MAKING YOUR GSA INCLUSIVE OF BLACK LGBTQ+ STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

Black students often face discrimination in schools on the basis of both race and sexual orientation. According to the 2019 National School Climate Survey, 34.7% of Black students experience both racist and anti-LGBTQ victimization at school.[1] As a result, it's important to take intentional steps to make your GSA (and your school) inclusive of Black LGBTQ+ students. This resource will provide some guidance on concrete steps you can take to make your GSA more inclusive.



CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE IN YOUR GSA

Making your GSA inclusive of Black students requires that you establish an inclusive culture in your GSA. While there are a few specific actions you can take, overall, creating an inclusive culture requires that everyone involved with the club is committed to anti-racism.

Every GSA should have a set of norms or by-laws that govern how students should interact with each other in the club. For a list of sample norms, check out our **Guidelines for Respectful GSA Spaces**. As you build out the norms for your club, make sure that there is a written commitment to anti-racism. It could be as simple as a statement saying "In this GSA, we do not tolerate racism, anti-Blackness, or bigotry of any kind." Once you have those guidelines in place, you must make sure they are upheld, otherwise, they are meaningless.

In your GSA, you should ensure that Black experiences and the needs of Black communities shape your GSA's work, while also ensuring that not all of the labor falls on Black students. This can look like having diverse programming that intentionally centers Black people, being intentional about listening to your club members and ensuring that everyone is comfortable and has their needs met, and avoiding sharing potentially traumatizing content (like videos of police brutality or other examples of violence) without giving students the opportunity to opt out. Additionally, when you have conversations about racism or other issues that disproportionately affect Black students, make sure you give Black students the opportunity to participate as much or as little as they would like to.

In your GSA, commit to paying Black people in whichever ways are feasible for you. If your club is hiring a speaker to talk about racial justice in the LGBTQ+ community, for example, find a Black presenter and pay them fairly for their time. Many clubs have limited financial resources, so you may want to host fundraisers, apply for grants, or work with other organizations in your school so you don't have to shoulder the financial burden alone.



CREATING INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING FOR YOUR GSA

Now that you've established an inclusive culture, it's time to work on creating inclusive programming for your GSA! Often, GSA programming reflects mainstream queer culture, which has largely been shaped by white supremacy. As a result, it is important to take intentional steps to make sure your programming is diverse, inclusive, and anti-racist.

As you plan out your year, make sure to be mindful about events and holidays that affect Black students. Some of these awareness days are listed on the GLSEN calendar, but you can also look for days that are specific to your school, city, or state, as well as other national observance days.

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If your GSA does educational programming, make sure that Black experiences are included in that. If you're doing an activity about queer history, make sure to highlight Black queer history as well. If you're discussing gender identity, talk about the gender binary as a white supremacist concept, and share information about some of the many African and Indigenous tribes that have embraced gender outside of the binary for decades.

Even in non-educational programming, there are a lot of steps you can take to be inclusive. If you make a club playlist, make sure that Black artists are included. If you have a GSA movie night, pick a movie that doesn't have an all-white cast. You can work with racial justice-focused clubs in your school to plan events that are inclusive of LGBTQ+ students and students of color.

Have in-depth conversations in your GSA about intersectionality, solidarity, and anti-racism. These conversations are incredibly important, but you must also ensure that you do not place any undue burden on Black club members to share their trauma or to teach non-Black club members about racism. Provide space for Black people to process during or after these conversations, if needed, and make sure students know that they can step out at any point if they're uncomfortable or triggered.



ESTABLISHING INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IN YOUR GSA

Making your GSA truly inclusive requires that you have inclusive leadership as well. Having Black students in leadership roles can help ensure that your GSA continues to meet the needs of Black students.

As you decide on a leadership structure for your GSA, make sure you consider the needs of Black students. For example, when you create the leadership positions for your club, you may want to make sure that there's someone (or a group of people) whose job it is to handle interpersonal conflicts. Then, there's someone whose job it is to keep an eye out for general conflicts in the club, as well as instances of anti-Blackness and other bigotry. Additionally, all of the leaders in your club should have an intersectional focus and a commitment to anti-racism.

While it is always important to offer opportunities for leadership to Black students, it's also important to recognize that not all Black students want to be the leader on projects relating to race. Teaching about racism can require a lot of emotional labor that students may not have the capacity for or desire to provide.



ADVOCATING FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE SCHOOL THROUGH YOUR GSA

Making your GSA inclusive goes beyond just your club members. There are a lot of ways that you can use your GSA to advocate for an inclusive school and community as well!

Express a commitment to abolition of police and carceral systems. Police in schools have been proven to cause disproportionate amounts of harm to Black and Brown students, LGBTQ+ students, disabled students, and other students of color. Your GSA might want to work with other folks in your school or community to advocate for the removal of police from schools. At the very least, make sure your GSA isn't bringing police into club meetings or events.

If there are racial justice-focused clubs in your school, collaborate with them on intersectional programming and events. You can also have GSA members participate in other school-wide events to show solidarity with LGBTQ+ and racial justice causes. You may also want to get involved with racial justice-focused community organizations to see what your GSA can do outside of your school. You can see if your city has a QTPOC pride festival or organization, or just ask your GSA advisor, friends, or teacher for recommendations of folks to work with!

CONCLUSION

Making your GSA inclusive of Black LGBTQ+ students is an ongoing process that requires commitment and action from everyone involved with the club. Hopefully, these steps have provided some guidance on steps you can take to create an anti-racist GSA. Visit **https://www.glsen.org/research/black-lgbtq-students** to learn more about the experiences of Black LGBTQ+ students.

[1] Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.