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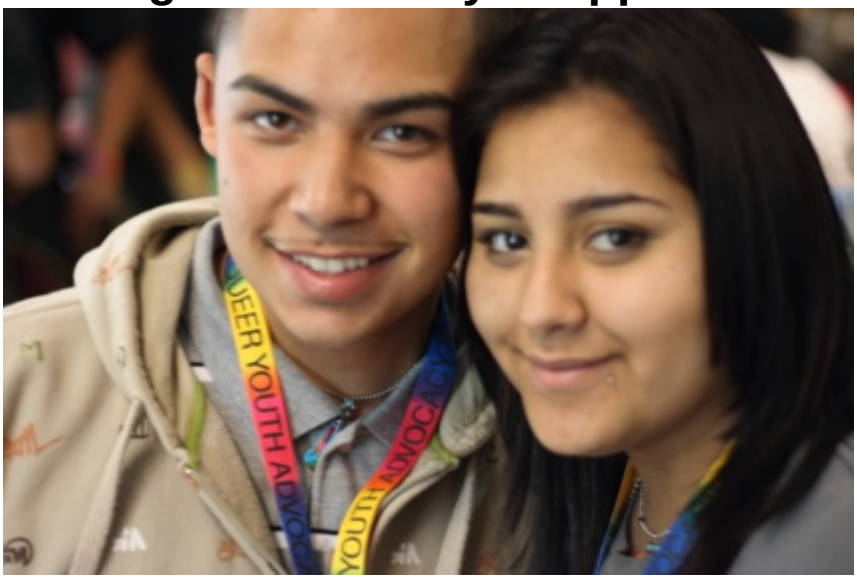
Dealing with Hostility & Opposition



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Should you find your GSA club facing harassment or hostility at school or from the community, here are some possible ways of dealing with it.

HOSTILITY?

?From Teachers

Train the Teachers. Work with administrators to schedule a teacher training where the GSA could help teachers learn about non-discrimination laws and increase their understanding of LGBTQ students and related issues.

Get Adults Talking. Ask your GSA advisor to talk to the teachers who are hostile to LGBT students or the GSA club. A teacher may be more likely to listen to another faculty member than to a student. Also, ask the GSA advisor to propose during a staff meeting that all willing and

supportive teachers show support for LGBT youth by posting rainbow flags, ?Safe Zone? stickers, or other supportive ally signs in their classrooms.

?From Students

Educate Your Peers. Hostility is often due to ignorance, and the only way to fight ignorance is to educate. Consider teaming up with other equity and social justice clubs at your school to establish freshman anti-bias workshops and/or to create anti-bias seminars for the larger student body. Use these events as opportunities to educate your peers about LGBTQ issues and other matters of social justice. See other GSA Network resources to learn how.

Create Policy. If you have a supportive administration, ask them to establish a new school policy in which a student who bullies or harasses another student on the basis of sexual orientation or gender must sit down and talk with a select group of GSA members to help them understand why such behavior is not acceptable. Such measures help prevent future incidents.

Get Published. Write an editorial for your school newspaper. For example, you could editorialize about the purpose of a GSA or you could compose an article that explains the negative impact that sexual orientation- and gender-based harassment has on all students.

?From Administrators

Use the Law. Inform hostile administrators that they cannot discriminate based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender, because it is against California law AB 537, the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act. If you want more information about AB 537, check out our ?AB 537 Fact Sheet.? If the administrator still does not comply with the law after being informed, consider filing a complaint. Contact GSA Network for help.

Find a Teacher Ally. The administrator may be more likely to listen to another adult than you, so ask your GSA advisor or a sympathetic teacher to come with you to talk with the administrator.

?From Your Community

Write an Editorial. Publish an editorial in your local paper. Get your voice out there and explain your point of view to the community.

Present Your Case. Make a presentation to the PTA or to a community organization and explain what your club is all about. Be sure to include LGBT and straight ally members of the community, and if you?re talking to the PTA, be sure to include supportive parents with LGBT youth or parents of the GSA members.

HOSTILITY?

?Against an Individual Student

Identify a Support System. Let harassed students know that they have somewhere to go and that people support them. Reach out and help them understand that you and the GSA are there for them if they need it. Make sure you find out if counselors or social workers at your school are educated about and supportive of LGBT issues. Find other support groups and services in your community.

File a Complaint. File a written complaint about the harassment. See other GSA Network info on AB 537 and your rights. Contact GSA Network for help with filing.

?Against Your GSA Club

Create a Broader Image. Consider showing your school or community that your club is about more than just LGBTQ issues. Partner or form a coalition with other equity and social justice clubs at your school to work on issues of civil rights, social justice, and multi-issue organizing. This will help you gain allies if your GSA meets resistance.

Make Yourself Heard. Write an editorial for your school newspaper and explain the purpose of your club and why it?s necessary.

Plaster the Campus with Posters. Develop a poster campaign. Put up a series of posters designed to raise awareness and explain the importance of your club.

OPPOSITION?

?To Your Posters

Surprise Messages. Behind each poster, leave a second, surprise message. Some GSAs have successfully put empowering messages behind their posters for the people who tear them down to read and for the rest of the student body to read afterward. Some ideas of messages are ?Hate is easy; Love takes courage? or ?You?ve just committed a homophobic act? (from the Los Gatos High GSA).

Laminate. Laminating your posters makes them longer-lasting and less destructible.

Solution: Put Them in Safe Locations. Ask supportive teachers if you can put up posters in their classrooms. Ask supportive administrators if there are glass cases or bulletin boards where you can post permanent flyers. Either of these strategies makes it harder for other people to get to tear down the posters.

? To Your Meetings

Location, Location, Location! Hold your meeting in a discreet or out of the way location, away from people who might want to harass your club.

Stealth Advertising.

If you?ve found a discreet place to meet and you?re still being bothered, try keeping the location of your meeting a secret. On posters and announcements, don?t list the location. Instead, advertise that interested students must ask the club advisor or another supportive teacher where the meeting will be held This way, only people who really want to go will show up.

REMEMBER!

Under California law, AB 537, your school is legally responsible for protecting you from harassment and discrimination. You can always file a complaint if you think you are being harassed or bullied

by other students, teachers, and even administrators. Please see our ?Make it Real? campaign guide for details, and don?t hesitate to call GSA Network for further help.

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