Do you plan simply to call for a meeting appointment, or would a formal letter, signed by group of concerned students, be more effective?

All of these very specific steps are known as **tactics**. **Tactics** are deliberate, planned actions, and should be designed to show power to your **target**, and to increase visibility and support for your **issue campaign**. Everything you do, from how you contact supporters to how your group chooses to behave at a protest rally, is a **tactic**.

What's more, a **tactic** can have **tactics**. A perfect example of this is the Day of Silence. Within the planning of the Day, there can be multiple **tactics** for generating publicity, building participation, increasing visibility of participants and using momentum to organize additional events. At the same time, the Day of Silence can be one **tactic** in a larger **issue campaign** to reduce harassment of LGBT students, or to increase support of LGBT students.

The Day of Silence on its own is a compelling statement supporting LGBT people and others who experience silencing and oppression in your school community. Imagine how powerful the Day of Silence could be in your school if you were to use it as a **tactic** to further a larger **issue campaign**.

The Day of Silence, as a nationally organized event, can:

- make your group and its **issues** recognizable to members of your school community
- raise general awareness around LGBT people and concerns in your school community
- generate momentum for your future actions
- mobilize a network of **allies** for you to call upon for assistance and support
- help you to raise money to sustain your work
- provide the foundation for building a **coalition** of concerned individuals and groups from the local to the national level
- bring to your work the attention of media, elected officials, local and national LGBT organizations and others concerned about school safety, equitable education, students' rights, diversity, and social justice

Think about it!

### TA-DA!

When you put these ten organizing steps together and figure out what role each can play, you have your **issue campaign**. The Midwest Academy, one of the nation's oldest and best known schools for community organizations, citizen organizations and individuals committed to progressive social change, has developed a graphic model called the "Strategy Chart" that can help you to arrange your information into an overall **campaign**. If your group would like to go through the process of visually mapping out your **goals, organizational considerations, constituents, allies, and opponents, targets, and tactics**, you can complete your own Strategy Chart.

## COALITION-BUILDING

A **coalition** is a diverse cluster of individuals and groups that work together to reach a common goal.

That goal might be a number of things, but often includes one of the following:

- Influencing people's behavior (for example, reducing anti-LGBT verbal harassment)
- Building a healthy community
- Adapting, creating, or expanding public policy

### WHY BUILD A COALITION?

- To provide programs and use resources more efficiently and effectively and to eliminate any duplication of services (in other words, to avoid reinventing the wheel)
- To increase communication between groups and break down stereotypes
- To revitalize the sagging energies of members of diverse groups who are trying to do too much on their own
- To plan and launch community-wide efforts
- To win victories that couldn't be won by one group alone
- To build a stronger power base
- To develop new leaders

### HOW DO WE BEGIN TO BUILD A COALITION?

#### BE STRATEGIC

Be strategic in how you construct your **coalition**. Don't assume it will come together "naturally." Whom you ask, how you ask them, and who you ask first, second and third, are all important. Some groups won't join if others have been asked first. Some groups won't work together and you won't be able to get both on board. Take into account your own **goals** and **organizational considerations**.

It's important to build a diverse, representative **coalition**. Start with a list of every student and/or community group that is concerned with, affected by or working on diversity, equity and social justice issues. Be creative with your list; don't limit it to the most obvious choices. Once you have your comprehensive "wish list," you can begin to narrow it down according to specific concerns and circumstances. Identify the **self-interest** or the reason each group might have for wanting to join the **coalition**, and understand and respect that groups will have different reasons for joining.

Once you are ready to ask groups to join, don't approach them as a "token" gesture. All needed groups should be signed on and at the table from the beginning. Diversity will only happen if the **coalition** works on issues that cut across many groups and acknowledges how barriers created by institutional sexism, racism, heterosexism, ableism and classism affect the internal workings of the **coalition**.

#### CHOOSE UNIFYING ISSUES

**Coalitions** come together around a common **goal** or set of **goals**. These **goals** must be developed by more than one group. Don't decide on the **issue** and the **strategy** and then invite others to join you. This doesn't work because other groups won't feel invested in the project. Develop **strategy** collectively. **The strength of a coalition lies in its unity**. Work with other groups to develop a **strategy** that makes sense for everyone. The **tactics** you choose for your **campaigns** should be supported by all members of the **coalition**.

Avoid **coalitions** based on groups agreeing to exchange help. Groups can rarely deliver their members to work on some other group's program, and no group will feel that it got enough out of the **coalition**.

### JOINING EXISTING LOCAL/STATE COALITIONS

If there is a **coalition** formed already outside of your school or off-campus, it's imperative that students have a seat at the table! **Coalitions** can be very easy to join; just call around to local community groups and organizations, find out if any active **coalitions** exist, get the names and contact information of the people heading up the coalition, and call them. Let them know that students at your school are interested in joining the **coalition**.

## II: THE DAY OF SILENCE AT YOUR SCHOOL

### ***PUTTING TOGETHER A LEADERSHIP TEAM***

The Day of Silence entails organizing individuals and/or groups throughout your school to learn from the experience and to participate in additional activities and events devoted to ending the silencing of LGBT youth. The following guidelines offer suggestions for how to manage these somewhat challenging tasks and organize the Day of Silence at your school. Keep in mind that these are only suggestions; we encourage you to adapt the information so that it works for your own school.

You should start to plan the event at the beginning of the spring semester, in January or February. This way you have lots of time to brainstorm innovative and creative ideas, and lots of time to take care of all of the potentially overwhelming details that are part of planning any event.

First things first, you should build a team of people who are willing to help you organize the Day of Silence at your school. You may want to organize the Day of Silence through an established school group (such as the gay-straight alliance (GSA), Amnesty International club, or Student Union), or you may want to build a **coalition** of interested individuals from different school groups. It's important, however, for you to think very deliberately about the people you need and want to include, and for you to recognize that as you begin and continue to plan, your needs may change. Try to get a group of people together who have a variety of strengths and interests, such as public speaking, making fliers, organizing publicity, fundraising, and contacting potential supporters. Can you organize the Day of Silence alone? Yes, but the impact will be significantly greater if you outreach to others to join you.

Once you've brought these people together, it's time to brainstorm. You should think about **the reasons** you have for wanting to organize the Day, **the people** you want to reach with the Day, and **the message** you want to communicate to them. After you've decided these things, it will be much easier to develop an effective **strategy**.

#### **SOME QUESTIONS FOR BRAINSTORMING MIGHT INCLUDE:**

1. Why is the Day of Silence needed at our school?
2. What do we want to change at our school, & how can we use the Day of Silence as a tool in accomplishing that goal?
3. Who knows about the Day of Silence at our school?
4. What do people know about the Day of Silence at our school?
5. How did they learn about it? What publicity strategies have we used? What has been most successful? Why?
6. Who else should know about the Day of Silence?
7. What is the best way to reach them?
8. What obstacles have we faced?
9. What resources might we need?
10. How can organizing the Day of Silence help to build interest and participation in our group?

Once you've determined the answers to these questions, it's time to get to the nitty-gritty of planning the Day. Your group should draft a **strategic plan**. The **strategic plan** should address **what** will get done, **when** it will get done, and **who** will be responsible for doing it. There are lots of elements to keep in mind: committing people to help with planning, reserving space for "Breaking the Silence" events, fundraising for resources and guest speakers, finding out procedures for publicity and organizing additional tactics are just a few tasks that require planning in advance.

