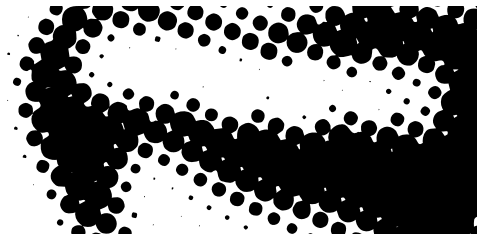


MORE THAN SILENCE

Organizing a *Breaking the Silence* Event



“It really opened people’s minds and hearts. After the *Breaking the Silence* rally, I had to take a step back because I was so happy and overwhelmed by the well received response.”

— REINALDO CHAPARRO, SCHENECTADY, NY

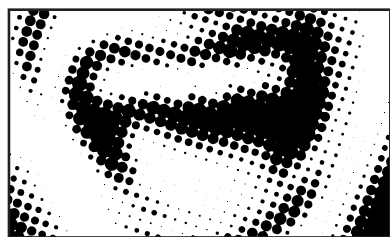
THERE IS NO ONE-WAY TO DEVELOP AND FACILITATE A GOOD *BREAKING THE SILENCE* EVENT. THE LOGISTICS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVENT ARE VERY MUCH UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON, GROUP OR COMMUNITY PLANNING IT. WITH THAT SAID, ONE COMMON OBJECTIVE OF *BREAKING THE SILENCE* EVENTS ARE TO BRING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE, AUGMENT AND SHARE THE IMPACT OF THE DAY OF SILENCE IN ALL COMMUNITIES.

MANY *BREAKING THE SILENCE* EVENTS INCLUDE SPACE IN THE AGENDA FOR STUDENTS WHO TO SHARE THEIR FIRST WORDS AFTER PARTICIPATING IN THE DAY OF SILENCE AND ARE NOW READY TO LET IT ALL OUT! PERFORMANCES, GUEST SPEAKERS OR AN OPEN MIC HAVE BEEN PART OF PAST *BREAKING THE SILENCE* EVENTS. OTHERS HAVE HAD RALLIES, DINNERS, DANCES OR GALAS TO BREAK THEIR SILENCE. THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY TO HOLD A *BREAKING THE SILENCE* EVENT. FIGURING OUT WHAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH AND WHAT WILL WORK BEST FOR YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY IS THE FIRST STEP IN MAKING A SUCCESSFUL EVENT.

HERE ARE 10 “QUICK TIPS” TO HELP YOU PLAN YOUR OWN *BREAKING THE SILENCE* EVENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

1. FORM A COALITION: A coalition of individuals and groups allows you to outreach and work with diverse folks in your school and community. Think big! Your coalition can go beyond just the local Gay Straight Alliance or Diversity Club. Your *Breaking The Silence* event is for everyone! Consider inviting the groups who are affected by or care about anti-LGBT bias — or bias of any kind. Perhaps the local chapters of the Urban League or your school’s Black Student Union, Christian Student Group, or Latin American Club want to participate. Draft a letter explaining the Day of Silence and your *Breaking The Silence* event that can be sent to these organizations. Attend their meetings, talk about your event and identify those who express interest in participating in your coalition. The more groups involved — the better!

2. SET GOALS: This may sound like the easiest part, but it isn’t. Setting goals can be a tedious process, but it can be one that excites and motivates you! After building your coalition, it is the first step in planning your event. Set a goal for the number of people you like to realistically attend your event, how much money you plan to spend, how many performers or speakers you hope to have. The more detailed your goals are, the more likely you will stay focused during the planning process. Some communities have found it easier to start early. In Albany, NY, students begin planning in the fall, which allows time for a schedule of trainings for schools and time for a larger coalition to help plan and participate in their *Breaking The Silence* event. GLSEN Chicago wanted to integrate the *Breaking The Silence* event with a campaign for teacher training for all district teachers, so they hoped for more of a community event with large numbers to rally outside the school district offices to demand teacher trainings. Their goals allowed them to plan for a later rally, which allowed students from numerous schools and adult allies to participate.



