Welcome to the 2021 National Day of Silence Zine!

This Zine was created by GLSEN’s 2020-2021 National Student Council. This year, we are focusing on the theme *My Silence, My Story* to tie storytelling into GLSEN’s National School Climate Survey, and show the difference between forced silence and chosen silence. Staying silent is a choice that some of us have the option to partake in, and we must continue to stay silent and break the silence for those who have no choice.

GLSEN’s National Student Council created this zine with the challenge of reimagining silence. In it, you will find artwork, playlists, poetry, resources, and much more! We hope that through this zine, you are empowered, invigorated, and inspired to get involved and continue fighting for justice!

**Our Silence is Loud!**

Esmée Silverman  
she, her, hers  
19, 12th grade, MA  
National Student Council
Eric • he/him
17, 12th grade, AL

glsen.org/DayOf Silence
A Statement on the Importance of Stories

Apparitions of fairytale characters haunt the stage as a green-velvet-clothed witch emerges from the shadows. She sings in a somber mezzo:

“CAREFUL THE TALE YOU TELL, THAT IS THE SPELL.”

In preparation for an upcoming audition, I was making my way through a playlist of clips from Into the Woods. As the week passed, and my audition came and went, I found myself coming back to that same line and remembering how stories had woven their magic through my own life. Reading Carry On, shortly after realizing I was gay, built a foundation of self-acceptance. I became interested in the complexities of race and culture after seeing a production of Spinning into Butter my freshman year. Stories have led to my interest in new topics, made me reckon with my relationship with myself, and fundamentally changed how I interact with the world.

Just as stories have changed me, they have changed the world. Egyptian myths millennia ago allowed pharaohs to keep their power; Uncle Tom’s Cabin was one of the catalysts for the civil war; Hamilton forced us to reckon with how we view the past within present contexts. The Thespian Induction Ceremony says that stories are telepathy, the act of transmitting one’s soul to another. They are empathy. They are connection. They are insight. This is precisely where their power lies. The ability to step into someone else’s shoes is so much more powerful than people consciously realize. Some argue that laws are the most powerful things to be written, spoken, or broadcast. I disagree. Whereas laws might force people to change, storytelling persuades them. How will stories shape the future, and how are world-changing stories created? Stories themselves may be fiction, but their power is anything but.

In an information-laden time like ours, with an endless list of victims and an awareness of society-threatening issues pushed onto us every day, it is easy, almost necessary, to slip into apathy. Stories are the cure. They create human understanding in a world of distance. They keep each life lost from becoming just a tally mark, they compel people to care about issues that seem displaced from their own lives, and they prevent isolation in an inevitably isolating time. They are fantastical in their ability and are desperately needed. Stories, now more than ever, are a necessary magic.

So, this Day of Silence, when you are reclaiming your silence and your story, consider what you want that story to do. How do you want to use that story? Because in ways small and large, it will change the world.

Make that story your own, protect it, and most importantly...TELL IT.
Anyone can make a call to their representative at any time, there’s no need to take part in an organized phone bank, although calling alongside other people can certainly help ease anxiety.

HERE’S A QUICK GUIDE TO MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD:

1. Identify an anti-LGBTQ bill in your state, and where it is in the legislature. This information should be available on your state’s general assembly website.

2. Chances are that the bill is designated to be voted on in some type of committee or subcommittee. Use the same website to find which representatives are members of that committee/subcommittee and their respective phone numbers.

3. Dial the number and tell them to vote “NO” on the specific bill. You may want to include a short explanation as to why you find the bill harmful. You might be leaving a message, that’s okay, your message will still be marked down later. If you do talk to somebody, it will probably be an assistant of the representative, which is also okay. They’ll still write down that you want the representative to vote no.

4. Encourage others to do the same!

In my state, Tennessee, there are currently 10 anti-LGBTQ bills in the legislature, dubbed the “slate of hate” by the Equality Coalition. One bill has already passed, HB3, which will force transgender athletes to choose between competing for the team of their sex assigned at birth or not playing at all. Another, HB529, would require teachers to give notice to parents of upcoming LGBTQ-related content in class and give the parents a chance to opt their child out of those lessons. HB800 would ban all textbooks that have LGBTQ content. HB578 is an attack on gender-affirming care for transgender youth. HB372 is an anti-diversity training bill. HB1177 and HB1233 are both anti-trans bathroom bills. Needless to say, this is a terrifying attack on the rights of not just LGBTQ people, but LGBTQ children and youth in Tennessee. And it’s not just happening here.

In recent news, Arkansas’s governor vetoed HB1570, which would ban any and all gender-affirming care for trans youth. In less than a day, lawmakers overrode his veto, and that bill is now law. In North Carolina, SB514 would ban gender affirmation care for trans people under 21 and require schools to notify parents if a child displays “gender nonconformity.” These are just some of the most egregious attacks on transgender youth, but many more are currently being seen in legislatures across the country. Check out this link for more information.

IT IS NOW MORE VITAL THAN EVER THAT OUR LAWMAKERS HEAR OUR VOICES and see trans youth as human beings and constituents who deserve to be listened to (because let’s be honest, it’s highly unlikely that any of them have ever spoken to an out trans person). Recently, the GLSEN Tennessee SHINE Team hosted a phone bank to tell legislators to vote no on HB529 and HB800. We made 873 calls.

