

GSA Newsarama  
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Read GSA Newsarama online at [www.GSAforSafeSchools.org](http://www.GSAforSafeSchools.org). Visit our website to download past issues of Newsarama in clean, easy-to-read PDF format.

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This newsletter is created by Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools to keep students, school professionals and other community members up to date on the issues, events and news items that may be of interest to those working within Wisconsin schools, communities, Gay-Straight Alliances and similar clubs. If you are no longer interested in receiving this update, simply reply to this email requesting that your name be removed from the list. Please include your current school, or previous school if you have graduated or are no longer in school.

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## Feature

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## There's Still Time to Fill Out the Wisconsin School Climate Survey

For the past month, GSA for Safe Schools has been collecting responses from middle school and high school students to our Wisconsin School Climate Survey, and we've got almost 100 completed surveys so far!

Can you help us reach 150? Or 200?

Fill out the survey here: <http://tinyurl.com/wischoolclimatesurvey09>

The survey is completely anonymous and takes between 20 and 30 minutes to complete. You will be asked questions about anti-LGBT language you hear at school, experiences you've had with harassment and bullying, whether or not LGBT issues are taught in the classroom at your school, and where you go to find support.

We know that the survey is a little long, but the information we're gathering will be extremely helpful in approaching administrators and decision makers in advocating for more inclusive school policies and curricula. Please don't start it unless you have time to finish it – we can't use information gathered from incomplete surveys.

Please fill out the survey today at: <http://tinyurl.com/wischoolclimatesurvey09>

Did you already fill out the survey? Share the link with a friend! Post it to your Facebook page. We are looking for students of all identities and orientations who are concerned about safe schools to complete the survey.

If you have any questions about the Wisconsin School Climate Survey, send an email to Brian J. at [brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org](mailto:brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org) or Tim at [tim@gsaforsafeschools.org](mailto:tim@gsaforsafeschools.org).

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### Headlines

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#### 1. Bring the Anti-Slur Task Force to Your School!

A slur is a word or phrase that is used to insult or malign a person or particular group or people. The word "slur" has linguistic origins in the Middle Dutch word "sloren", which meant "to trail in the mud", and the Norwegian word "slora", which means "to go about carelessly."

Are you tired of people being careless with their language and using slurs at your school? We all know that the phrases "that's so gay" and "that's retarded" are said over and over again in the hallways, but what about other slurs? Do you hear language that targets women, or people of color, or certain faith traditions?

GSA for Safe Schools' student planning team has spent the past few months thinking about how to address slurs at school, and would like to share their knowledge and ideas with you. If you're located in Dane County, the "Anti-Slur Task Force" would love to pay a visit to your school and train you on how to run a campaign that challenges hurtful language.

Would you like the Anti-Slur Task Force to come to your school? Email Brian J. at [brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org](mailto:brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org) or call him at (608)661-4141.

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## 2. Thank You to Our Fall GSA Conference Presenters and Participants

Last Friday, nearly 130 students from 29 schools all over Wisconsin gathered in Madison for "Step Up v2.0", our fall GSA conference. Paul Wesselmann of the Ripples Project kicked off the day with a motivational speech, and 30 very talented presenters co-facilitated 16 different workshops from which to choose.

Thank you (in no particular order) to Craig, Andie, Bonnie A., Abra, Katie, Angie, Lindsey, Robert, Brinae, Seb, Teddi, Samii, Mama J., Samantha, Robin, Tim, Jessica, Drew P., Maria, Emily P.-P., Pearl, Stephanie, Drew R., Emily R., Bailey, Tom, Nora, Sophie, Bonnie S., Lydia, Jon, Kathlene, and Paul for putting on such a terrific event.

I had a chance to speak with both the Senior and Associate Pastors at First Baptist Church, and they were both extremely pleased to have the GSA conference take place at their church and said we should feel welcome to use their space for any of our other events. So a big thank you to the good people at First Baptist Church for continuing to open their doors to the GSA movement in Wisconsin!

