



Day of Silence – April 13, 2005

Fact Sheet and FAQ



What is the Day of Silence?

The Day of Silence, a project of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in collaboration with the United States Student Association (USSA), is a student-led day of action where those who support making anti-LGBT bias unacceptable in schools take a day-long vow of silence to recognize and protest the discrimination and harassment -- in effect, the silencing -- experienced by LGBT students and their allies.

Who started the Day of Silence?

In 1996, students at the University of Virginia organized the first Day of Silence with over 150 students participating. In 1997, organizers took their effort national and nearly 100 colleges and universities participated. In 2001, GLSEN became the official organizational sponsor with new funding, staff and volunteers.

Has the Day of Silence been successful?

In last year's Day of Silence, more than 450,000 students at nearly 4,000 K-12 schools, colleges and universities organized events. This made the Day of Silence in 2004 the largest, single-day student-led grassroots action on LGBT rights in American history. GLSEN spokespersons appeared on national media outlets and there has always been extensive local media coverage from coast to coast.

Why do we need a Day of Silence?

GLSEN's 2003 National School Climate Survey found that 4 out of 5 LGBT students report verbal, sexual or physical harassment at school and more than 30% report

missing at least a day of school in the past month out of fear for their personal safety. The Day of Silence helps bring us closer to making anti-LGBT bullying, harassment and name-calling unacceptable in America's schools.

Does the work end after the day is over?

The Day of Silence is one element of a larger effort to create safe schools for all students. Many communities, in addition to supporting the Day of Silence, host Breaking The Silence events, rallies, legislative lobby days, performances and more – both on the Day of Silence and all-year round. We are also asking our national leaders to support policies that create safe schools for all. Many communities are asking their local and state leaders to support and implement similar policies.

What is GLSEN?

GLSEN, or the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, now in its tenth year, is the leading national education organization addressing the serious problems of anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment that affect ALL students – LGBT and straight alike – in our nation's schools. Established nationally in 1995, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. For more information on GLSEN's educational resources, public policy agenda, student organizing programs or development initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.

Does this event put students at risk?

This event has been happening peacefully in schools since 1996. For students who are constantly faced with anti-LGBT bias and harassment, this may be the safest school day of the year.

What do you have to say about potential opponents to the Day of Silence?

The issue at hand is the bullying, harassment, name-calling and violence that students see and face in our schools. The Day of Silence is an activity created and led by students to educate their peers and bring an end to this harassment.

Those who do not support the Day of Silence often protest, but rarely contribute positively to finding ways to end anti-LGBT harassment. In the past, some individuals and groups have organized days in response to the Day of Silence. These events grossly mischaracterize and often simply misunderstand the basic purpose of the Day of Silence. Bringing attention to these events, which are so often based on mistruth, only adds a false credibility to their misinformation about the Day of Silence, GLSEN and the 450,000 American students taking action on April 13th.

We look forward to engaging all organizations and individuals who share The Day of Silence vision of schools free from anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment.