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**The United States Student Association Foundation  
The Voice of Students Across the Nation**

The United States Student Association (USSA) is the oldest, largest, and most diverse organization, representing millions of college and university students nationwide. For the past 54 years, USSA has provided student activists with a vehicle to become involved in social change movements and the political process on the campus, statewide, and national levels. USSA promotes educational access, especially for those traditionally excluded from obtaining postsecondary education; works against racism, sexism, ableism and homophobia; advocates for workers' rights and economic justice; and teaches students how to navigate the political system, including organizing voter registration, education, and get-out-the-vote campaigns.

USSA is a student-operated organization where the organization's leadership and action agenda are determined by student delegates from 350 member campuses from all regions of the country. USSA and its membership address a wide range of policy issues, including student financial aid, child care, affirmative action, recruitment and retention of students of color, racial profiling, bias-related violence, and campus safety.

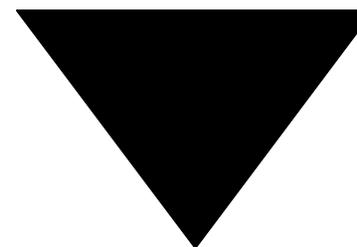
The tax-exempt USSA Foundation (USSAF) complements the work of USSA by producing informational materials; conducting weekend-long grassroots organizing trainings; and providing technical assistance on a wide range of issues. USSAF sponsors the Student of Color Campus Diversity Project, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Student Empowerment Project, the Grassroots Organizing Weekend Project, and the Student Labor Action Project.

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# **National Queer Day of Action**

**April 10, 2002**

# **Campus Organizing Guide**



**Day of Silence Project**

**Sponsored by  
The United States Student Association  
and  
The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education  
Network**

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On April 10, 2002 students will be demanding this protection and support on their campuses. Some of the demands being made include: adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the campus-wide non-discrimination policies, the creation of LGBT resource centers, the formation of committees designated to study the campus climate for queer students, and mandatory educational training for staff (particularly mental and physical health care providers, campus police, and residence hall staff).

“The Day of Silence,” according to local organizer [insert student’s name], is especially relevant to [insert name of school] because [insert student quote]. Local organizer [name] hopes that the event will work towards creating positive change on campus.

*(Put information about your action in here)*

###

For more information or to get assistance in identifying issues, setting goals and targets, and planning tactics, call or e-mail:

Caeden Dempsey  
LGBT Student Empowerment Project  
2002.347.8772  
lgbt@usstudents.org

*Sample Press Advisory*

**National Queer Day of Action  
April 10, 2002**

To Increase the Retention of LGBT Students in Higher Education

For Immediate Release For more information Contact:  
(Local Media Contact, Phone #)

**Day of Silence**

(City, State, Date) – Students from across the country are taking steps to increase access to underrepresented students on their campuses. On April 10, 2002, students will participate in the Day of Silence Project to call attention to the specific issues that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people face in universities and to demand change on campus that will improve the lives of LGBT students.

[Put your local campaign info here. Be short, concise.]

The existence of homophobia and transphobia on our campuses negatively affect the recruitment and retention of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in higher education. Students face harassment in the dorms, heterosexism in the classroom, and violence on campus. Most universities do not provide institutional support for LGBT people, leaving queer students open to this discrimination.

“LGBT students around the country are facing barriers to higher education because of the homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism that exists in our colleges and universities,” said Jo’ie Taylor, Vice President of the United States Student Association. “Universities must protect and support queer students from discrimination and harassment on campus in order for queer students to continue their education and earn a degree.”

Dear Student Organizer,

For over seven years, the Day of Silence Project has been making itself heard. Participation has grown yearly since the Project’s founding in 1996 by Maria Pulzetti, then a student at the University of Virginia. Hundreds of high school and university students from around the country have contributed their voices and inspirations to the Project’s powerful statement in protest of the discrimination that LGBT people face.

This year marks an exciting turning point in the history of the Day of Silence Project. The Project’s founding organizers have formed an official alliance with the United States Students Association (USSA) and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). Working in coalition, the Project can expect participation to reach an all-time high.

The Day of Silence is a day on which those who support increasing accessibility for LGBT students in education take a nine-hour vow of visible silence. Instead of speaking participants hand out cards explaining the reason for their silence and stating their demands for change on campus. This day is used as a tactic in a campaign to end the continued silencing of queer people due to homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism on our campuses.