### ***CREATING A TIMELINE FOR YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN***

A strategic plan is simply a way to organize your tactics into a timeline that you can then follow to achieve your goals effectively. The following sample timeline includes the "deadlines" and guidelines organizers have needed to achieve their goals; the main ideas are then broken out into more detailed thematic sections. We encourage you to expand and customize the plan to meet your own goals. If you have decided to organize for the Day of Silence and it is only a few weeks away, don't panic or give up; you can still pull it off!

## **FIRST THINGS FIRST**

### **THINK ABOUT YOUR GOAL**

If you're using the Day of Silence as a tactic in a larger campaign, make sure you map out the "big picture" so that everyone understands the role each person and each part of your planning is going to play in accomplishing your ultimate goal. Make goals measurable so that you may easily evaluate the success of your work.

### **ASK FOR INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT**

If you are a high school student, it is important to think about the school procedures and policies regarding events like the Day of Silence. If you are a member of a student club, or a GSA, your faculty advisor can be a key ally in figuring out who in the administration you should speak with and what permissions you will need for breaking the silence events. Individuals organizing the Day of Silence should seek the advice of a supportive teacher or member of the administration about letting the school know what you want to do. Another section, "Potential Challenges for Day of Silence Organizers and Participants" offers some suggestions for approaching the administration about your plans.

### **NETWORK**

Determine which people you need and want to participate in all aspects of the Day of Silence. Who should help to organize participants? Who should help with publicity? Who might be able to provide funding? Whose endorsement would be valuable to you? Who is going to oversee all of the planning? Don't forget to compile a list of volunteers who'd be willing to help with the time-consuming tasks.

### **JUMP ON THE BANDWAGON**

When the decision has been made to join the Day of Silence Project, email the Day of Silence Project and become an officially participating school. Visit the website ([www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org)) to fill out the online registration form, or contact us by phone, mail or email. Include your school's name and the sponsoring group's name (and web address, if applicable). We will post the names of all participating schools on our website, although we do not post the names of individual student organizers.

### **EVALUATE COSTS**

If you plan to design your own publicity materials (speaking cards, guidelines, flyers, or other materials), plan on spending a minimum of \$50 on printing for the event. Sample versions of these materials are available on the Day of Silence website ([www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org)); if you choose to use those, you only need to budget for paper, cardstock and printer labels/stickers. If you're hosting a guest speaker, renting a space for an event, or printing t-shirts for participants, budget this stuff now as well.

### **CULTIVATE THE TEAM**

Plan ongoing meetings with the core group of participants who will be responsible for planning and coordinating the work. Divide up the tasks for groups or committees to follow up on. Remember one person needs to be responsible for the Day of Silence list of participants. Be careful to collect only "safe" contact information; for a variety of factors some people may not be able to be contacted. Have food and energizers –to make it fun – at every meeting. Review your timeline and goals at every meeting too!

### **SIX WEEKS IN ADVANCE**

#### **CONTINUE TO NETWORK**

Compile a list of contacts from student groups that you can use to outreach to Day of Silence participants. Make initial contact with these groups to explain the Day of Silence, and to find out their meeting times and places. Consider asking for co-sponsorships or endorsements from these other groups, to increase the depth and breadth of the Day.

### **PLAN ADDITIONAL TACTICS**

Brainstorm events, activities and programs (**tactics**) to reinforce the Day of Silence and further your campaign, such as a "Breaking the Silence" rally or other gathering at the end of the Day where participants

can share their experiences or hear a guest speaker. Decide which **tactics** would be most effective and practical, and ask for volunteers to help plan them.

### **ONE MONTH IN ADVANCE**

#### **SPREAD THE WORD**

Attend meetings of the groups from which you are going to outreach to participants. We'll call these "ally groups." Ask in advance for permission to make a brief announcement at their meetings. Ask each group's secretary to include the Day of Silence in the meeting minutes, and to post information in the group's meeting space, office, bulletin board, and/or email list. Tell the group when you plan to return with the materials for Day of Silence participation.

#### **GET THE GOODS**

Design and print your own materials, or download from the website the flyer to advertise the Day of Silence, the guidelines for participants to follow, the speaking cards for participants to hand out, and stickers for participants to wear. Make sure that the materials have the date of the Day of Silence printed on them, as well as pertinent information about any additional tactics you've planned.

#### **TOOT YOUR HORN**

Send press releases to school and local media. Be sure to include the contact information of your Day of Silence organizers, or the name and contact information of your group if you don't want to use individuals' names.

#### **CREATE A SAFE SPACE**

Reserve a "safe room" at school that people can visit if they need to be with other participants during the Day itself. Talk with school counselors about having a counselor on duty, if that's right for your school, or have students volunteer to be "peer supporters" in the safe room during the Day.

### **THREE WEEKS IN ADVANCE**

#### **REIND PARTICIPANTS**

Attend ally group meetings again. Distribute materials to Day of Silence participants. Keep a list of participants; it's important to have a general idea of how many students are participating. Thank the organizations for working with you.

#### **RECRUIT, RECRUIT, RECRUIT!**

Keep recruiting participants—your friends, your friends' friends, your family, your neighbors, classmates, faculty, school staff, anyone. Remember, for those who can't be silent, you can suggest alternative ways to participate.

#### **WORK THE MEDIA**

Design and submit an ad to the school and local newspaper(s) announcing the Day of Silence. Submit public service announcements (PSAs) to school and local radio stations. Write and submit a letter to the editor of your school newspaper to be printed on or just before the Day of Silence.

### **ONE WEEK IN ADVANCE**

#### **HOLD PREP MEETINGS**

Have a pre-Day of Silence meeting for participants and those hosting the safe room. Talk about what will happen during the silent hours and how participants might be most effective throughout the Day. It's a good idea to rehearse strategies for handling reactions to your silence. Also, inform participants of the message(s) and talking points.

"IT TAKES A SMALL effort and makes a big impact, whether you have five or fifty people that actually participate. The Day of Silence was very symbolic for me. Since I am normally very outgoing and talkative, my peers noticed that something was up right away. The Day of Silence gave me the chance to inform many people about the needs of my community. The most successful part of the Day of Silence is how many people you can inform personally within the space of a single working day."



## **RACE TO THE FINISH LINE**

Send out press releases again. Keep recruiting participants. Attend ally group meetings one more time if you think that it will help recruit more participants. If you have a specific area at school where student groups advertise, post flyers there to publicize the Day of Silence and recruit volunteers. Put up flyers advertising the Day.

## **THE DAY BEFORE GET EXCITED!**

Remind people that the Day of Silence is tomorrow. If you have an email list of participants, send a reminder to them. If you have a phone list, ask some volunteers to call as many people as possible. Remember, you should never call or email people who haven't "officially" given you their contact information.

## **ADVERTISE**

Post flyers everywhere. Write with chalk on the sidewalks.

## **SECURE YOUR STAFF**

Make sure people are available to host the safe room.

## **FINALIZE ADDITIONAL TACTICS, AT LEAST THOSE HAPPENING DURING THE DAY OF SILENCE**

In particular, make sure everything is ready for the "Breaking the Silence" events: logistics, publicity, participants and so on.

## **THE DAY OF SILENCE!**

### **SSSHHH!**

Be visible. Hand out as many speaking cards as you can. Whatever your goal, the Day of Silence is the perfect opportunity for you to build support and momentum. You may want to schedule people to stand at a prominent spot at your school and hand out speaking cards all day to passers-by. Smile and give a thumbs-up to other participants. Drop by the safe room and get support from fellow participants. Take time to think about why you are being silent and how it makes you feel.

## **BREAK THE SILENCE WITH ALLIES AND SUPPORTERS**

Attend the "Breaking the Silence" events and give yourself a pat on the back! Enjoy the achievements of the day, thank the participants and your allies and take a moment to appreciate your collective strength.