Aiden Cloud • they/them
12th grade, TN

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Books that made me feel represented

Our own stories are undeniably important, but sometimes it’s hard to find the courage to embrace those stories in the first place. That’s what I see as the role of representation. Seeing others’ stories that mirror our own is often just what we need to be braver ourselves. Below, I’ve compiled a few of the books (prose and graphic novels) that have most made me feel represented. I identify as gay and Indian American, so these novels are mostly tailored to those identities.

Disclaimer: There are some words below that may be potential triggers. All books have also been These warnings were completed to the best of my ability as a student, but they may not be all-encompassing.

TW: Religious homophobia, violence, death, blood, mild gore

THE MAGIC FISH by Trung Le Nguyen: Every night, Tiến and his mother, a refugee from post-war Vietnam, read fairy tales together while she works to tailor her clients’ clothing. They read about great romances that always seem to have a happy ending, something that simultaneously gives them hope and hopelessly contrasts their own life. Tiến grapples with his feelings for his friend, Julian, while attending his Christian middle school, and his mother struggles to find who she is after her connection to Vietnam is severed. The Magic Fish is a story about belonging, connection, and how we use stories to communicate the things words cannot. There are so many things I connected to within this graphic novel! The main character's identity as gay, Asian-American, and a child of immigrants was front and center. As someone who was (and still is) a serious bookworm, the way Nguyen overlaps stories (mostly fairytales, including a Vietnamese version of Cinderella) and cultures to show how all those factors shaped this single character's life really spoke to me.

TW: Death, violence, PTSD

THE NAMESAKE by Jhumpa Lahiri: The Namesake follows Gogol, an Indian American with a confusingly Russian name. The novel starts out with the story of Gogol's father, Ashoke, and his mother, Ashima. It covers their life in India, their transition to a life in America, and all that comes after. Stories also play a central role in this novel, specifically “The Overcoat” by Nikolai Gogol (spoiler: the titular namesake). Lahiri then takes us through 30 years of Gogol and his family's life. It's a novel about finding your place, family, and the challenges life throws at us. This novel was not about queer identity so much so as immigrant identity, but the things it says about identity as a whole can be applied to many people.

TW: Homophobia, bullying, eating disorders, mild violence

HEARTSTOPPER by Alice Oseman: Heartstopper follows the story of Nick and Charlie, two students at a British all-boys grammar school. Nick is a rugby player who isn’t really sure what he is yet. Charlie is high-strung and openly gay. As the two grow closer, their friendship blooms and starts to become something more. The comic tackles homophobia, ED, questioning your sexuality, and more with a brilliantly endearing cast of supporting characters (from across the LGBTQ+ spectrum). Heartstopper, perfect for any fans of the YA genre, is a comic that will make you laugh, cry, and everything in between. I most connected with the character Aled (Queer introverts rise up!), but honestly this series has so much LGBTQ+ representation across the spectrum. Almost everyone can find a character that they relate to.

Suraj Singareddy • he/him • 18, 12th grade, GA
These songs are all about reclaiming yourself and your story. We hope they make you feel empowered!

**PARTY FOR ONE**  
Carly Rae Jepsen

**DANCE TO THIS**  
Troye Sivan ft. Ariana Grande

**LOVE ME 4 ME**  
Rina Sawayama

**CHERRY**  
Rina Sawayama

**FLICKER**  
Rina Sawayama

**STRONGER**  
Raveena

**SAFFLOWER HARVEST**  
Katsu Hoshi

**RAINBOW**  
Kesha

**I’D RATHER BE ME**  
Barrett Wilbert Weed, Original Broadway Cast of Mean Girls

**EVERYBODY SAY YEAH**  
Billy Porter, Stark Sands, Kinky Boots Original Broadway Cast

**CORNER OF THE SKY**  
Matthew James Thomas

**DEFYING GRAVITY**  
Idina Menzel, Kristin Chenoweth, Original Broadway Cast of Wicked

**BORN THIS WAY**  
Lady Gaga

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3z18N3L89RakYNRY4fLOeg?si=fsKWdOBQRvOV367fEcAbow&nd=1

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Suraj Singareddy • he/him  
18, 12th grade, GA

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To me, gender is a performance.
My gender is an itchy, oversized sweater,
handed down to me when I was young.
Given with the notion that I would one day
grow into it, but never did.
That gender makes the closet look fuller than it is.
I choose to wear that sweater with relatives and friends.
But the second it’s too warm, the sweater is put away
for a colder day.

Gender is a performance.
My gender is three feral cats, stacked into a trench coat.
Wearing fake mustaches and large inauthentic sombreros on
My gender is an eleven-year-old stuffing their bra to fill in what’s meant to be.

My gender is overgrown body hair with a shaved head.
My gender is also tinted chap stick after applying Rogaine to my face.
My gender is a performance I choose to put on once a week.
That performance is put on through needles of T.

My gender is an ultra-rare trading card with a pull value of six cents.
My gender is an overlooked throw pillow on the side of the road.
My gender is an insurmountable amount of pain in a worm.
My gender is an unpopular movie made straight to DVD.

My gender is an empty theatre to an award-winning Broadway musical.
My gender is a full bladder on a six-hour hike.
My gender is an inconvenience but can be convenient at times.
My gender is answering unknown on a COVID-19 questionnaire
My gender is the textbook definition of empty, but that
gender is mine.