On April 10, 2002 organize the Day of Silence Project on your campus and join hundreds of students nationally working to increase recruitment and retention of underrepresented students. Use this day as a tactic in an already running campaign or as a kick-off for a new campaign that increases accessibility for queer students in higher education.

Happy Organizing!

Caeden Dempsey  
LGBT Student Empowerment Project  
United States Student Association

## The Basics

The Day of Silence is a day on which those people who support making schools more accessible for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people take a nine-hour vow of silence. This visible silence is taken to protest the harassment, prejudice, and discrimination that LGBT people face. Instead of speaking, participants hand out cards or wear stickers or t-shirts etc. printed with the following message:

“Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am protesting the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. My deliberate silence echoes the 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?”

LGBT students on campus may be forced to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity for fear of physical or verbal harassment. These students may be made invisible by curriculum that makes no mention of LGBT people or events. Professors and other students can also make the classroom a hostile place by using homophobic and transphobic language.

You should identify the issues at your campus and use this day as a tactic in a campaign to make concrete changes. (See page 5) for sample goals). Organizers should feel free to adapt the above statement to fit their campus. We also urge people to include in these cards the demands being made on their universities. This will connect the day to your campus and give people an idea of the concrete changes you are working for on campus.

### Why Silence as a Tactic?

The Day of Silence enables participants to show, in a highly visible way, that they support LGBT rights. It is important to remember that although we are not using our voices, we are being very loud in our message. Our silence is visible: through handing out cards, tabling, wearing tape over our mouths, etc. we bring acknowledgment to the voices that are not being heard and call attention to the daily silencing of LGBT people.

## Sample Press Advisory

### National Queer Day of Action

#### To Increase the Retention of LGBT Students in Higher Education

For Immediate Release For more information Contact:  
(Local Media Contact, Phone #)

### Day of Silence

(City, State, Date) – Students from across the country are taking steps to increase access to underrepresented students on their campuses. On April 10, 2002, students will participate in the Day of Silence Project to call attention to the specific issues that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people face in universities and to demand change on campus that will improve the lives of LGBT students.

[Put your specific campaign info here. Be concise]

“The Day of Silence,” according to local organizer [insert student’s name], is especially relevant to [insert name of school] because [insert student quote]. Local organizer [name] hopes that the event will work towards creating positive change on campus.

WHO: The Day of Silence Project - The United States Student Association

WHAT: *Put in your action here*

WHEN: April 10. *Time*

WHERE: *Put your place here*

[Put information for any photo opportunities here]

###

- Fifth, after the event. Once your event is over. Run to the nearest fax machine and fax out your press release and do follow up calls once more. Even if reporters didn't show up to your event, they still may want to write up a short blurb for the paper.

### **Do's and Don'ts of Media Relations**

Do know your facts and provide background information

Do stay on message

Do make creative visuals for photographers and cameras.

Do try to develop relationships with reporters.

Don't ever lie to a reporter

Don't plan an event before 10am or after 3pm, typical deadlines for media

Don't ever lose your temper with a reporter.

### **Resources that can help frame your message:**

The United States Student Association

[www.usstudents.org](http://www.usstudents.org)

Day of Silence Project

[www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org)

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

[www.nglft.org](http://www.nglft.org)

Transgender Law and Policy Institute

[www.transgenderlaw.org](http://www.transgenderlaw.org)

National Youth Advocacy Coalition

[www.nyacyouth.org](http://www.nyacyouth.org)

National Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Organization

[www.llego.org](http://www.llego.org)

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network

[www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

The National Consortium of Directors of LGBT Resources in Higher Education

[www.lgbtcampus.org](http://www.lgbtcampus.org)

### **Breaking the Silence**

Make sure to have an event directly after the nine-hour vow of silence ends. This gives people an official time and place to "break the silence". These events can include:

- "New Year's Eve" - 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, shakes noisemakers, etc.
- "Daybreak" - It starts off like the "New Year's" but when the clock strikes, people begin to slowly make noise or speak as the feeling comes to them.
- "One Voice" - Participants assemble at the end of the day, and when the clock strikes, they take turns going up to microphones and speaking to the group.