## **THE FOLLOWING WEEK**

### **CELEBRATE!**

Hold a party to thank everyone who participated and helped out.

## **ASSESS**

Did the Day of Silence meet your expectations? Did you achieve your goal, or are you now in a better position to achieve it? What was particularly successful about the Day? What might you have done differently?

## **FOLLOW UP**

Attend ally group meetings or send thank-you emails/notes expressing your appreciation for participation and other help. Contact the Day of Silence Project to share how the Day of Silence went at your school, including great ideas you had, problems you encountered, participation data, and suggestions for next year. Write a thank-you letter to any businesses, community organizations or individuals that sponsored you, telling them how well the event went and how vital their contribution was to your success.

## COORDINATING OUTREACH

Nothing is more important than participants during the Day of Silence. The most important key to success is to let as many people as possible know about the Day and how they can participate, as well as where they can access materials for participation. In high schools in particular, it will be critical in publicity and outreach efforts to have administrative support.

Secondly, the most important task is to let people know about the Day and how they can participate, as well as where they can access materials for participation.

## GATHERING PARTICIPANTS

There is no “right number” of participants for the Day of Silence, although the general rule is the more, the better. The more people participate the more visible the event will be, and participants will feel less alone during their silent hours. In the past, 1 Day of Silence organizers have recruited participants from individuals and school groups of all backgrounds, interests, sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.

Before you start recruiting participants, make sure that you have materials available and accessible for those who wish to participate. You need to create a way for participants to be visible. You could give participants a sticker to wear that says “Day of Silence.” Some schools have had participants wear all black or a noticeable armband. Still other schools have had T-shirts made up for their participants to wear during their silence. Work with your budget to get the most creative and cost-effective materials. T-shirts and stickers adorned with a rainbow or some other LGBT symbol will clearly define what the event is about. Remember that you can always use the sample flyer and sticker that are downloadable from the Day of Silence Project website ([www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org)).

You will also want to provide all participants with enough speaking cards to pass out to people they usually encounter. Make sure the card has the date of the Day of Silence on it so that would-be participants do not forget, the Day of Silence Project web address ([www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org)) for people who might wish to find additional information on LGBT issues, and the contact information for your school’s organizers. Remember that the speaking cards are a great way for your group to get some general publicity! Finally, you should supply participants with some guidelines for remaining silent. Have these materials accessible and available whenever you talk to school groups or advertise for the Day of Silence. We recommend having materials available at a central school location as well: perhaps a library, a supportive teacher’s office, or the LGBT group’s office.

So now that you’ve got all that ready, make a list of people and groups that you think might be supportive of the Day of Silence. Write down every person and group you can think of, and don’t be afraid to be adventurous in your choices: you’ll never know unless you ask if someone will want to participate. Try asking the following groups to participate (some are more applicable to college-level organizing):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • LGBT and Ally Groups                     | • Faculty   |
| • Women’s and Feminist Organizations       | • Staff   |
| • Racial/Ethnic/Cultural Affinity Groups   | • Administration  |
| • Religious Organizations                  | • Athletic and Recreational Groups  |
| • Sororities and Fraternities              | • Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Organizations  |
| • Residence Halls                          | • Academic Groups   |
| • Political Organizations                  | • Individual Academic Departments   |
| • Student Government and Leadership Groups | • Specific Classes (for example, history classes that study social movements or nonviolent protest) |
| • Student Centers                          |   |
| • Counseling Centers                       |   |

The more groups you have participating in the Day of Silence, the broader the support the Project will receive. You may even want to ask the groups if they would like to co-sponsor or endorse the Project – this is a great way to get visibility and funding.

The following are some great ways to approach potential allies:

### **1. PERSONAL CONNECTIONS**

Let's face it, nothing's better than a personal connection when it comes to asking individuals or groups for help. Make a list of the other groups your organizers belong to, and which students belong to which groups. These individuals already have a relationship to those groups, and can ask in person for their participation, endorsement or help. Then, make a list of the groups your organizers do not have personal connections with, and designate someone to contact those groups to ask if one of your organizers can visit their meeting and talk for a few minutes about the Project. Bring materials to their meetings and try to stay for the entire time; groups will be more receptive to you if you show an interest in their activities. With this in mind, you may wish to designate someone to attend ally groups' meetings on a regular basis.

### **2. EMAIL AND LETTERS**

It's time to start writing. Email can help immensely with this task, especially at schools where most students have accounts. Write students and groups a letter explaining the Day of Silence message, suggesting why they would want to participate, and specifying when and where they can pick up materials. Encourage them to write to you to confirm their participation, and to forward the letter to other individuals and/or groups. Email spreads like wildfire, so make the most of this opportunity.

### **3. NEWSPAPER AND RADIO ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Take advantage of your school media. It is often the case that newspapers and radios offer free public service announcement (PSA) spots for good causes. Draft an announcement or advertisement seeking participants in the Day of Silence. Be sure to include contact information for organizers and the location and time for picking up materials.

### **4. TABLING**

You'll always pick up some participants during the week before the event. Have tables out in high-traffic areas, such as the student center and cafeteria, with materials for participation. Don't rule out picking up participants on the Day itself. People will get excited to participate as they see other participants, so be sure to have lots of materials on hand on the actual Day.

### **5. FLYERS**

You'll certainly be able to pick up a few participants if you have some eye-catching flyers. In addition to being effective general publicity, flyers draw people in who may not be networked into organizations and groups. Again, be sure to include specific information about where and when to pick up materials for participation. A great sample flyer can be downloaded from the Day of Silence Project website for your use.

### **GENERAL PUBLICITY**

Generally, the same venues you used for collecting participants will be venues you can use for getting the word out about the Day of Silence. Put ads in school and local papers and PSAs on the radio. Flyer profusely before the event with catchy slogans such as "Shhh! Day of Silence" or "End Anti-LGBT Bias: Day of Silence." Make advertisements eye-catching, informative and accessible to people who may not be familiar with the event or the LGBT community. Make sure that your press releases and ad campaigns include some tangible examples of silencing and anti-LGBT bias. If your school includes students whose native language is not English, you should reach out to those students by creating materials in their languages. Ask groups that have agreed to participate in the event to communicate the importance of the event to their members. Everything you've done to recruit participants, you should also do to promote the event widely.



## ***BUILDING A MESSAGE***

What's the message of your Day of Silence? How you present your issue and group is crucial in outreach to participants and generating publicity. First, any part of your campaign should have a plan. Begin your "message" plan with some of the tools you've already used for your strategic plan, such as identifying your goal(s) and constituents/allies.

What influences people to care about your problem? The more personal you make your message with facts and stories, the more likely they are to agree with your solution to the problem. Families may be most concerned about student safety, and faculty may be more concerned about the improved climate of their classroom or improved student performance. Be prepared to have various messages that are consistent, don't contradict one another and can be used again and again. You may also want to anticipate what messages the opponents of your issue might use, and address those in a positive way.

You can highlight several messages to be key phrases or "talking points" for giving media interviews, testifying at board or council meetings and talking about your campaign to potential participants or funders. Anyone working on your campaign should know your message and talking points. Role play public speaking scenarios with your team, so that everyone has a chance to build their comfort and confidence with communicating the message. Consider the following tips:

- **Have a bigger plan.** Creating a message is part of a bigger plan for media and outreach to participants and supporters.
- **Keep it simple.** The language and ideas of the message or "talking points" need to be understood by many people who will hear and/or read them.
- **Prepare "Message Deliverers."** The basic message may be the same, but people can personalize it with their own stories and examples.

