



**DAY OF
SILENCE**
GLSEN[®]

2021
Breaking the Silence Guide

My Silence, My Story.

Every year, after participating in the Day of Silence, a national student led movement protesting the silencing and erasure of LGBTQ+ people, we get together and **BREAK THE SILENCE!** This year's theme is **My Silence, My Story**. Where LGBTQ+ people are often left out of curriculum and students are deprived from the opportunity to learn about LGBTQ+ struggles and resilience, this year we will break the silence with your story!

This is a chance for LGBTQ+ students, educators, and school community members to reclaim their silence and erasure. This guide is for anyone who wishes to participate in the largest LGBTQ+ student led day of action. Below are ideas you can use at school, with your GSA, and online community to take action, insert yourself back into the narrative, and become an organizer and advocate in support of LGBTQ+ people. GLSEN's resources will provide opportunities for student leaders to organize their day of action and engage in creative and impactful ways to tell their story especially in incorporating racial, gender, and disability justice.

JOIN GLSEN'S NATIONAL BREAKING THE SILENCE RALLY!

Register here for information on guest appearances, speakers, entertainment, and special announcements. GLSEN's Instagram will have special guests throughout the afternoon that you won't want to miss! Just follow @GLSEN and tune in April 23rd at 7:00PM ET.

HOST YOUR OWN BREAKING THE SILENCE RALLY

- Students can make a schedule of who is speaking, performing, a simultaneous moment to Break the Silence together.
- Connect with your local GLSEN Chapter for support in organizing your event.
- Invite a guest speaker to perform or share empowering words or stories to the group.
- Hold a discussion group to Break the Silence. Listen to their story, identify ways LGBTQ+ students in your group are experiencing silencing and erasure.
 - Why was it important to you to take action and participate in the Day of Silence?
 - How are LGBTQ+ students at this school experiencing silencing and erasure?
 - Identify things at this school that make you feel unsafe?
 - What is your vision for a liberated school environment? What does it look like? What does it smell like? Who is there with you? How do you feel? What is different about this vision from your current reality?

VIRTUAL IDEAS

- Set up a video call via Zoom, Google Hangouts, Skype, etc.
- Invite your GSA AND other GSAs from your school district to join virtually.
- Select a time where you will all Break the Silence virtually together! Unmute yourself and yell, say an empowering word, ring a bell, bang a pot, howl etc. :) get creative!



For more information visit glsen.org/DayOfSilence
or email students@glSEN.org.

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IN PERSON IDEAS

- Safety plan by understanding school safety protocols for events. For gatherings and events, create a safety plan for the event space that is communicated to the students such as making sure students are at least six feet apart and wearing masks. Work with students to identify a safe location to hold an event or gathering as some students may feel unsafe being out in the open.
- Ring a bell or honk a horn and shout a word that makes you feel seen and strong!
- Set up an in person open mic with a list of speakers and performers.
- Host a panel discussion.
 - Invite students, teachers, community members to participate.
 - Create questions with the theme: *My Silence, My Story*.

HOST A VIEWING PARTY

You can watch Netflix with your friends virtually or in person. Break the Silence by watching an LGBTQ focused movie, show, or youtube influencer. Movies and TV Series like **HairSpray**, **Love Simon**, **Love Victor**, **The Half of It**, and **The Prom** have discussion guides you can use afterwards. hint hint: You can also tune in to the National Breaking the Silence Rally!

VISUAL REPRESENTATION

There are so many LGBTQ+ young artists and we would love for you to share your gifts! This year's theme *My Silence, My Story* is the perfect prompt for this section. Post your art on your social page and at school, explain the connection to Day of Silence, tag @GLSEN and hashtag #DayofSilence for a chance to be featured on our IG page and story! Work with your school administration on selecting a location to host this art wall.

- **T-shirt design party.** Bring a shirt you can repurpose for Day of Silence and decorate it with words and visuals, then wear it on the Day of Silence.
- **Drawing, painting, graphic design, etc.** This has been the traditional outlet for Day of Silence and Breaking the Silence! And this is an activity you can do together with your GSA! Have a gallery walk of all the pieces submitted or showcase them when you table or your Breaking the Silence event.
- **Poetry and other forms of writing.** Words have power, share and tell your story through creative and expressive writing. The Day of Silence theme *My Silence, My Story* can be the writing prompt. You can also do this with your GSA or group of friends. Share your work with each other in this silent activity.
- **Dance and movement art.** Body movement in all of its forms is an empowering expressive outlet. This is an opportunity to connect what it means to feel erased, silenced, empowered, resilient through body movement.
- **Zine making party!** Check out the National Student Council's Zine and share it! You can also create your own Zine as a group while on a video call with each other. Connect with the closest GLSEN Chapter to you and share your Zine! They can share it on their social and if you tag @GLSEN and use the hashtag #DayofSilence and #BreakingTheSilence, you could be featured on GLSEN national's social media outlets!