### **Suggested Goals for Campus Organizing**

- Inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in the university nondiscrimination policy
- Funding, space, and staff for an LGBT Retention Center
- Creation of a diversity requirement for mandatory classes which includes subjects on sexual orientation and gender identity
- Designation of accessible restrooms and housing for transgender students
- Creation of a committee committed to reviewing the campus climate for LGBT students
- Official system for tracking anti-LGBT hate crimes
- Regular, mandatory, educational trainings for all staff (particularly campus police, mental and health clinicians, and residence hall staff)

## Organizing Plan

### Step 1)

- Meet with student organizations interested in increasing recruitment and retention of LGBT students. Or plan a roundtable or forum and invite organization representatives to discuss problems and possible solutions for a retention campaign.
- Brainstorm potential issues, targets, and tactics.
- Propose Day of Silence to kick off your campaign, or to bring the problem to the larger campus and to recruit more organizations and volunteers to the campaign.
- Register your campus at [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org)

### Step 2)

- Meet with organizational representatives and discuss goals for a campaign and details for the Day of Silence. Get volunteers to coordinate works committees. Delegate tasks to work committees. Don't forget; media, logistics, speakers/programming, organizational outreach (it's best to have members of different groups on this committee), and campus publicity.
- Continue to expand the list of potential allies and even co-sponsors and plan events for February and March leading up to April 10<sup>th</sup> (such as an educational panel).

### Step 3)

- Finalize the issues that you will address on the Day of Silence. Identify the appropriate target(s) and additional tactics.
- Contact Caeden at USSA and let us know what you are planning for the day. USSA can help identify speakers, provide materials, and make connections with other campuses participating in the Day of Silence, as well as help you troubleshoot and answer technical questions.

### Step 4)

- Finalize target(s) and additional tactics and organize the logistics of the day.

**Press Lists**...make sure you have the names, phone numbers, faxes, and e-mails of all the reporters you want to contact concerning your event.

### Media Strategy

1. Incorporate your media strategy into the timeline of your campaign. Include deadlines for press advisories, press releases, and media calls.
  2. A week before send out press advisory (includes your main message, who, what, when, where, time). A press advisory is an invitation to the press to your event. (See the sample advisory). Make follow-up calls right after it is sent out. These calls are to confirm the advisory was received and that the right person got it. This is your chance to "pitch" your event to media.
  4. The day before your event, send out the press advisory, and make follow up press calls again.
  5. The morning of your event, send the advisory again, make more follow up calls. At your event have a press kit for media that shows up. Your press kit should include: Press release, Educational materials, any materials you use to publicize your organization, and a copy of any remarks from speakers, if possible. Put all of these materials into a nice folder.
- Media point people at an event do more than pass out press kits. Make sure that reporters are talking to the right people (spokespeople who have been briefed and have a strong command of your message). You must know what is going on with all of the reporters.
  - Have a press sign in sheet. One, it helps you figure out who you need to follow up with after the event (to make sure they have all the information they need and don't have any more questions). Two, to add their contact information to your databases for future events.
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## Making the Most of the Media

### What is your message?

Before making any type of media plan, make sure you have a clear and concise message. It is that exact point you want people to know or understand about your organization or campaign. Your message should have no more than three main points that you will want to get across to reporters that in turn will relay your message to your target audience. You should have a strong command of the message you want to get across. Everything that goes to the media concerning your message should reflect that.

### Tips on your message

- Avoid negative language
- Make sure your main points never change
- Everyone involved in your campaign should be able to state your message.
- It is important to create messages that will reach and mobilize students.

### Between message and strategy

•Why do you want media coverage? How do you want people to react to your media coverage? Do you want them to write letters or to call their representatives? Do you want them to sign a postcard or register to vote? The answer to this question is usually the same as the goals of your larger campaign.

•Who are you trying to reach? What is the point of your message? Who do you want to hear that you are doing something? Think about this when crafting your talking points and organizing your media events. You should have a specific audience in mind and a specific goal of how you want your target audience to react after your media event is over with.

•Holding a press conference doesn't mean you'll get press. Instead organize an event that is newsworthy that the press needs to cover. You don't get to choose how a reporter will write about you in the papers, but you do have some kind of control over who will attend your event and who will be interested in reading about your group and what your group did.

### Step 5)

- Set up an information table to spread the word about your campaign and the Day of Silence and produce a turnout plan including an email announcement of the day, a plan for phone banking the members of organizations involved in the day, ways to advertise the day on campus and in the community, etc.
- Place letters to editors in campus and local papers explaining the issue or campaign you're working on and announcing your participation in the Day of Silence Project

### Step 6)

- Recruit volunteers to phone bank members of event-sponsoring organizations in the days before the event to let them know the details of the day.
- Finalize the logistic of the day and increase visibility by flyering and chalking the campus. Create cards for participants to hand out. (See page 4 for sample card)
- Work the Media! – Fax out press advisory and talk to friendly reporters/media. (See page 14 for media tips)

### Step 7)

- Organize a phone-bank to call all of the participants the night before the day of action.
- Send out a final press release and do a final round of press calls.

