



# Dr. Martin Luther King Organizing Week Manual

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"We are all tied together in a single garment of destiny. An inescapable network of mutuality. I can never be what I ought to be until you are allowed to be what you ought to be."

– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In the spirit of one of the world's greatest leaders, GLSEN is proud to support Dr. Martin Luther King Organizing Week January 19 – 22, 2010! During this week, organizers will work to build connections across multiple groups, communities and issues and grow their advocacy through coalition building.

This week of action encourages students working in the safe schools movement together with other social justice work to recognize the importance of collaborating with others as a tool for social change. By connecting across multiple issues, identities, groups, communities, and experiences we strengthen the movement for social justice comprised of people of different races, ethnicities, abilities, religious beliefs and age.

## Ideas for MLK Week Activities

- Host a screening of "Brother Outsider"
- Hold a roundtable discussion
- Volunteer with another club or organization
- Create a visual display about people who represent multiple identities and movements
- Co-facilitate a workshop or training

Before you get started, be sure to REGISTER your MLK Week activities on [www.studentorganizing.org](http://www.studentorganizing.org)!

## 1. Get Permission

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Doing any activity in your school usually requires the approval of the principal or other administrator, whether posting fliers, reserving a room or just making announcements. The earlier you work with your school's administration, the easier it is to avoid problems and address concerns. It may help to prepare a presentation with the reasons you want to do the activity and how it will impact the school in a positive way. A presentation to your school administration also helps to show how the action fits into the school's mission to build community and/or educate students.

## 2. Build a Core Group & Action Plan

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Working with others adds more perspective and ideas, as well as people power to get everything done. Work with your GSA or other student club like to sponsor and help plan the event. It's important to build a coalition and include other groups or clubs to bring in more ideas and share the work.

Strong goals help make your MLK Week activities more successful. How many events do you want to plan? How many other clubs do you want to join your coalition? How many people do you want to include? Be SMART: establish goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant & Timely. This will help you focus and evaluate your efforts.

There's an endless list of activities you could do for MLK Week; determine what you think will work best for your school or community. Consider partnering with other schools in your district or community to host community-wide MLK Week activities. MLK Week is flexible and

adaptable, so you can be creative in your organizing. Look at the Ideas box above for just a few activities you can organize!

### **3. Build a Coalition**

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A coalition is a diverse group of individuals and organizations that work together to reach a common goal. The goals can be anything that you think will be helpful to making your school safer for everyone in the coalition: by changing school policy, educating peers or faculty, or by communicating about common experiences. Coalitions help to break down stereotypes and discrimination. They also help establish allies and to build stronger movements by including many different ideas in your organizing. The trick is to discovering what your groups have in common. Perhaps you all experience discrimination, are all working for more student club visibility, or facilitate trainings for teachers. Whatever the intersection, it's important to work within the commonalities to make a truly strong coalition. And remember, dialogue is key!

For tips on how to start and build a healthy coalition, read "10 Steps to Start a Coalition" at [www.dayofsilence.org/mlk\\_steps.html](http://www.dayofsilence.org/mlk_steps.html).

### **4. Strong Action Brings Strong Results!**

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Dr. Martin Luther King Organizing Week is about building coalitions that work to make your school safer from bullying and harassment. Although it's important to have discussions and develop understanding amongst the members of the coalition, it's better if you develop an action plan together to make your school a better place.

Through dialogue and discussion, pin-point an issue everyone in your coalition faces. The group should work together to find a solution to this issue, and develop a plan to make that solution happen. You can build a task force to intervene in all forms of bullying and harassment. You can have monthly student community round tables to discuss concerns and issues. You can plan joint trainings for peers. Think about what your school needs to be a safer place and brainstorm how your coalition can make it happen!

### **5. Be Safe**

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Are you the only one in your school who wants to work on this issue? Is your administration hostile to doing any activity that addresses LGBT issues? It's important to determine which actions are safe for you, the student club, and/or others involved in MLK Week. GLSEN's work is about ensuring the safety of everyone in K-12 schools, and we don't want you to put yourself and others in any harm. Therefore, it's always important to know how and whom to report any bullying or harassment.

If you are unsure about your rights, or feel your rights have not been granted, please contact us at [info@dayofsilence.org](mailto:info@dayofsilence.org).

**What are you doing for Dr. Martin Luther King Organizing Week?  
Let us know by emailing [info@dayofsilence.org](mailto:info@dayofsilence.org).**

For more information on this resource, contact:  
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