

Addressing Resistance to the Day of Silence

Getting permission is an important part of organizing an in-school activity. But what do you do when the administration at your school says no? As you plan for your Day of Silence, you may face resistance in your school or opposition from your community. Here are some tips that will help you organize a peaceful and effective Day of Silence no matter what.

Send a letter ahead of time

Send your administration a letter with your intent to participate in the Day of Silence, including:

- › A description of the Day of Silence
- › Information about supportive clubs and/or staff
- › Date and description of what you hope to do
- › Any specific requests you have for your events
- › A note of thanks for their support and understanding
- › Links to GLSEN resources where they can learn more

See dayofsilence.org for a sample letter to administrators from the ACLU outlining your legal rights as a student.

Request a meeting

If you sent a letter and an administrator denied your request to participate, ask to schedule a meeting with the principal, activity director or other appropriate staff. Invite your GSA advisor, supportive faculty and/or other members of your GSA to join your meeting. Be calm and respectful during your conversation; don't accuse or yell. Instead, ask them to explain their concerns about the Day of Silence. Listen carefully to what they say and take notes. Be prepared with respectful questions that move the conversation forward. If you can't reach a solution, ask if you can follow up later. If you feel your right to free speech is being violated, contact the ACLU or Lambda Legal.

If you encounter opposition

Some people may want to actively detract from the message of your Day of Silence activities. Here are a couple of tips for you if you find yourself facing this type of opposition:

STAY COOL: It's difficult to be challenged, and some people who oppose the Day of Silence may say hurtful things. Take a few deep breaths and find supportive friends or school staff who can help you stay calm in the face of adversity. Remember that you're participating in the Day of Silence to make a difference, not to start fights. If you feel your safety is being compromised, contact a school official immediately.

REPORT IT: If there are people who are bullying or harassing you as part of their opposition, you should report it—to school officials, online authorities, your parents—immediately. If this takes place at school, make sure to notify a supportive staff member, and ask for their assistance as you follow up on the status of your report.

CONTACT US: If you experience extreme amounts of opposition, face bullying and harassment, or feel your rights have been violated in an way, please contact us at info@dayofsilence.org and let us know right away! We can put you in touch with the appropriate legal support.