"IT IS SELDOM EASIER to make such a profound statement for justice than it is with the Day of Silence Project. Those who participated, myself included, made it a point to make our silence known. We were received at worst with just a look of confusion. For many [our greatest challenge] was getting through the middle of the day, lunch for instance, that made our silence most known. It is important to have tons of cards."

## ***MAXIMIZING THE MEDIA***

### **KNOW THE MEDIA**

Find out who the education reporters from your local newspaper, radio, and TV stations are, and obtain their professional contact information. Give them a call and introduce yourself. They probably will be flattered and therefore more likely to work with you. This type of personal approach to the press is typically overlooked. Have one of your organization's members keep a database or list of the reporters from local and statewide press that allows you easy access to their information.

### **KNOW YOUR OWN AGENDA**

Ever heard the term "stay on message?" Always have an eye on the three main points you want to get across to reporters in every interaction, even the most casual. These "talking points" should be reiterated in everything you send to the media. Press releases, fact sheets, quotes, interviews and other materials should all cover these main points in different ways.

### **KNOW THE BASICS: PRESS RELEASES AND ADVISORIES**

Tell the print and electronic media about the Day of Silence by sending a press release and calling their offices. No matter how well you have advertised the event, do not assume that they know about it.

The press release is one of the most commonly used tools for getting press attention. Consider the press release as your version of the story that you want picked up by the press. Releases can announce an activity, clarify a point or rebut/respond to a controversial issue of concern to your organization or community. Press releases should do more than promote your organization. They should appear to be newsworthy. The press release should give context and a spin to your story. Be sure to make your story substantive but simple.

The attention-grabbing headline and the lead paragraph are the most important elements of the release. Often, they are all the reporter or editor has time to read. The lead should contain the five W's: who, what, when, where and why. The following guidelines can help you to write an effective press release:

- Neatly type the release
- Include the name and number of the main contact person at the top of the release
- Write the release as if you want the story to appear in the next day's paper
- Indicate the date the information can be released in the top left-hand corner
- If the release is two pages, write "more" at the bottom of the first page
- Use an attention-grabbing headline that summarizes the story in as few words as possible
- The first paragraph should include all of the most essential information
- Try to keep your release objective – if you want to include value statements, do so through direct quotes
- Use full names and titles when they are mentioned for the first time; if the person is cited again, use their last name only
- Use quotes for emphasis and always credit the source
- Indicate end of release with 30, ##, or "end" (this is press etiquette and signifies the end of the release)

### **KNOW THE BASICS: INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOL-BASED MEDIA**

Hold an event, even if it is simply a planning meeting, that a reporter and photographer can attend. During the Day of Silence, the silent hours are not very conducive to front-page pictures – "Here is a student not talking!" – but the "Breaking the Silence" gatherings at the end of the day can provide lots of photo opportunities.

Have a quote or two prepared, for answering common questions. You will almost definitely be asked these questions, and it can be hard to answer well on the spot. Writing answers on note cards and keeping them with you can be helpful.

- Why do you think we need the Day of Silence at this school?"
- What are some examples of anti-LGBT bias at this school that make the Project relevant?"
- How do you think that silence can end silence?"
- How would you describe the general atmosphere at this school regarding LGBT people?"
- How many people are participating in the Day of Silence at this school, and who are they?" (i.e. what groups are they from)
- How many other schools are planning the Day of Silence?"

If you are being interviewed and you do not like a certain question, feel free to redirect it. Make sure you talk about what you want to talk about, because you are better informed than the reporters.

Ask the reporters to read back your quotes at the end of the interview. Doing this can avoid misquotations, although sometimes mistakes happen anyway.

### **KNOW THE BASICS: PROFESSIONAL PRESS CONFERENCES ONE WEEK BEFORE YOUR PRESS CONFERENCE**

- Reserve a room that is not too large so it will not look empty if attendance is low
- Pick a convenient date and time – Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays – are best and try not to schedule it before 10:00 a.m. or after 2:00 p.m.
- Prepare written material, including written statements and press kits
- Send out written announcements by fax or mail, or hand deliver them to editors, assignment desks, reporters, weekly calendars, alternative press, community-based newspapers or news-magazines and other supportive groups

### **THE DAY BEFORE**

- Decide on the order of speakers and who will speak on which topic
- Call all prospective media and urge their attendance
- Collate materials; make extras for follow-up

- Walk through the site and review materials
- Type up names and titles of spokespeople for the media handout
- If people can speak other languages, be sure that bilingual media can find them easily

### **THAT MORNING**

- Make last minute calls to assignment desks and desk editors
- Double-check the room several hours before
- Walk through the press conference with speakers

### **DURING THE PRESS CONFERENCE**

- Have a sign-in sheet for reporters' names and contact information
- Give out press kits
- Hand out a written list of participants
- Make opening introductions
- Arrange one-on-one interviews if requested

## **EFFECTIVE FUNDRAISING**

Sometimes it seems that the only thing that stands between you and having the capacity to run an amazing Day of Silence is money. First of all, commitment, participation and energy are always more important than money. Your strategic plan, however, should include a budget which will cover basic expenses, such as speaking cards and guidelines for a few dozen participants, publicity and materials for the Day of Silence itself, as well as expenses for additional tactics. You can organize the Day of Silence on a very small budget: rely more heavily on word-of-mouth, school papers and homemade posters for publicity; plan simpler "Breaking the Silence" and additional events. If possible, the budget could include funds for more expensive resources, such as a guest speaker, or T-shirts for participants. If you're thinking bigger, the money exists - you just have to know where it is and how to get it.

The following fundraising tips, some of which are more applicable at the college level, can help your group to get the resources needed to make your ideas and goals for the Day of Silence a reality. Don't forget that some donors may prefer to offer in-kind donations, by which you're provided a free product or service rather than money. Remember to ask for funding well in advance!

### **ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS AND FACULTY**

Virtually all academic departments have funds available for students who want to attend conferences or for project and program planning. Often, individual professors have their own discretionary funds, which can be made available to students. The important detail when approaching faculty for money is a clear connection between the program or event and the academic mission and goals of the particular department. Finally, get to know who the active faculty are at your school. Often, they can give you assistance or the "inside track" on funds that are available from faculty. Faculty may also require you to do a related assignment in order to receive the funds.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS AND INDIVIDUAL ADMINISTRATORS**

Similarly to academic departments, administrators have funds available for the same type of student programming. Unlike academic departments, however, administrators usually don't have as many restrictions. They are free to give funds to a broader range of activities. This doesn't mean you shouldn't take a strategic approach to raising money from administrators. Each department has its own agenda, and they will be more willing to give funds to student projects which will further their department's mission.

### **STUDENT GOVERNMENT AND STUDENT PROGRAMMING BOARDS**

Student governments and programming boards have the largest pool of funds directly available for individual activities and events. Each has its own funding process. Usually they require the student or group to show how their program or campaign will contribute to the overall educational environment of the school. These funds are usually first come first served, so you need to submit your funding request early in the semester!

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Community groups such as civil rights organizations, women's groups, LGBT organizations, local unions and other community organizations are fabulous places to approach for funds. It usually takes a meeting with the local President or Executive Director, and some good follow-up, to receive a small amount of funding. They will usually ask that they be acknowledged as a co-sponsor on materials for events and campaigns. Your community fundraising efforts will be more successful if you have developed a working relationship with the organization you approach. It is important to community groups to see some investment from you in their work, not just their funding resources.

