

Anti-Racist GSAs

This handout was adapted from and inspired by materials produced by dismantlingRacismworks (dismantlingracism.org). Check out their website for more great resources!

GSAs and iNSIDEoUT, like all institutions in the United States, reflect the racist elements of this country's past and present. GSAs in North Carolina are to be found mostly in relatively well-funded schools serving predominantly middle to upper class, white students. In schools that are more diverse, or located in rural areas, GSAs either don't exist or are populated mostly by white, privileged students. The GSA movement simply cannot fulfill its potential unless its population becomes representative of the population at large. dismantlingRacismworks identifies four stages of organizational development. Transforming into an anti-racist organization, they explain, requires passing through these four stages:

The **ALL WHITE CLUB**, while it does not deliberately exclude people of color (POC), is composed almost exclusively of white people. POC either do not join the group, or leave shortly after they do. In the all white club, people of color must fit into an all white culture. The all white club fails to address internal issues of race, and is not accountable to people of color.

The **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OR 'TOKEN' ORGANIZATION** adopts clear affirmative action policies and goals to include POC in its leadership. It may also conduct workshops to eliminate prejudice. But, much like the all white club, the 'token' organization remains slanted in its perspective and structure, despite the fact that it outlines clear policies for including POC.

The **MULTI-CULTURAL ORGANIZATION** is composed, at every level, of a diverse group of people. It educates its participants on issues of race and diversity. Its commitment to diversity is reflected in its vision and constitution, and in what it does on a day to day basis. Nonetheless, POC within the organization are still made to fit in to an existing culture.

The **ANTI-RACIST** organization actively confronts racism inherent this country's past and present, and considers how that gets reflected internally, within the organization. It cultivates anti-racist awareness and participation among its members, and people of color are actively and meaningfully involved as leaders and empowered participants. Anti-racist organizations educate their members about racism, challenge their members to think and communicate about race, even when it becomes uncomfortable, and create an ongoing dialogue about issues of race and class within and outside of the organization.

No organization falls perfectly into any of these classifications, though an organization may be in one stage more than the others. What is your GSA's state of development?

____% All White Club

____% Affirmative Action or 'Token' Organization

____% Multi-Cultural Organization

____% Anti-Racist Organization

Questions to Check Yourself, Your GSA, and Your GSA Network

1. Do close friendships within the organization cross racial and cultural boundaries?
2. In terms of race, does your GSA's population resemble the population of students in your school's hallways? Find out the actual demographics of your school on the iNSIDEoUT website: <http://www.insideout180.org/diversityoutreach.php#demographics>. Does your GSA's population reflect these statistics?
3. Now compare the demographics of your school to that of the *leadership* of your GSA? Are they similar?
4. Relative to other schools in your district and in North Carolina, is your school better or worse off economically? Have you considered whether there are GSAs in schools that differ from yours economically?
5. Has your GSA done anything special for Martin Luther King Jr. Day?
6. Does your GSA follow the Christian calendar? Do you take non-Christian religious/cultural events and holidays into consideration when planning?
7. Is your meeting room handicap accessible?
8. Are your fliers and posters printed only in English? Or do you include Spanish or other languages?
9. Do you make it clear that anyone with special needs will be accommodated?
10. Do you retain most of the new people and people of color who come to your GSA meetings? Is your GSA dominated by one or a few cliques?

Some Suggestions for Building Anti-Racist GSAs

- Don't give up! This stuff isn't easy, and may make you feel uncomfortable.
- Assess your GSAs strengths and weaknesses using the questions above (Consider your leadership, vision, written documents, culture, friendships, structure, and programming).
- Set specific, realistic goals for diversity and write them down.
- Visit other minority clubs, and educate people about your GSA and invite them to your meetings.
- Plan an event with other minority groups in your school.
- Hold a panel that includes people from different backgrounds and have them take questions from the audience.
- Print fliers and posters in both Spanish and English, and let people know that their special needs will be accommodated.
- Research, and educate your members about issues of race and class, and how they relate to your school.
- Create a dialogue within your GSA about how people of color and other minority groups are excluded, exploited, underserved and oppressed. Create a safe space for people to talk about how they feel.
- Do something for Martin Luther King Jr. Day!
- Educate your teachers about issues of race and class.
- Take on activist projects that intersect different kinds of oppression and liberation, and collaborate with other minority groups on them.
- Connect with students in a school that differs from yours demographically. Run a GSA program together.
- Make a meaningful effort to be open, welcoming and nice to newcomers.
- Create an exhibit about racism and lgbtq oppression and hang it in your school's hallways.
- Brainstorm additions to this list and send them to iNSIDEoUT180@gmail.com.