### Step 8)

- Have an amazing and powerful day!
- Hold a Breaking the Silence Event. (See page 5 for examples)

### Step 9)

- Debrief day with members of your group and representatives from all the groups involved in the planning. What was positive about the event? What could improve it in the future? Decide on the next steps for the campaign.
- Debrief with Caeden at USSA.
- Send press clips to USSA.

## Additional Tactics

The Day of Silence should be used as one tactic in your campaign. In order to continue demonstrating your power and putting pressure on the administration, make sure to follow-up the Day of Silence with additional tactics.

### Rally and March

Have a sign-making party before hand. Choose a tone for the rally – somber, loud, etc. Make sure the speeches match this tone. Have flyers explaining the issues and your goals ready to hand out to onlookers. During the rally have volunteers walking around crowd answering questions and talking to people about how they can be involved in the campaign.

### Candlelight Vigil

This is a powerful visible means of showing collective support and strength. Since candlelight vigils are often 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.

### Publications

Write an op-ed for your local and campus newspapers that talks about the discrimination that LGBT people face on your campus.

Meet with the editorial boards of your local and campus newspapers and encourage them to editorialize on supporting your coalition's goals.

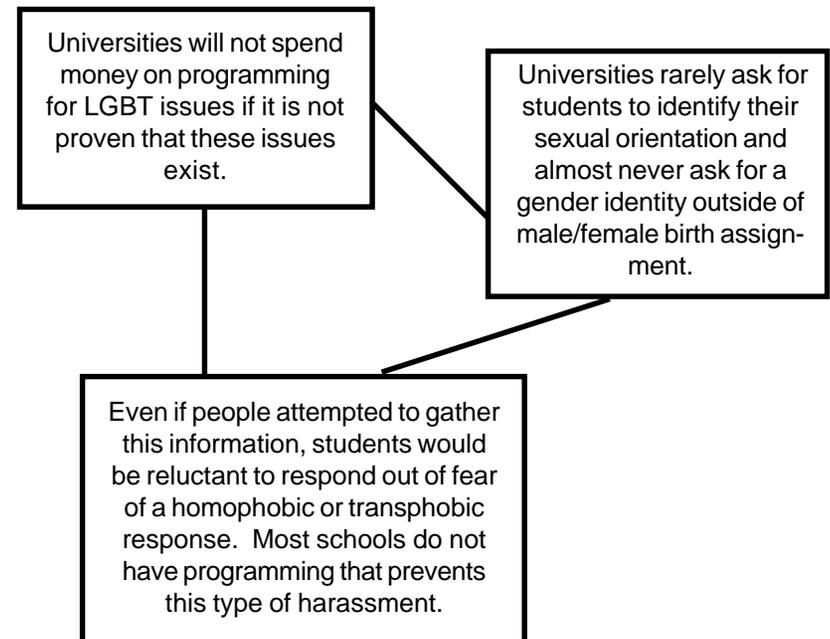
### Letter and Email Writing

Draft a letter directed toward your target(s). Provide a sample letter for others to copy or adapt and this will increase participation. Either provide participants with addressee information or address and mail their letters for them.

LGBT students on college campuses face harassment ranging from verbal abuse and homophobic graffiti to physical violence. Often, LGBT people don't report these hate crimes to the university or law enforcement for fear of being "outed" or of being further harassed by police.

- Most college campuses do not provide LGBT sensitivity trainings to their campus police. When police do not have the training on how to properly identify and deal with anti-gay hate crimes they are less likely to pursue an investigation and may even participate in more violence directed towards LGBT people.
- Because these crimes either aren't reported or are ignored, statistics on anti-gay crimes may not be collected and every new case is seen as an "isolated incident".

It is hard to receive funding for programming that addresses the needs of queer students in higher education because studies exploring these issues are not conducted. Because research looking at the campus climate for LGBT students isn't done, it is difficult to gather the concrete information needed for policy and programming implementation that positively affects the lives of queer students on campus.



## Talking Points

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students face harassment and discrimination in numerous areas of college life.

**Housing:** Residential Life programs may place students with homophobic roommates and/or students may have RAs who are not educated around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Classroom:** Students are faced with professors who make homophobic and transphobic remarks, heterosexist curriculum that ignores or trivializes LGBT people's experiences and contributions, tokenization and silencing.

**Health Care:** Campus health centers are not often equipped to handle the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and particularly transgender students. These centers can be an intimidating space for LGBT students to enter due to insensitivity and under/mis-education of staff, and lack of general resources for LGBT people.