## LOCAL BUSINESSES

There may be businesses in your local community that are owned and/or operated by LGBT people or allies who would welcome the opportunity to support the work of LGBT student organizers by providing funding or free/discounted services to your Day of Silence. Some communities with significant LGBT populations publish an LGBT Yellow Pages. Another way to determine if a business is LGBT-friendly is, of course, a rainbow sticker displayed on the premises. Students in your group may work in LGBT-friendly establishments, or have friends or family who do. Even very small businesses may be able to offer a valuable contribution to your work. You may not get cash, but never underestimate the expenses you could save by receiving in-kind donations such as printing services, art supplies and food.

"DO IT! HOWEVER, start planning early and follow the planning guidelines on the Day of Silence Project web site. It meant a lot to me and a few others but not a lot to the entire group. I think that's due to the fact that we didn't plan and publicize well in advance of the event."

## INDIVIDUAL DONORS

It's been said that "charity begins at home." If you interpret "home" broadly, you may have a pool of family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and acquaintances who would be happy to contribute a donation to your group, especially if you can show them that other members' families and friends also have contributed. Even in large nonprofit organizations, many individual donations happen through word-of-mouth education and publicity.

## FUNDRAISING EVENTS

If in-kind donations and small contributions are not enough to cover your budgeted expenses, you may want to organize larger fundraisers, such as:

- Raffle
- Car wash
- Bake sale/candy sale
- Dance
- Benefit concert
- Athletic event or "-athon"

Ask around to see what has and hasn't worked at your school before investing time and energy into these events. Also, remember to use the events as an educational opportunity; for example, people attending a dance can leave with a "grab bag" of informational flyers, speaking cards and stickers for the Day of Silence!

## FIVE KEY STEPS TO RAISING MONEY

1. Send out a formal letter requesting funds to every faculty member, department, administrator, funding board and organization you have identified as a potential source of money. The letter should be no longer than one page, and should briefly introduce you and/or your group, and explain the Day of Silence.
2. Seven to ten days after you send the letter, follow up with a phone call. Often, people will not even look at a letter unless they receive a follow-up call. Ask if you can set up an appointment to meet with the appropriate person, and find out exactly what information and materials they would like you to provide them.

3. Develop a longer, written proposal for your initial meeting with the contact. This proposal should include a detailed description of your group and the Day of Silence, and an explanation of how the Day is consistent with the mission and goals of the department, committee, organization or business. You should also include any materials you have, especially your Day of Silence **strategic plan**.
4. Finally, develop a visual presentation for funding boards and committees. This should allow you to walk a larger group of people through your written proposal. Attempt to anticipate questions you will receive and have answers prepared ahead of time, just as you would for the press.
5. The day after your meeting or presentation, mail a thank-you letter. This should arrive prior to the date they set for informing you of their decision. The thank-you letter should repeat the benefits funding the Day of Silence would bring to the school and the community.

### **VISIBILITY BEFORE AND DURING THE DAY OF SILENCE FLYER PROFUSELY THE DAY/NIGHT BEFORE.**

Flyer like you've never done before. These signs will be your words for the day, so make sure they're everywhere.

### **ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO PASS OUT THEIR SPEAKING CARDS DURING THE DAY OF SILENCE.**

The speaking cards are a crucial part of the Day of Silence. They are your most captivating publicity tool, since they are handed directly to individuals, and they provide the greatest opportunity for educating your school community. In addition, they are participants' primary means of communication throughout the day, so passing them out can be very powerful both for the giver and for the recipient. Hold a rehearsal meeting prior to the Day during which participants practice silently passing out their cards and silently handling reactions from supporters and opponents. Whenever you see participants during the day, encourage them - silently - to keep passing out their cards!

### **HAVE A RESOURCE TABLE STAFFED ALL DAY.**

Have a resource table in an accessible spot in your school, with materials about the Day of Silence Project and any other LGBT resources you can provide.

### **HOLD A VISIBLE EVENT DURING THE DAY.**

This event could be a "silent lunch" where participants sit in the school cafeteria or student center and eat together, or a silent rally in a high-traffic area. It is powerful and unifying for participants to see others participating, and a visible event provides photo opportunities for the media.

### **ADVERTISE "BREAKING THE SILENCE" GATHERINGS AND ADDITIONAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES ON ALL DAY OF SILENCE MATERIALS.**

On the back of your Day of Silence cards, include information about any additional tactics you've planned and would like people to know about.

## ***BREAKING THE SILENCE***

Participants from previous years have used lots of great ways to break the silence at the end of the day. There's the "New Year's Eve" model: participants assemble at the end of the day, there's a silent countdown to the designated finish time, and when the clock strikes, everyone screams, hollers, sings, rings bells, blows whistles, beats drums, shakes noisemakers and so on. There's the "Daybreak" model: participants assemble at the end of the day, there's a silent countdown to the designated finish time, and when the clock strikes, people begin slowly to make noise or speak as the feeling comes to them. There's the "One Voice" model: participants assemble at the end of the day, and when the clock strikes, participants take turns going up to microphones and speaking to the entire group.

One powerful approach is to have participants describe how it felt to remain silent for nine hours, and the responses they received throughout the day. Remember that participating in the Day of Silence can be a very emotional and exhausting event for people, so don't try to control the conversation too much.



## **ASSESSING THE EFFORT**

The longer you wait to assess your Day of Silence organizing, the more difficult it will be to evaluate your work. Your strategic plan should include plans for team assessment of your efforts. Try to have as many people as possible participate, giving each person a task in the assessment.

One good idea is to create a system for measuring your goals. You could regularly revisit each goal and assign it a number or other value that everyone understands, in order to track your progress. You could make monthly goals and then a year-end or project-end goal for each area of your work, such as outreach, meetings, budget, participation, publicity and so on. It's useful to have a method for evaluating your meetings and events, as well. One easy tool is the Plus/Delta. Take two large pieces of paper and write a plus sign (+) at the top of one, and a delta sign (Δ), which is a symbol that represents change, at the top of the other. On the Plus page, ask participants to write something they liked, or that they thought was successful. On the Delta page, ask participants to write something they would change. Someone in your group should volunteer to collect evaluations at all meetings and events, and to develop a summary.

Want to make assessment more fun? For a final wrap-up at the end of a project or the year, plan a party that doubles as a time to look back at your goals, assess your work, and begin new planning.

## **ADDITIONAL TACTICS**

A common pitfall for organizers is that after holding incredible events and getting everyone energized, they then offer no outlets for people who want to become involved in your work or obtain more information. Make sure that you take full advantage of the awareness the Day of Silence will spread by offering additional activities, events and resources.

## **MATERIALS**

Brochures and resources about LGBT issues in general, as well as LGBT resources available at your school, can help you to educate your school community and publicize your group's activities. If your group has a goal(s) it is trying to pursue, the Day of Silence is a good time to advertise and gain support! Have a petition and your mailing list available at your resource table and at events for people to express their support and/or receive information. The Day of Silence can be a great tactic in a larger issue campaign to end discriminatory practices or create resources for LGBT students.

## **EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

Events bring people together, sustain the interest and momentum created by the Day of Silence itself, and further the larger goals of your campaign and your group. Especially effective are community gatherings that provide a space for reflection, celebration, dialogue, education and/or performance; and visual presentations such as display cases, murals, art installations and films. Make sure that you plan these events well in advance: budget time for finding speakers, find out how and when to reserve rooms, coordinate transportation for guests, assemble any multimedia equipment you may need. Advertise your events and activities throughout the Day of Silence campaign, and even on the cards. Put plans for these events in your strategic plan. Have fun and be proud of your accomplishments!

