

National Day of Silence: What are You Doing to End the Silence?

Written by Rev. Lori Tisher



The 11th annual National Day of Silence, led by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), is April 18, 2007. Students of all ages throughout the country will be quiet all day to protest the discrimination, harassment and abuse—in effect, the silencing—faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students and their allies in schools. Over 6,000 participants are expected to be silent on April 18th, (www.dayofsilence.org) wearing stickers and passing out ‘speaking cards’ that read:

"Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth movement protesting the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their allies in schools. My deliberate silence echoes that silence, which is caused by harassment, prejudice, and discrimination. I believe that ending the silence is the first step toward fighting these injustices. Think about the voices you are not hearing today. What are you going to do to end the silence?"

GLSEN's 2005 National School Climate Survey found that more than 64% of LGBT students report verbal, sexual or physical harassment at school and 29% report missing at least a day of school in the past month out of fear for their personal safety (<http://www.glsen.org>). In the midst of such struggle and injustice, GLSEN has helped spear-head the National Day of Silence. This Day of Silence is one way students and their allies are attempting to make LGBT bullying, harassment and name-calling unacceptable in America's schools.

I still remember the first Day of Silence in which I participated and the many Days of Silence after that in which I took part and helped organize. On that first day, nearly a decade ago now, I had recently come out and was still quite hesitant about participating in public advocacy. Even with all of my doubts that day, though, I still remember that feeling at the end of the day of camaraderie with others who had participated – a sense of belonging and connectedness that I had never before felt. What a difference one day made in my life. What a difference it made to know that I was not

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alone. What a difference it made to know that others cared about me and the issues that were close to my heart. I had taken one more step away from my life of silence – what a difference that would make in the days and years to come.

This year, on April 18th, what will you be doing to end the silence? Grab a button, wear a t-shirt, hand out a card, or write a letter or an editorial to a local newspaper or an elected official: be a part of the movement to break the silence. The Day of Silence is one element of a larger effort to create safe schools for all students regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Be creative and find new ways, even beyond the Day of Silence, to encourage, support, and embrace young LGBT people in our midst throughout the year.

Rev. Lori Tisher is currently the intern for the Health and Wholeness Advocacy Office in Wider Church Ministries, in the United Church of Christ.

Important Dates and Events

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| Apr 18 | National Day of Silence
www.dayofsilence.org |
| Apr 27-29 | “Called Out for Good” Conference
www.ucc.org/lgbt |



Clergy from every state in the nation will converge on Capitol Hill to raise public awareness of the need for

congress to pass legislation combating hate-motivated violence and banning workplace discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Americans. Legislation to address hate crimes and employment discrimination will be moving in Congress this April. Americans need clergy to stand up for them now — and politicians need clergy to remind them of their moral duty to protect those who are most vulnerable. For more information on this event go to: www.hrc.org and click on “religion” in the drop down menu on the left.

To subscribe to this e-newsletter: <http://ga3.org/ucc/join/tcl>

For more information:

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