

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE G/QSA

Members of the LGBTQ community come from all segments of society and in order for your G/QSA to be an inclusive and safe space for ALL LGBTQ students, it's important that your G/QSA is truly representative of your school's population.

What's the difference between a Gay-Straight Alliance and a Queer-Straight Alliance?

As Gay-Straight Alliances have expanded across the nation, some groups have chosen to call their clubs Queer-Straight Alliances. Using the term Queer as opposed to Gay is a way for folks to be more inclusive of students' diversity of identities.

Here are some suggestions for building an inclusive G/QSA:

- **Refer to our "Anti-Racist GSA" document, also found in this packet**
 - Transgender and queer people of color are some of the most critical movers and shakers of LGBTQ history and their stories often go ignored and untold. G/QSAs can honor this legacy by including trans & queer people of color.
- **Are there other clubs at your school (like a social justice or diversity club) that you can partner with to host an event?**
- **Think about who else at your school is impacted by issues that you as LGBTQ youth are similarly impacted by.**
 - Immigration & LGBT rights - did you know that over 1 million immigrants identify as LGBT and that over 250,000 of that 1 million are undocumented?
 - Disability & LGBT rights - did you know that people with disabilities sometimes experience social isolation and discrimination from both the disability community and the LGBT community?
 - School Discipline - Students of color, students with disabilities, and Queer/Gender non-conforming students experience some of the highest rates of school discipline such as suspension and expulsion.
- **Here are some ways to be more trans & gender non-conforming inclusive**
 - Use gender neutral pronouns.
 - Ask people how they want you to refer to them.
 - Remember that gender identity is fluid and changeable...and that's ok.
 - When you really think about it, do you *really* need to know what someone's pronoun is?
- **Thinking about other languages and cultures**
 - Are your materials and communications available in English and Spanish?
 - When scheduling events are you mindful of important events and holidays of other cultures?
 - Do you discuss issues and topics that are relevant to other cultures?
- **Accessibility**
 - Are club spaces, events and gatherings accessible to students with disabilities?
- **Learn about and talk about a diverse group of LGBTQ leaders and activists like:**
 - **Silvia Rivera** (1951-2002) - A fierce trans and queer civil rights activist, Silvia Rivera fought for the inclusion of those who were most marginalized, even within the larger LGBT community. This included low-income queer and trans people of color.

- **Marsha P. Johnson** (1944-1992) - Black transgender rights activist, actress, drag queen and model. Marsha "Pay it no mind" Johnson along with Silvia Rivera, was a Stonewall veteran and the two co-founded S.T.A.R - Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries - in the 1970s.
- **Audre Lorde** (1934-1992) - Lorde was a Caribbean American poet, radical feminist, lesbian and civil rights activist who was instrumental in pushing forward the conversation of the ways that oppressions intersect.
- **Langston Hughes** (1902-1967) - Writer, poet at the center of the Harlem Renaissance.
- **Janet Mock** - (1983-) - Writer, transgender rights activist and former staff editor of People's online magazine. Check out her memoir: *Redefining Realness*.
- **Laverne Cox** (1984-) - Actress, writer and the first trans woman color to produce her own TV show. Laverne Cox is a vocal LGBT rights advocate.
- **James Baldwin** (1924-1987) - Author, activist and social critic. Baldwin wrote about the intersections of race, sexuality and class in books such as *Giovanni's Room* and *The Fire Next Time*.
- **Eli Clare** - Eli Clare describes himself as white, disabled and genderqueer. He is a writer and activist and teaches across the country about disability, queer and trans rights and social justice.
- **Sins Invalid** - A performance troupe that focuses on the intersections of disability and sexuality and that also places queer performers of color at the center of their work.
- **Leslie Feinberg** (1949-2014) - Leslie identified as a white, working class, secular Jewish, transgender lesbian. Leslie was a pioneer and a revolutionary in the movement for queer liberation. Leslie wrote *Stone Butch Blues* which is considered a seminal work in LGBT literature.
- **Bayard Rustin** (1912-1987) - Prominent civil rights activist and chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington. President Obama posthumously awarded Rustin the Medal of Freedom in 2014. Check out the documentary *Brother Outsider* to learn more about Bayard Rustin.
- **Pauli Murray** (1910-1985) - Raised in Durham, NC, Pauli Murray lived and worked at the intersections of race, class, gender, and religion. She sought hormone therapy in the 1930s, was instrumental in the civil rights movement and was also one of the co-founders of the National Organization for Women (N.O.W.) in 1967.
- **Ella Baker** (1903-1986) - Ella Baker was another unsung hero of the civil rights era whose impact as an organizer was overlooked because of her gender.

A final note about language & inclusion...

Not everyone uses the same words to describe themselves. The best thing you can do is strive to see others the way they see themselves.