DAY of SILENCE

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 **GLSEN**

3. SET A DATE: You want your event to be on or near the same day as the national Day of Silence.

Confirming the day and time of an event can sometimes be a process. When searching for a date, pay attention to other activities or events that are happening during that time. Finding a date that works for everyone in the coalition is tricky. At Northport High School in Long Island, NY, students planned an event at the end of the school day while organizers in Connecticut planned an early evening activity at the state capitol, which allowed community members and others to attend.

4. GET SPACE: Now that you've set your goals and date, you need to find a space that can host your event comfortably. You'll also want to consider other goals or objectives. Will there be performances? Speakers? Will the event require a stage, microphone or podium? Do you want your event at school or in the community? With your coalition partners, brainstorm a list of five locations and delegate to different people to contact the possible spaces. Again, don't be afraid to think big! If you want the event at the Capitol, the Elks Club or the school cafeteria — just ask! You might not be able to get your first choice, so ranking your preferences is a smart idea.

5. GET SPEAKERS/PERFORMERS: First, what kind of people do you want to participate? Remember to consider your target audiences (i.e. whom you want to “speak to”) both at the event and through the media who may cover the event. Possible participants include school board members, city council representatives, the mayor, the governor, poets, students, faculty, artists, singers and dancers. The mix can never be too varied if you set up the program in a way that keeps the interest of those who will attend the event. If you want the mayor or governor to attend — invite them! It won't hurt, and you'd be surprised at how receptive some people can be. Also, make sure you follow-up with all people you invite. After your first invitation, try to follow-up with a phone call to confirm that they received information about the event. Also, encourage performers and speakers to outreach to others about the event. One last tip: If you don't have a lot of scheduled speakers or performers, providing an open mic can be a great way to fill space and allow people to Break The Silence.

HINT: Whether or not the governor, mayor or local officials can attend your event, ask them for a proclamation or resolution. Planners of events in Hartford, Madison, Seattle and Kalamazoo were able to present and read proclamations and resolutions from elected officials at their *Breaking The Silence* events. For more information on proclamations and resolutions, contact the Day of Silence leadership team or visit www.dayofsilence.org.

6. SPREAD THE WORD: This is when your coalition comes in really handy! The more people at your event, the better! Outreach happens in many ways. Word of mouth is the most personal and can provide the best responses. Talking to people (at lunch, before class, in the hall or on the street) and telling them about your event is really productive and creates a personal experience with the person you just spoke with. Flyers and e-mails are always great too! Make more than just one type of flyer. Catchy and fun are always appealing, but be sure to include the essentials like the date, time, location, and event highlights (i.e. open mic, performers, poets, speaker, etc). Students in Missoula created buttons for the Day of Silence and their *Breaking The Silence* event. In Beaverton, outside Portland, students created some very successful stickers.

7. BE SAFE: Safety is always important! Even if you don't need a chaperone, it might be a good idea to ask a school staff or other trusted adult to participate. Also, many schools and communities require permits or other forms of permission to have events even in public spaces. With that, better safe than sorry. If people try to disrupt your event or you are having any other challenges, don't be afraid to inform the school staff or a trusted adult.

8. MAKE A CHECK LIST: Being organized is good. The days before your event can feel somewhat hectic. Write down and track what you need to do.

9. HAVE FUN: When you're part of the team that is planning a *Breaking The Silence* event, having fun can sometimes be forgotten. Through it all, this is intended to be a great experience that includes a lot of celebration and fun

10. GOOD LUCK: Actually, you don't need luck — after following the 10 steps to organizing your *Breaking The Silence* event, you're ready!



> K-12 Students Contact **GLSEN** @ (212) 727 0135 OR info@dayofsilence.org

> College & University Students Contact **USSR** @ (202) 347-8772 OR lgbt@usstudents.org