The following are some great ideas for events and activities:

### **SPEAK-OUT!**

Speak-outs can be extraordinarily effective events if organized well. Timing is crucial. Speak-outs work best when you hear many different voices, so you don't want any one person to command the floor for too long. At the same time, you don't want to silence anyone by cutting them off in mid-sentence! Agree upon a time limit at the beginning, and encourage people to follow it so that everyone who wishes to speak has a chance to speak. You may also want to propose that speakers prepare their words before the event, but since remaining silent for nine hours can be difficult, preparation isn't always possible. Plus, some people decide to speak out after being inspired by other speakers.

## **GUEST SPEAKERS**

Guest speakers can be a very useful addition to your events. They can bring the perspective of an outside ally, or an experienced LGBT leader; they can draw extra media attention and extra funds; and, they can attract people who might otherwise ignore your event out of resistance, complacency or just plain cluelessness. When negotiating with potential guest speakers, be sure to find out if they expect to receive financial compensation for their time or travel expenses – the last thing you want is surprise costs!

## **“NIGHT OF NOISE”**

Another great idea is an event – perhaps combined with the speak-out – that showcases sound and speech as art forms. You could include singers, musicians, poets, spoken-word artists, performance artists and storytellers. You could hold a battle of the bands, a DJ spin-off, a poetry slam or an open mic. You could even record the evening’s performances and produce a CD as a fundraiser!

## **NONVERBAL PERFORMANCE**

Instead of, or in addition to, a “Night of Noise,” you could hold an event that showcases nonverbal forms of artistic performance such as dance, mime and martial arts, to show how powerful movement and gesture can be, how expressive people can be even without their voices.

## **“DAY OF DIALOGUE”**

Why not follow the Day of Silence with a “Day of Dialogue” during which you hold educational activities such as assemblies, rallies, workshops and teach-ins? Or, perhaps you could convince the faculty at your school to devote some regular class time that day to discussing the Day of Silence and anti-LGBT bias. Your group could place representatives in every class to facilitate such discussions.

## **FILM SCREENINGS**

Films are a great way to draw a crowd, and there are several good educational films that address anti-LGBT bias in schools and the experiences of LGBT youth (though certainly not as many as there should be – listen up all you filmmakers out there). You could organize a regular film series with accompanying discussions. Or, you could document your own Day of Silence on film and screen the footage afterwards.

## **SILENT AUCTION**

If someone in your group would welcome the responsibility of soliciting donated items, such as art (by LGBT artists?) or tickets (to events by LGBT performers?) or products or services (from LGBT businesses?) then hold a silent auction! It’s fun, it’s a great way to raise money, and people love the mysterious competition.

## **CANDLELIGHT VIGIL**

This perennial favorite of social justice movements is, like the Day of Silence, a powerful visible means of showing collective support and strength. Since candlelight vigils often are used to memorialize a person or event, you could provide information about victims of anti-LGBT censorship and violence, or invite participants to speak about their own experiences with silencing, discrimination and harassment.

## **KEYPAL/PENPAL PROJECT**

One of the most damaging effects of silence is the sense of isolation and alienation that it produces in people. Many LGBT youth remain silent in school because they feel isolated and powerless. Student groups have been successful in initiating concrete changes in their schools partially because they provide spaces for members of specific communities to communicate with one another and share their experiences. Another way to foster communication among LGBT youth is a keypal/penpal project. Participants would establish one-on-one email or postal correspondence with other youth outside their immediate communities, in order to provide peer support and exchange ideas about organizing in their schools.



## **DISPLAY CASES, MURALS AND ART INSTALLATIONS**

Visual presentations can be very powerful, since they present a perfect opportunity for collaboration, and they're a great way to reach people who miss, for whatever reason, your events. How about a mural that depicts people being silent and silenced, with quotes about silence from LGBT leaders and leaders from other historical and contemporary social justice movements? Or a photography exhibit with pictures of people using their voices individually and collectively?

## **PUBLICATIONS**

Has your group considered publishing a newsletter or zine, or even proposing a regular column in your school newspaper? Publications are a useful means of sharing information, provoking reflection and discussion and keeping people interested in your issues and activities.

## **ONLINE RESOURCES**

If you have some web enthusiasts in your group, you may want to create a website where you can post information about your group, event notices and any other anti-LGBT bias content you find. It's especially important to keep in mind your school and community climates when you consider doing anything online; the larger the audience, the more vulnerable you may be to unwelcome responses. Another idea is to host a listserv that enables email users to converse with one another in a closed forum. Since your group would control subscription to the listserv, it would be easier to protect participants from unsafe communications.

## **CONSUMER BOYCOTT**

Boycotts are a powerful way of using your voice as a consumer. You can do research to learn about companies with policies and procedures that discriminate against LGBT people, and organize a boycott of their products or services. Be sure to contact the company you're boycotting to make it aware of your action, and to inform the media.

## **LETTER-WRITING AND EMAIL CAMPAIGNS**

Letter-writing campaigns are another tried-and-true tactic of social justice movements. Begin by deciding who your target is. You could coordinate your letter-writing with your boycott, and target the presidents of the companies you're boycotting; or, you could target your representatives in local, state or federal government. By drafting a model or sample letter for others to copy or adapt, you can maximize participation. Either provide participants with addressee information, or address and mail their letters for them. When soliciting funds from local businesses for the Day of Silence, you could request a donation to cover postage for a follow-up letter-writing campaign.

## **PETITIONS**

Petitions are a very effective organizing tool. It requires very little time for someone to read and sign a petition, and voilà! You automatically get a contact list of supporters for your group! As with a letter-writing campaign, you should pick a specific target for your petition, and a concrete issue to support or problem to protest.

## **GSA/LGBT CLUB OPEN HOUSE**

If you want to expand the membership of your group, why not build on the interest generated by the Day of Silence and invite people to an open meeting? You could plan a special program where you explain your mission statement, discuss your goals and provide an overview of your group's current activities.

## **QUESTION BOX/BULLETIN BOARD**

Place a box for anonymous questions in a high-traffic area of your school. You'll probably want to find a locking box with just a small opening at the top. Post responses to the questions on a bulletin board.



## CURRICULAR INCLUSION

It's likely that LGBT people and allies are invisible in your school's curriculum, especially if your teachers rely mainly on textbooks for source material. But if you're looking to add LGBT content to your school's curriculum, that doesn't mean you have to go out and buy a ton of LGBT books! There are lots of LGBT resources online that include extensive sections on LGBT history. With a little research, you could easily produce a list of ten ways your school could incorporate LGBT people and history into its current curriculum. If you already have an ally on your school's faculty, enlist that person's assistance in brainstorming and determining the feasibility of your suggestions. Plus, the administration will be more open to a proposal that's already been endorsed by a faculty member. Check out the "Resource Center/Curricula" section of GLSEN's website ([www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)) for ideas.

## FACULTY FORUM

There are numerous ways your faculty could make their classrooms safer and more inclusive: responding quickly and decisively to harassment, using language that's inclusive instead of heterosexist, and coming out publicly as allies are just a few. Hold a meeting where faculty can express their ideas and concerns about your school's climate and LGBT inclusion, and where you can discuss your needs as students. You can also use the forum to share your ideas about curricular inclusion. It's much harder to ignore or refuse a request when it's made during an open, in-person dialogue (with witnesses!).

## LIBRARY RESOURCES

If high schools even have LGBT resources at all, they're often silent and invisible, hidden in a counselor's office and therefore only accessible to students seeking the help of the counselor. Many LGBT student groups have worked to acquire LGBT resource materials for their school libraries. Make a list of the resources you think would be most helpful to the students in your school community: LGBT history resources? Literature by LGBT authors? Social service and medical resources on topics such as coming out, safe sex, relationships and depression? Youth-produced books and zines? Once you've developed your list, request a meeting with your school librarian to discuss it. This is another action that could benefit greatly from the support of a staff ally.

## LGBT PUBLICATIONS AND BUSINESSES

Depending on the bookstore/newsstand landscape of your town or city, LGBT magazines may be difficult to obtain. Luckily, some LGBT print publications have accompanying websites, and there are web-only publications as well. The best thing to do, for convenience's as well as safety's sake, is to search online. Once you've found some LGBT publications you like, contact them to request a free subscription for your school library. (Or, request a donated subscription for your silent auction.) Similarly, search for LGBT businesses that might be willing to donate funds, products or services to your activities.

"SILENCE SOMETIMES SPEAKS louder than words. Being silent not only allows you to feel how someone who is oppressed feels, but it also allows other to see what they are missing when they oppress others so that they cannot speak out. I decided to participate because it was an ingenious alternative to noisy rallies which seem to anger people, distracting from the overall meaning of the demonstration."

### III: HOW TO HANDLE ROADBLOCKS

#### ***WORKING WITH THE ADMINISTRATION***

Many high school students and student groups will want and need the support of their administration to organize the Day of Silence. Find a supportive faculty member or member of the administration to help you plan your outreach to the administration (perhaps the faculty advisor for a GSA or other student group). The following are suggestions for approaching the administration:

- Make an appointment to see the principal or Dean of Students at your school. Before your appointment, mail, fax or hand them some written information about the Day of Silence. You should include a letter stating why the Day of Silence is needed at your school and why it is an important event for the students. The letter could even include a statement about why the Day of Silence is compatible with the school's curriculum (or what the Project is protesting in the curriculum) and which school organizations support the Project. Give administrators a Day of Silence flyer, speaking card and the web address of the Day of Silence Project ([www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org)).
- If you are uncomfortable going to the meeting alone, ask someone to accompany you. Consider asking a teacher, community leader, relative, school staff member or anyone else who supports your proposal. Contact several people and explain the Day of Silence to them and why/how you would like their help.
- Before you go to speak with administrators, make a list of the points that you want to make. This way, you'll know ahead of time what you want to say. You may want to rehearse the meeting beforehand with a friend or trusted adult. Try not to take on an offensive or defensive attitude; if you've been granted an appointment, you should expect that the person you're meeting with at least will be open to hearing you out.
- Bring two copies of the letter you sent to the administrators to the meeting, one for yourself and one in case they didn't have a chance to read the letter, as well as an additional brochure or flyer. Present your budget and explain your cost expectations and fundraising strategy. Show your power by acting confident during the meeting. Remember, you have every right to meet with administrators and to be taken seriously.
- Points to make at your meeting should include: 1) why the Day of Silence is important to you personally, and 2) why it should be important to the school. Emphasize that the Day of Silence is a peaceful demonstration that is meant to enhance the educational environment of the school. Give administrators a basic idea of how much interest has already been expressed by individuals and groups, and what you expect in terms of participation. Make clear that the Day of Silence will be organized so that it will not disturb students' studies; suggest that students could do alternative assignments – such as writing reactions to readings – rather than speak in class during the day.

#### ***WHEN THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION SAYS "NO"***

In high schools, approval from the principal or other appropriate staff is necessary to promote and implement any project. When approaching your school's administration, it helps to have the backing of a student club and your advisor(s). However, in the situation of your administration not approving or supporting the Day of Silence, you may want to consider planning a community event outside of school, in the morning or evening. You may also want to consider other types of projects inside the school that would seek to educate the administration and/or decision-maker who has not allowed the Day of Silence to take place.

Another option when the administration does not approve the Day of Silence is to plan a campaign to influence the decision-maker. In earlier sections of the Organizing Manual, there are steps for organizing a campaign. Using this process, your group can work to change the decision. In this case, the problem is the not being allowed to have the Day of Silence take place in your school and the issue, or solution, is approval

of the project. The decision-maker is whoever in your school or district is not allowing it take place. Who are your allies? Who are other opponents? What are your resources? What are your strategy and tactics to influence the decision-maker to change her/his mind? Before starting any campaign to change the decision, you and your group will want to consider the impact of “challenging” an authority figure in your school. Work with your advisor(s) and other allies to do all the activities within the guidelines of the school. Especially in high schools, following established rules for student clubs or students will be crucial to the success of your campaign.

### ***COPING WITH THE STRESS OF REMAINING SILENT***

In a world where we rarely go nine minutes without talking to someone, being silent for nine hours can prove to be a challenging task. That’s why it’s important to take care of your participants by keeping them well-informed, and providing them with opportunities to communicate their feelings about the Day.

### **BEFORE THE DAY OF SILENCE**

We recommend that you hold a participants’ meeting to talk about what the Day of Silence might look like and what people might expect. These meetings can consist of current organizers, and even past participants, talking about the logistics of the Day and handing out materials and guidelines. The meetings will bring together participants, creating an important support network. Many people feel more empowered and energized if they are connected to a communal effort.

### **DURING THE DAY OF SILENCE**

The Day of Silence has the potential to be a solitary event; at large schools, participants may be dispersed, and remaining silent for nine hours can feel very isolating. In order to help participants throughout the day, you should set up some support activities and safe spaces. One event could be a “silent lunch,” which would promote visibility, publicity and participant unity. You should also establish a safe space, somewhere participants can visit if they are feeling stressed out during the day. The space should have snacks and someone to talk to, perhaps a supportive counselor or members of the LGBT organization. Taking care of participants should be a number one priority.

### **AFTER THE DAY OF SILENCE**

People are going to have much to say once they begin to speak again, so it is important to have additional events, such as a “Breaking the Silence” rally at the end of the day, or a more informal reflection gathering. See the “Additional Tactics” section for more specific ideas for events.

### **ADDRESSING HARASSMENT**

If your school is hostile or resistant to LGBT issues, you may want to consider how the school community will react to your visible silence during the course of the day.

Some people may see others’ silence as an opportunity for harassment. At your preparatory participants’ meeting, you should discuss strategies for handling harassment from non-participants. While people are not usually harassed for participating in the Day of Silence, it is important to be prepared. Planning a strategy will make the harassment less scary and also decrease the likelihood of it escalating into a truly dangerous situation. Identify supportive faculty whom you can seek out when someone is harassing you. Talk with allies about intervening when they witness harassment.

Remember, everyone is negatively effected by bias and oppression. Work really hard to get allies involved. Allies can come from anywhere and everywhere, and the more allies you can get involved, the better. Ally participation can also help to create acceptance, since people will see people of all backgrounds and experiences supporting the event. At the same time, allies should be prepared to be the targets of anti-LGBT harassment, and participants should not assume that the presence of allies will protect them.

Find the pockets of your school that are supportive. Reach out into the surrounding community for support. This can be helpful both for your group and for the community.

Finally, consider whether participation in the Day of Silence is right for you and your school at this time. If your school is not ready to face the presence of LGBT individuals, you may want to find an alternative way to participate in the Day of Silence. There are many ways for you and your community to benefit from the Day no matter how you organize it.

## **ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO PARTICIPATE**

Another hurdle people face when organizing the Day of Silence is actually maintaining the silence. You will find when you're outreaching that some people will balk at the idea of being silent for nine hours. They may have different reasons for not being able to be silent: students who need to talk to bring up their grade in a particular class, students who need to talk to their friends at lunch, or faculty who wish to participate but who need to speak during their classes.

Don't get frustrated, and don't give up on getting them to participate. Develop some creative ways for people to participate on their own terms. You might want to ask faculty to tape their lectures, or to make an announcement before class that they would participate if it weren't for the requirements of their job. You may make the rules more flexible, creating a "silent space" for an hour for teachers and administrators who wish to participate, for example. There certainly is space for "speaking roles": people to staff the safe room, or people who can be part of the project team. Get those participants to post flyers, write press releases or maintain the list of participants. Be ready for people who want to participate without being silent, and make a list of other things they can do to help you out.