**Transgender Students:** Most universities will not acknowledge the gender identity or expression of a student if it differs from their assigned sex. This leads to issues in residence hall placing, bathroom usage, ID cards, etc.

**Queer Students of Color:** Due to racism in the LGBT community and a general lack of funds for programs focused on the recruitment and retention of queer students and students of color in higher education, resources for queer students of color are limited, or even nonexistent, at most universities.

Most universities in this country do not have institutional policies or procedures in place to protect LGBT students from discrimination.

Of the over 3,000 institutions of higher learning in the United States, only about 347 include sexual orientation in their Nondiscrimination policies.

Only a handful of universities include gender identity in their non-discrimination policies

### Hold a Teach-In

Think of clever ways to involve participants. Talk to people about the issues that LGBT people face in college and what changes can be made on your campus to improve the lives of queer students.

### Make Presentations

Talk to student organizations, residence halls and staff and faculty groups about the issues and ways in which they can help. Look for faculty to help you or check out the resource section of this kit to get more information to prepare yourself.

### Hold a Press Conference

Make sure to call the media in advance and then again the day before the press conference. Have speakers prepared to give concise speeches regarding the recruitment of LGBT students in general and the specific issues that queer students face on your campus.

### Radio

Get your campus or local radio talk show to devote a show to LGBT rights. It is VERY IMPORTANT to make sure you have at least 10 people calling in to make comments supporting LGBT rights.

### **Choosing a Tactic:**

When deciding on tactics to use in a campaign look at the amount of power your organization has over your target and where that power lies.

\*In public universities, students have a lot of voting power. Choosing tactics that show how you can affect your target's reelection campaign demonstrates this power.

\*Administrators at private universities are not elected so these tactics wouldn't work. In private schools, most of the university's money comes from tuition. In this case, good tactics demonstrate how students can negatively affect enrollment (ie. Discouraging prospective students from applying and creating bad press for the university).

## Allies and Co-Sponsorship

Outreaching to potential Allies/Co-Sponsors:

- Organize a teach-in with a couple of speakers to educate students about the issues and to inform them on how to get involved.
- Get articles in the school paper about the issues you are working on and announcing the Day of Action.
- Setup a table of information, including leaflets about the Day of Silence, facts sheets, etc
- Contact progressive professors to talk about the day in classes.
- Send a mailing to community organizations that would be interested in the day and your campaign.

### Organizations that may co-sponsor

- \* Women's and Feminist Organizations
- \* Racial and Ethnic Organizations
- \* Political Organizations
- \* Student Government
- \* Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Organizations
- \* Academic Departments
  - Women and Gender Studies
  - Queer Studies
  - Anthropology
  - Sociology
  - Political Science
  - Ethnic Studies
- \*LGBT Retention Centers
- \*International Student Retention Centers
- \*Multi-Cultural Centers

## Building Coalitions

Coalition work is hard, but it is crucial to win victories that can't be won alone and to build a strong student movement for access. The Day of Silence is an opportunity to do just that, but first let's go over some points to keep in mind.

- ☉ When we use "coalition" we mean an organization of organizations that are working toward a common goal (not people that happen to belong to other groups, or organizations that support each other). When we say "goal" we mean what we want from our university, not what we can do for ourselves (ie. more LGBT faculty vs. get 200 postcards signed).
- ☉ Remember a coalition only works if every group involved feels they are getting something out of it like publicity, more members, more funding, experience for new leaders, etc. They are not the same reasons for each group. Find out what each group wants to strengthen their organization.
- ☉ Before you approach a group, find out what they are working on, what kinds of events they hold, and other things that are important to that group. Ask members about it, go to an event of theirs, or check out their office or website. This goes a long way to show you are sincerely interested in the organization and respect their work. Try to gauge what their interest is in joining your coalition, how would it benefit them?
- ☉ DO NOT SET THE AGENDA BEFORE contacting organizations representing students directly affected by the issue. Organizations that are already working on the issue will feel disrespected if their work and experience is not recognized. Some organizations will feel they are being asked to join to make the coalition look legitimate or diverse, especially if they were not included in decision making from the start. Most importantly, in order to devise the best message and strategy, you need their perspective!
- ☉ Hold a meeting with organization representatives to discuss the problem of recruitment and retention. What are some things they are already working on? Think of a common goal (ie. retention center) that will benefit all of the groups and that their members can be invested in winning. DO NOT make a laundry list. Organizations cannot turn out members for an issue they do not feel directly affects them.