

# **CPYU Trend Alert: "Day of Silence"**

by Walt Mueller

A few days ago I was speaking on youth culture at a church in the Midwest that sits directly across the street from the local high school. I had challenged those in attendance to reach out to the large population of broken and confused kids who walked the halls of that school each and every day. Afterwards, a woman shared a concern and asked a question. She explained that she was part of a group of Christians who were working to get the school to ban the upcoming "Day of Silence." "What can we do to stop it?" she asked.

If you're in the dark regarding the "Day of Silence," here's an explanation: Founded in 1996 at the University of Virginia, the "Day of Silence" is billed by organizers as the largest student-led action towards creating safer schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Scheduled to be held this year on Friday, April 16, hundreds of thousands of students in middle schools, high schools, and colleges across America will take a vow of silence in an effort to encourage their schools and peers to address the problem of anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender behavior. The event is now officially sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). According to research from GLSEN, nearly nine out of ten LGBT students report verbal, sexual or physical harassment at school, and more than 30 percent report missing at least a day of school in the past month out of fear for their personal safety.

According to the "Day of Silence" official website ([www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org)), there are four truths that address common misinformation about the Day of Silence. These truths are:

1. The Day of Silence's purpose is to bring attention to anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment and effective responses.
2. Hundreds of thousands of students of all beliefs, backgrounds and sexual orientations participate in the Day of Silence.
3. Day of Silence participants encourage schools to implement proven solutions to address anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment.
4. The day is a positive educational experience.

In 2008, students participating in the "Day of Silence" handed out "speaking cards" which said: *"Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth movement bringing attention to 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 name-calling, bullying and harassment. 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?"*

After pondering the woman's question for a few moments, I offered a response that I think surprised her. My response was rooted in a couple of realities. First, but not foremost, there's my own experience of harassing people during my high school years, something rooted in my own adolescent insecurities. You know – putting

others down to feel better about myself. While I'm ashamed to admit it, my behavior included harassment of a small number of peers who were rumored to be homosexuals. Second, and foremost, is my understanding of who God is, who He's made people to be, and who He's called His followers to be. . . especially in response to those who - like you and me - are sinners desperately in need of God's saving grace.

And so I told her this. . . **First, I believe that God has established sexuality as a good and wonderful gift that is to be experienced and celebrated with great freedom within the bounds of His order and design.** Because our world is fallen and broken, there will be sinful distortions of that plan that we are to avoid including adultery, fornication, pornography, sexual abuse, sexual lust, and homosexuality. . . among other things. We are to teach these truths to our children without hesitation.

**Second, banning the "Day of Silence" only deals with symptoms of deeper issues.** Shouldn't we be concerned about the hearts where those deeper issues live and from which the symptoms rise to the surface? And while we're talking about hearts from which the issues come, what about the hearts from which hate and ignorance flow. . . especially when those hearts belong to those who claim to follow Christ?

**Third, we can't force anyone to follow Jesus. Only God's Spirit is able to draw people to Himself.** While we can't strong-arm people into the Kingdom of God, we can and must choose to follow Jesus ourselves. Following Jesus means facing our Pharisaical tendencies/sins head-on, while loving sinners as Jesus has loved them (and us! . . . because we're in that group too). Loving on sinners is our calling, just as our calling is to hate and avoid sin.

**Finally, I asked her this question: "Have you ever thought about acting on your rightful concern by sitting down and spending some time getting to know and listening to the kids who are planning the 'Day of Silence' at your school?"** She paused. . . as I guess most of us would. . . and said "no." I then challenged her to find out the names of the kids, invite them out to Starbucks, and then sit with no agenda other than to listen, learn, build a relationship, and love.

What would happen if we would stop working so hard to "protect" our kids by legislating morality, and start "providing spiritually" for our kids by modeling how to take the Gospel to those who are hungry for Heaven? I'm learning that while it's easier to wish and work away differences I might not like, Jesus is calling me to go as His ambassador to people He's called me to love. Then, He'll take care of the rest.

*Are you or someone you know suffering from sexual brokenness and enslavement to sexual sin? We recommend that you visit the website of Harvest USA at [www.harvestusa.org](http://www.harvestusa.org)*

**For more information on today's youth culture, visit the website of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding at [www.cpyu.org](http://www.cpyu.org).**