You probably will find that people will not be totally silent on the Day of Silence. The whole point is to raise awareness and make people think. A whole mass of totally silent people is ideal, but if there are a few exceptions, the point will still be made.

The best way to keep people silent during and throughout the Day is to make sure they're reminded the day before and throughout the Day that they're supposed to be silent. If you do see participants talking, simply put your finger to your lips and give them a thumbs-up. Remember, it's important to be flexible and stay positive.

## **IV: BUILDING A MOVEMENT**

### **CREATING A STUDENT ORGANIZER NETWORK**

#### **WHAT IS A STUDENT ORGANIZER NETWORK?**

A student organizer network consists of students who are designated as the "point people" for specific "communities" within your school, and, in the case of a residential college, for specific areas on and around the campus. These students distribute materials, knock on doors and communicate with the people in their designated area. With a working student organizer network, a majority of the student body can be informed on an issue and asked to take action in a matter of days.

**"IT IS REALLY STUNNING when a group can get a wide enough participation. It is important to use your voice, and so this is not the only step, but an important and large-scale one."**

#### **RECRUITING STUDENT ORGANIZERS**

##### **1. MAKE A LIST OF AREAS**

Make a list of all of the areas that will make up your student organizer network. What are the residence halls on campus, or the wings of your school building(s) that get the most student traffic? What is the best way to separate them into manageable areas for a student to handle?

##### **2. MAKE A LIST OF COMMUNITIES**

Make a list of all of the student "communities" in your school. What are all of the different ways students are arranged, or arrange themselves? (For example: by class, by homeroom, by family group, by club, team, organization or other group, by academic major, by academic division.)

### 3. STUDENT ORGANIZER PLEDGE SHEETS

It is important to make a simple pledge sheet that lays out what you are expecting students to commit to as student organizers. Below is a sample:

<p>I, _____, pledge to do the following as a student organizer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend a student organizer training</li><li>• Distribute information in my area once a month</li><li>• Attend a monthly student organizer network meeting</li></ul> <p>Date: _____ Signature: _____</p>
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### 4. OUTREACH

Either call, email or visit the students on your prospect list. You should set up a student organizer network kickoff meeting for students who are interested in learning more; attending this meeting is the commitment you will ask of them when you first talk to them. At the meeting, your purpose will be to get students to commit to being student organizers, to pick an area of your campus or school to be responsible for, and to sign the pledge sheet.

### 5. STUDENT ORGANIZER TRAINING

Once a student has committed to being a student organizer, it is the experienced organizers' responsibility to train them and provide them with the resources they need to do the job. It is important that the first role a student takes on as a student organizer is easy and fun. A good first task is knocking on residence doors, or visiting appropriate building locations, to hand out fact sheets on the issue they're working on and introduce themselves. An experienced organizer should always go with them and demonstrate how to do this outreach, offering helpful advice along the way.

### COORDINATING THE STUDENT ORGANIZER NETWORK

#### FOLLOW-UP

The way to make sure that student organizers are successful is through constant follow-up. The organizers who "mentored" them should take time regularly to check in with them and offer support, should provide many different tasks for the student organizer to do so that the position remains fun and exciting, and should encourage them to provide input and suggestions for tasks they could take on.

#### REPORTING AND TRACKING

In order to have an effective student organizer network, you must have organizers document the work that they are doing. Tracking sheets are a useful reporting tool. One sheet can be for reporting on numbers: how many postcards did they get signed this month, how many people did they talk to, how many students signed up to volunteer and so on. Another sheet can contain more detailed information about their interactions with other students.

#### MONTHLY MEETINGS

Scheduling a monthly meeting is what makes the network real. All of the student organizers get together to share their work and make plans for what work needs to get done the next month.

### DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

Students directly affected by anti-LGBT bias need to be able to advocate on their own behalf. Leaders of groups are often tempted to do the work themselves because it is faster than taking the time to include and assist others. The cost of not developing leaders is having a few students doing all the work and quickly burning out. The other consequence is that targets simply wait for the "loud mouth" organizers to graduate or leave school—thus waiting for the campaigns to die out.

It is up to students to make sure that student groups are sustainable, and student organizers are strong year after year. Student groups can be some of the strongest voices at your school, but they need to be developed and nurtured to grow and stay strong.



## **WHAT MAKES A LEADER?**

Leaders are people who really “have people.” This allows them to provide confidence and direction, and thus embody the will of the members. Leaders are the people who make themselves responsible for the well-being of the group, and they organize other students. They may or may not be elected, but are recognized by others as leaders because of the commitment they have made to the group and their experience in it.

No one can be a leader without wanting to be one. Motivation is necessary, but not enough, however. Charismatic leaders can inspire others to follow them, but don't necessarily have the skills needed, such as patience or attention to detail. They also may lack a deep understanding of the problems and issues. Thus, they can only organize as far as they can reach.

Sometimes there's a vacuum in leadership. In this case, look to the person who shows the necessary talent but never considered becoming a leader. Such a person can be the most valuable find. There are members that you rely on now, who can be cast into the leadership role by their own work.

When someone's considering a leadership role, there are usually two factors: the person's self-interest to do so, and the circumstances within and surrounding the group that require new or more leaders. Leaders get benefits aside from working to create positive change; including respect, the satisfaction of showing their power, skills and in-depth education about the issues. When people discover they can do a whole range of things they never believed were possible, such as facilitating a meeting, writing an article, talking to people they have never met before, standing up to people in powerful positions and inspiring people, they want to see what else they can do.

A leader isn't just a symbolic figurehead – they prove themselves through organizing victories and by doing real work. Leadership tasks include: facilitating communication within the group, communicating and defending group decisions to others, initiating long-range plans, handling emergencies, making sure the group uses strategy, having the ability to develop and encourage others, fundraising and managing finances. In an LGBT anti-bias campaign, a leader must be sensitive to the issue, but also know how to turn fear and anger into positive progressive action that changes conditions at a school. It's not enough for someone to watch current leaders do and be these things. The work has to come from the prospective leaders. When a person fills these functions, other people start to think of that person as a leader.

Current leaders can help potential leaders show off strong points and develop weak ones. Make a list of their strongest skills, and assign leadership functions in those areas right away. List skills that need improvement, and slowly add responsibility in these areas, teaching and correcting along the way. Finally, list skills that people agree can't be improved. Find people with these skills to fill these particular gaps; for example, skills such as writing or fundraising.

## **HOW TO SUPPORT LEADERS**

### **CREATE A SUPPORT GROUP FOR POTENTIAL LEADERS.**

Leaders need defined tasks, clarification of whom they are accountable to and when, and support that is organized and explicit.

### **ENCOURAGE AND ENABLE LEADERS TO BEGIN WITH THEIR STRENGTHS.**

If the leader's strongest skill is planning, for example, they should assume a leadership role at the end of one project and before the next. The new leader brings the new program. If instead the leader's strongest point is carrying out an activity, for example, then the point of transition should come just after the start of a new program. If the leader is weak at facilitating meetings, for example, move the group away from a plan to adopt a constitution and bylaws during the transition.

### **FACILITATE LEADERS' OWN GROWTH, AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER LEADERS.**

Seek and give constructive feedback. The leader must feel that their greatest skills are what the group needs for its success. Make sure that leaders are enjoying their positions; if leaders are unhappy or frustrated with their positions, they can frustrate the people around them. Remember that every strong leader should be developing other leaders. People should not become so important that the group can't function without them.