We plan to get some photos from the conference up on our website in the next couple of weeks, as well as some of the resources used in various workshops.

Remember: The spring GSA conference will be combined with the Lt. Governor's Conference, and will be taking place in Oshkosh on March 5th. We will continue to share details about that with you as they develop.

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## Related Readings: Events and Opportunities

GSA Newsarama is a publication of GSA for Safe Schools (GSAFE). Events, resources, and news items listed under the "Related Readings" sections of GSA Newsarama are not sponsored by GSAFE and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of GSAFE.

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### 3. Transgender Day of Remembrance is Next Week

The Transgender Day of Remembrance was set aside to memorialize those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. The event is held in November to honor Rita Hester, whose murder on November 28th, 1998 kicked off the “Remembering Our Dead” web project and a San Francisco candlelight vigil in 1999. Rita Hester’s murder — like most anti-transgender murder cases — has yet to be solved.

Transgender Day of Remembrance will be held on November 20th this year.

Although not every person represented during the Day of Remembrance self-identified as transgender, each was a victim of violence based on bias against transgender people. Over the last decade, more than one person per month has died due to transgender-based hate or prejudice, regardless of any other factors in their lives.

For ideas on how you can organize Transgender Day of Remembrance events and activities in your school, visit <http://www.transgenderdor.org/>.

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### 4. Legacy Essay Contest

This one is for high school juniors and seniors:

The Legacy Essay Contest is about revealing the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement in contemporary personal experience and current events. It is about comparing the experiences of the Civil Rights generation with those of the younger generation today in order to clarify the lessons for achieving genuine racial equity.

ESSAY SUBJECT: What are the legacy and lessons of the Civil Rights Movement?

HOW TO QUALIFY: Must be currently enrolled as a high school junior or senior in the United States and submissions must be through a certified high school teacher.

ESSAY LENGTH: No more than 1,000 words

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: December 15, 2009

DATE FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS: February 1, 2010

PRIZES: The winner to receive a \$3,000 cash award and a laptop computer; the five finalists to receive a \$500 cash award and a laptop computer each. The winner and five finalists to be honored in a Capitol Hill awards ceremony in February.

**SUBMISSION PROCESS:** Submissions must be made by a certified high school teacher. Each high school teacher is responsible for selecting the best essay from their classes, and there can only be one submission per teacher.

**JUDGING PROCESS:** The top ten essays will be selected by educators from around the country and then submitted to a distinguished board of ten judges for the winning essay and five finalists to be chosen.

**GUIDELINES:** The essays are to be based on current events, personal experiences, and the experiences of friends and relations and include fully cited references to at least two books (fiction and nonfiction) and at least three newspaper/magazine articles. Additional interdisciplinary sources (e.g., music, dance, and film) are encouraged. The essays should compare the experiences of the Civil Rights generation with those of today's generation to illuminate the evolution of race relations in America and what this evolution teaches us about who we are as a people and a nation and how best to address racial disparity. The judges will be looking for clarity of ideas and for fresh insight into the American racial divide.

The Civil Rights Movement believed that we all benefit from a truly diverse society that supports equal opportunity. All students, from all races and ethnicities, are strongly encouraged to submit essays for this contest.

**OBJECTIVES:** The aim of the Legacy Essay Contest is to encourage an appreciation among America's youth for the relevance of history in understanding today's challenges and to clarify the core principles and values of our democracy.

To learn more, click here: <http://tinyurl.com/yglrjcc>

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## 5. World AIDS Day on December 1st

Another "day of action" that you can organize around is World AIDS Day, which is held on December 1st every year. AIDS continues to take lives, without regard to a person's race, gender, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status. World AIDS Day is an opportunity to spread awareness and educate yourself and others about this global pandemic.

For information and resources on what you can do for World AIDS Day, visit [www.worldaidsday.org](http://www.worldaidsday.org).