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- **Make Signs!** Create large or mini protest signs for the Day of Silence. Find a slogan that works for you like “Stop Silencing and Erasing LGBTQ+ Students!” or “LGBTQ+ Representation Now!” “We Will NOT Be Silent!”
- **Make Buttons.** Make Day of Silence and Breaking the Silence buttons to wear and give out to folks participating. If you do not have buttons try printing stickers with the graphic design on the GLSEN webpage.
- **Cooking!** Food can be a healing and transformative way to engage in activism too! Share food that connects to your identity, decorate food, and share creative ways to connect food to Breaking the Silence!

BREAKING THE SILENCE TEACH-IN

Educate your peers or teachers on what is needed to build safer schools for LGBTQ students through an online webinar using zoom or google hangouts.

ZINE MAKING PARTY!

Check out the [National Student Council's Zine](#) and share it! You can also create your own Zine as a group while on a video call with each other. Tag @GLSEN and use the hashtag #DayofSilence and #BreakingTheSilence, you could be featured on GLSEN national's social media outlets!

ACCESSIBILITY

As for all advocacy work, make sure that your participation and your students' participation is accessible and does not perpetuate or engage in ableist behavior. Here are suggestions on how to participate with mindfulness and centering access needs.

- If you are planning an in-person event, offer all the ways your event will be accessible. For example, offering if the event will have live interpreters, wheelchair accessible, fragrance free for folks sensitive to smells, seating availability prioritized for folks who cannot stand for any length of time or need to be closer to the event for visibility. It is important to center the needs and requests of the folks you are supporting. If an interpreter is needed, ask if they have a preferred interpreter.
- Make a note of who to contact plus contact information if someone has accommodation requests (such as interpreters, live captioning, image descriptions.)
- Some people have light sensitivity so avoid using flashing lights or give a warning if there will be flashing lights at the moment they will happen and give folks a chance to look away. Let folks know when the flashing lights have stopped.
- Use image descriptions for folks who cannot see the image you are promoting or sharing. Here is an example of an image description for a photo. *Image description is of a person with short pastel orange hair in a light blue t-shirt and jeans standing on a stage and passing a microphone to another person with long black hair wearing overalls with flower prints on them.* For more information about why this is important, [check out this list of “Ways to Create Access”](#) from the Disability Accessibility Summit.
- Make sure folks are using correct names and pronouns by having name tags and encouraging students to add their pronouns.



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- Share content warnings for heavy topics such as mental health, death, violence, slurs, etc. should they be mentioned or discussed.
- Invite students to move up to the front but do not force or pressure them. For some students, it may have taken a lot for some students to get through the door, let folks be where they are most comfortable and feel the safest.
- This is the Day of Silence. What this means for hearing folks is using American Sign Language (ASL) or making up gestures like scattergories should not be “entertaining”, funny, or used as a substitution for you not speaking. American Sign Language is a complex and effective language of communication for Deaf and hard of hearing communities. It is ableist and offensive to try and make up gestures to communicate. If you or your peers need to communicate, using the chat feature is the best practice.

Explore GLSEN's GSA activities and use one or more to teach others on how to build a more inclusive school environment for LGBTQ+ students.

- **Pronoun Guide**
- **Learning Empowerment and Self-Identification**
- **LGBTQ History Cards**
- **Inclusive Curriculum Guide**
- **Gender Triangle Education Guide**

Challenge people to think about systems of oppression and how they impact building a safer environment for LGBTQ+ students. Be sure to have time for discussion and questions at the end of the activity.

Your existence is so important, you deserve to thrive and be seen in a way that makes you feel represented and affirmed. If you are feeling nervous about organizing and advocating, remember, LGBTQ+ students have always led and drove the LGBTQ+ movement forward. Can't stop, won't stop! And we are here with you.

Don't forget to tag @GLSEN and use the hashtag #DayofSilence #BreakTheSilence for a chance to be featured on our social channels.



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