



# The Front Page

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## GLSEN Breaks the Silence

### National Organization Marks its 10th Year with "Teach Respect" Campaign

NEW YORK — GLSEN, or the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, launched a national public education campaign entitled Teach Respect on April 13, 2005. This will coincide with the culmination of the Day of Silence, where in over 4,000 schools an estimated 450,000 students in all 50 states and Puerto Rico will take a vow of silence to bring attention to the bias and harassment experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students and their allies.

The Teach Respect campaign seeks to educate, inform and inspire Americans to address the serious problems of anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment that affects ALL students — gay and straight alike — in our nation's schools.

"It is fitting that GLSEN launches the Teach Respect campaign on the Day of Silence," said Kevin Jennings, Founder and Executive Director of GLSEN. "As hundreds of thousands of students lead a silent event to educate their classmates and communities about anti-LGBT bias, violence and harassment, GLSEN now breaks the silence on this issue with a campaign encouraging all Americans to take action to make schools safe for all students."

According to GLSEN's 2003 National School Climate Survey, 4 out of 5 LGBT students report being verbally, sexually or physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation. The study also found that inclusive safe schools policies, teacher trainings on LGBT issues and supporting student clubs commonly known as Gay-Straight Alliances are part of the solution to ensure schools are safe and effective environments for all students.

The Teach Respect campaign will use public service announcements, or PSAs, in print media and radio to raise awareness of the harmful effects of bullying and harassment in America's schools. The Teach Respect PSAs can be viewed and heard on a re-launched educational



### give bullies some direction

Name-calling, bullying and harassment are serious problems in America's schools. What should be a safe haven for learning is instead a dangerous and isolating place for many students — gay and straight alike — who regularly face anti-LGBT verbal and physical attacks. Find out how you can help make schools safe for all students at [www.TeachRespect.org](http://www.TeachRespect.org).



website, [www.TeachRespect.com](http://www.TeachRespect.com). The site will also provide information and resources about what can individuals can do within their homes, schools and communities to curb anti-LGBT bullying and harassment.

#### About the Day of Silence

The Day of Silence began on a small scale in 1996 and is now observed by tens of thousands of students annually at hundreds of schools and colleges across the country.

A project of GLSEN in collaboration with the United States Student Association (USSA), the Day of Silence is a student-led day of action: those who support making anti-LGBT bias unacceptable in schools take a day-long vow of silence to recognize and protest the discrimination and harassment — in effect the silencing — experienced by LGBT students and their allies.

Across the country last year an estimated 450,000 students in over 3,000 K-12 schools and over 600 colleges took part in the Day of Silence. This year the Day of Silence has already been endorsed by over 150 organizations and several local governments have issued proclamations about the day.

"The Day of Silence was an event conceived of by students themselves in response to a very real problem of bullying and harassment they saw on their campuses," Jennings said.

Irrked by the success of the nationwide Day of Silence, conservative activists this year launched a counter-event called the "Day of Truth" aimed at mobilizing students who believe homosexuality is sinful.

Participating students are being offered T-shirts with the slogan "The Truth Cannot be Silenced" and cards to pass out to classmates Thursday — the day following the Day of

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## Raise Our Voices

### "Day of Silence" shows we need to speak out for gay kids

By Mubarak Dahir  
Contributing Writer

According to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network's Web site, the national "Day of Silence" is the largest single student-led action aimed at drawing attention to the bullying and harassment of gay and lesbian students that remains all too frequent in America's school system, from elementary school through college.

More than 1900 schools with more than 100,000 students were expected to participate in this year's "Day of Silence," which took place Wednesday, April 13, across the country.

On the "Day of Silence," students take a vow of silence, refusing to speak the entire day as a way of showing solidarity with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students whose voices and identities are squelched on a regular basis.

The idea for the "Day of Silence" got its start back in 1996 at the University of Virginia, where 150 campus students took place in the first-ever event. The impact of the day inspired two students to take the event nationally. They developed a program that could be adopted by middle schools through universities all around the country.

If there was ever any doubt about the need for such an event or the seriousness of the problems it is meant to underscore, just listen to the words of those opposed to protecting gay and lesbian kids in schools.

Peter LaBarbera, the well-known anti-gay crusader who is now the head of a group called Americans for Truth, called on gay and lesbian advocates to take what he called a "Decade of Silence."

"Parents are sick and tired of pro-gay liberals using the trusted school environment to promote homosexuality and gender confusion as normal to impressionable children," he said.

"We need more silence from the radical homosexual education lobby," LaBarbera continued. "Most parents simply have no clue as to how much pro-gay propaganda has found its way into our schools."

Before you dismiss this call to undermine the safety and welfare of gay

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