



Speaking Up About the Day of Silence

Today marks the 13th annual “Day of Silence,” an activist endeavor ostensibly designed to draw attention to the “problem” of “anti-gay/lesbian/bi-sexual/transgender bullying.” Now officially sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN — They’re missing a few sexual designations there. It’s hard to keep pace with the times), participating students take a vow to speak only when necessary on the appointed day, and some will express their sentiments in other ways as well. Maggie Owner writing at [CivilRights.org](#) provides a brief synopsis of the history, scope, and methods of the event:



**DAY of
SILENCE**

The first Day of Silence was organized in 1996 by students at the University of Virginia. A year later, nearly 100 colleges and universities participated. Last year, more than 8,000 middle schools, high schools, and universities participated nationwide.

This year students are choosing different ways to spread the word about the Day of Silence. Some are using Twitter to encourage people to participate. Others are wearing face masks with an “X” over the mouth to represent their silence or t-shirts with messages like, “Gay? Fine by me.”

The first thing that occurs to me is that this is a good opportunity to test the left’s devotion to the free expression they countenance in school. While it certainly would take some pluck, a student who wished to take a stand for morality could wear a t-shirt stating, “Homosexual behavior? Not fine by me.” Or you could take the opposite tack and, making a point about how everyone draws lines, sport the message, “Polygamy? Fine by me” or “Bestiality? Fine by me.” It would be interesting to see if non-judgmentalism would remain the secular school system’s highest virtue or, if as C.S. Lewis said, they would prove that “their scepticism about values is on the surface,” that “it is for use on other people’s values.”

Of course, stamping out bullying is a noble endeavor, and if this was all this concerned, a Victorian disciplinarian such as me couldn’t take issue with it. The problem, however, is that this isn’t about bullying per se; the goal here is to legitimize deviant behaviors and afford certain groups special protection. This is why this is *not* an anti-bullying event — it is an effort targeting politically incorrect bullying, not bullying in general. In fact, the main thing children are bullied over is not perceived or actual sexual inclination, but appearance.

As strange as this will seem, this much reminds me of a certain scene in the old sitcom *All in the Family*. It involved an uproarious line uttered by the show’s protagonist, blue-collar bigot Archie Bunker, after his daughter, Gloria, passionately asked him, “Daddy, did you know that 65 percent of the people murdered in the last 10 years were killed by handguns?” The old curmudgeon’s classic reply was, “Would it make you feel any better, little girl, if they was pushed outta’ windas’?”

Unfortunately, leftist ideologues would feel better. They care about the method more than the madness.



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on April 17, 2009

And what motivates this desire to privilege certain groups and demonize certain types of bullying is similar: they care about the motivation more than the meanness.

For sure, children are taunted over all sorts of things, such as weight, being short, wearing glasses, being nerdy, and a whole host of other characteristics. And, again, intra-school tranquility must be secured, and students should be encouraged to treat one another charitably, but that isn't the priority here. This isn't directed toward the enforcement of discipline but the enforcement of orthodoxy, and children aren't being taught to love their fellow man but to rubber-stamp the fashionable sins.

Not surprisingly, the Day of Silence's cause is promoted with tendentious, unrepresentative examples of tragedy. This year, the face being put to the event is that of Carl Walker-Hoover. GLSEN tells us of his sad story, [writing](#), "An 11-year-old Massachusetts boy, Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover, hung [sic] himself Monday after enduring bullying at school, including daily taunts of being gay, despite his mother's weekly pleas to the school to address the problem. This is at least the fourth suicide of a middle-school aged child linked to bullying this year."

Such anecdotes are very compelling; they seize people on an emotional level and thus are difficult to combat with reason. And, of course, no child should be harassed — for any reason — to the point of severe despair. Yet, when analyzed accurately, this story is, if anything, an indictment of the permissive atmosphere the left has created within schools, not of the workings of traditional and necessary stigmas.

First, Walker-Hoover was not teased for being a homosexual — he in fact didn't identify himself as such. Yet homosexual activists label his torments "anti-gay bullying" because, as GLSEN points out, he was taunted with words such as "gay." Yet anyone who understands today's elementary-school lexicon knows that "gay" has become a fairly generic insult. In my day, if a boy wanted to get a schoolmate's goat, he called him a "faggot." But in doing this, there was no awareness that the word referred to homosexuals; to us it just meant a wimpy kid. And the only reason why "gay" has supplanted our old standby to an extent is because the language police have succeeded in associating "gay" with something other than happiness. (Moreover, if children today are making the connection with homosexuality where we didn't, it's only because of another piece of the left's handiwork: sex education).

Of course, the GLSEN crowd would say that if homosexuality can be destigmatized, words describing it won't assume a negative connotation. They then won't take the form of schoolyard taunts, generic or otherwise. This is true enough in theory but misses the point.

The issue is meanness. To lament the terms used to express that meanness is to simply prefer that people be pushed out of windows. Destigmatize homosexuality all you want; for that matter, completely dissociate it from a lack of manly virtue. Do you really think that young boys aren't going to taunt others over perceived wimpiness? The tongue can cut not just in plain English, but also in French, German, Russian — and Newspeak. A person can be driven to despair regardless of the terminology chosen.

This is not to say that words are meaningless, as they certainly can be used to manipulate thinking. But they won't temper man's darker urges. Only inculcation with love and virtue can do that.

And the proof is in the pudding. Insofar as children kill themselves due to bullying (and while I don't doubt it can be a contributing factor, it seems likely there are other factors at work as well), the bullying takes many forms. For example, I remember a story about a middle-school boy who committed



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on April 17, 2009

suicide after a group of girls pretended to like him and then degraded and scorned him mercilessly. And the problem was cruelty, not terminology. Of course, this will only matter to you if your goal is purging corruption, not justifying it.

Then there is the matter of how the media shape public perception. By showcasing the murders of homosexuals while ignoring their transgressions, the media succeed in casting them as a victim group in dire need of redress. Ergo, social engineering such as diversity programs, tolerance training, hate-crime (and hate speech) laws, and the Day of Silence.

A good example of this technique was the [murder](#) of Matthew Shepard, a homosexual who was tortured and left to die in 1998. He was used as a prop by the left, and the attention his case was given served to galvanize public and legislative support for hate-crime legislation. A bill was even [proposed](#) in his name, The Matthew Shepard Act. Yet the very next year another young man was tortured, sexually this time, and murdered. He was 13-year-old Jesse Dirkhising, but his [case](#) was virtually ignored by national media. Why? Because the killers were two homosexuals.

Ultimately, the workings of GLSEN and their fellow travelers not only fail to address children's inhumanity to children, they actually exacerbate it. This is because such groups spread a relativistic message. To engender "tolerance" of various sexual behaviors in the young, they preach non-judgmentalism. The idea is that all values are equal, so who can say what is right or wrong? The problem is that this is a philosophy that negates itself. After all, if all values are equal, how can tolerance be better than intolerance?

You see, convincing people there is no Truth certainly can legitimize the demon du jour. The problem is that all his dark friends come along for the ride.



Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative, non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.

Subscribe