You can also download the "Teaching It Back" resource on the GSA for Safe Schools website, which shares ideas for talking about HIV/AIDS with your GSA. Download it here: [http://www.gsaforsafeschools.org/docs/TeachingItBack\\_Handout.pdf](http://www.gsaforsafeschools.org/docs/TeachingItBack_Handout.pdf)

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## 6. American Legacy Foundation Youth Activism Fellowship

This one is for 18 to 24 year olds:

Applications are now being accepted for the 2010 American Legacy Foundation Youth Activism Fellowship. This program provides an opportunity for young adults ages 18-24 to build leadership in the tobacco control movement through training, coaching, peer to peer networking, and direct action. This program embodies and promotes Legacy's mission to build a world where young people reject tobacco and anyone can quit. Drawing on imaginative, practical and effective strategies to reach young people with their message, members sharpen their skills and organizing experience to work passionately as tobacco control and prevention advocates in their communities.

### Who Should Apply?

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 with a strong commitment to youth activism and organizing are invited to apply. Applicants must be residents of the United States, the District of Columbia or U.S. territories. Eligible candidates must demonstrate a commitment to promoting healthy communities through tobacco prevention and control. We welcome applications from individuals with an emerging interest in tobacco control and prevention at the local, state, regional and/or national levels.

### Requirements

- Commit to full participation for the duration of the 18-month program. (January 2010 – June 2011)
- Attend mandatory (3-4 day) trainings and events in Washington, DC and other locations (Travel, lodging and meals to be paid by Legacy):
- Actively engage in a local, state, or national advocacy effort focused on tobacco control and prevention
  - Contribute to a group project designed to benefit the national movement of tobacco prevention and control
- Complete program assignments and reporting requirements
- Participate in regular conference calls and all in-person meetings.

To apply, please click on the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/ykef7h2>

Deadline: Monday, November 30, 2009 12:00 PM EST

If you have any questions regarding the program or application please call Amaka Obidegwu at 202-454-5586

For more information about Legacy visit: [www.americanlegacy.org](http://www.americanlegacy.org)

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## Related Readings: News and Publications

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### 7. The Grio – A Mother’s Story: Hate Crime Brings New Bond with Transgender Child

Bonnita Spikes always knew her daughter Michelle might face challenges in her life as a transgender woman. In 1999, Michelle was the victim of a hate crime outside of an Atlanta club. This incident changed her daughter’s life, as well as her own.

Read Bonnita’s story here: <http://tinyurl.com/yl67ynd>

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### 8. The Advocate – Prom Returns With Lesbian Couple

When Cynthia Stewart asked her principal if she could bring her girlfriend to the prom, he initially responded by canceling the event entirely. But after being contacted by the ACLU, the prom will go on. And Cynthia will get to bring her date.

Read the full story here: <http://tinyurl.com/ylk9pww>

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### 9. NPR – Mormon Church Backs Salt Lake City’s Gay Rights Law

Salt Lake City became the first city in Utah last week to ban discrimination in housing and employment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, thanks in large part to the Church of Latter-Day Saints coming out in support of the law. The Mormon Church still strongly stands behind their stance against equal marriage for same-sex couples, but they felt that this law was “fair and reasonable.”

Read the full story here: <http://tinyurl.com/yg2chaz>

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### 10. GLAAD Blog – South Park Tries and Fails to Redefine “The F-Word”

Last week on the popular Comedy Central cartoon “South Park”, the use of the f-word (the one that derogatorily refers to gay men) was rampant, as the main characters tried to get a disruptive group of motorcyclists to leave town. It was revealed that the boys didn’t know that the f-word is meant to target gay people, and they tried to get it redefined. The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation feels that this commentary

on the constant shifting of language and meaning was ill-guided and denies the true impact that word can have on the LGBT community and its allies.

Read their opinions here: <http://tinyurl.com/ye3ehah>

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