Speaking for Ourselves

Resisting Organized Bigotry at School

A TOOLKIT FOR STUDENT ORGANIZERS

WESTERN STATES CENTER
ABOUT WESTERN STATES CENTER

Western States Center is a nonprofit organization based in the Pacific Northwest and Mountain West that takes regional action for national impact. We work with communities and organizations to build movements, develop leaders, shift culture and defend democracy through a prism of race, gender, justice, and equity.

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SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES: RESISTING ORGANIZED BIGOTRY AT SCHOOL

A TOOLKIT
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Introduction

Who is this toolkit for?
This toolkit is for middle and high school students who want to create positive change in their schools.

You might wonder, “Why should I care about school?” Whether or not you like school, you probably spend most of your day there. Most of us spend thousands of hours in school before we graduate. We learn skills, make friends, and belong to a community. Schools are one of the most important institutions in our society.

What is the purpose of school?
Schools are places where we:

- learn about the world
- learn to be in a community with one another
- learn how to participate in our democracy
- learn the skills we need to create change

Schools should be places where all students can feel comfortable and succeed. They should help students learn how to make the world safer and fairer for everybody.

Some lessons we learn in school are taught to us. Others we gather by observing how the school operates and treats its students.

Schools have never treated all students fairly. Many things could be improved with schools. Over the years, people have worked together to make schools fairer for everybody.

But not everyone wants schools to be diverse and equal. Some groups believe that making schools safer for marginalized students will hurt straight, white students.

Some of these people have formed bigoted groups or movements in the past few years. These groups think they should get to decide what schools teach and how they treat their students.

For example, bigoted movements want to...

- ban lessons and books about queer and trans topics
- prevent students from learning the truth about racism and oppression in the United States
- make school policies stricter so students can no longer wear clothes or use a name that reflects their gender identity
- prevent learning about any religion other than Christianity

In other words, bigoted movements want to control education. Education is the key to either promoting or stopping bigoted beliefs.

The good news is that YOU have the power to help stop these groups. Even though you are not responsible for stopping bigotry, you do have a voice in society. This toolkit will give you new tools to build power, join other students, and create positive change. If we work together, we can stop organized bigotry.

This toolkit has two parts. In Part One: Introduction to Community Organizing, you will learn how to use organizing to solve issues affecting you and your school peers. In Part Two: Organizing Against Bigotry, you will learn how to defend your school from bigoted movements.
Organizing 101: Stronger Together
You need other people to protect your school from organized bigotry. *Organizing is the process of working with other people to build power and create change*. This section covers the basics of organizing and how to get started with people you know.

Organizing has a long history. You might also hear the term "collective action" used for organizing. Famous movements in the United States are examples of collective action. Some examples are the civil rights, labor, and disability rights movements.

Open Bigotry is hatred of certain people who belong to a group — usually a religious, ethnic, or racial group. Related words are “bigot” (a person) or “bigoted” (adjective - can describe a person or belief).

Systemic discrimination is when unfair treatment is built into everyday practices and policies. Systemic discrimination can happen in schools, workplaces, or communities without bigotry or hatred. Words that end in *-ism* or *-phobia* describe systems or beliefs that treat people unfairly. Both systemic discrimination and bigotry are dangerous. Here are some common words we’ll use in this toolkit:

- **-ism**: discrimination against people because of
  - race or culture - *racism*
  - gender or sex (usually women, girls, female) - *sexism*
  - physical or intellectual ability - *ableism*
  - Jewish religion and culture - *antisemitism*

- **-phobia**: discrimination against people because of
  - Islamic faith - *Islamophobia*
  - gender expression (trans, nonbinary, gender-queer, etc.) - *transphobia*
  - sexual orientation (queer, bisexual, gay, etc.)
  - *homophobia*
  - immigration or being seen as “foreign” - *xenophobia*
  - large body size - *fatphobia*
KEY TERMS: BASE AND ALLIES

Your base comprises the people most directly affected by an issue. This will often be students who are most likely to be hurt by a school policy or bigotry. Allies are the people who agree with you and also care about the same issue. They might not be the most directly affected, but they will take action with you.

Your base or allies may be other students, teachers, parents and caregivers, administrators, or community members.

Base-building involves building connections within your base. Organizing is all about relationships! There will be times when you need to ask people to take action, but you cannot agree on the action. You will face challenges and setbacks. Trusting relationships will be very important in those moments. Base-building is one of the most essential pieces of organizing.2

Identifying Allies
You might have a trusted teacher or a few close friends who will support you. There might be other student groups that can create a safe and more inclusive school community. These are good allies to involve.

Bringing Together Your Base & Allies
Once you have built your base and identified allies, you can invite them to a meeting. This meeting can be as small as 2 or 3 people. Use this meeting to get started.

- Bring your base and allies together
- Identify issues and concerns
- Start brainstorming solutions together

Don’t forget: NEVER stop base-building! (Tip: bring yummy snacks to meetings or events and make them fun).

PRACTICE: BASE-BUILDING

Let’s say you are a part of an LGBTQIA+ student group. A group of parents is trying to ban books featuring LGBTQIA+ and Black characters from the school library. Students and teachers are upset and worried. What could you and other students do? Use the worksheet to brainstorm ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Allies</th>
<th>Base Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the problem here?</td>
<td>What is a solution?</td>
<td>Who will be most affected by the book ban?</td>
<td>Who else will care about the book bans?</td>
<td>Who will you talk to first? How will you invite them to organize with you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Decision-makers are the individuals who have the power to decide policies. Sometimes, decision-makers are called targets. Pay attention to what kind of power decision-makers have. For example, your teacher cannot change a school dress code policy, but your principal might be able to. But your teacher might be an ally and someone who will help you.

Power mapping involves identifying decision-makers and the groups/people who influence them.³

Make a power map for an issue you want to address in your school. It can help you identify your next campaign steps.

**PRACTICE: POWER MAPPING**

To make a power map, first look at the list of different groups in a school community. Add decision-makers and influential people to the worksheet.

- **Students**
- Student groups
- Parents and guardians
- PTA or other parent groups
- Teachers
- Teachers union
- School administration (Principal, Vice Principal, etc.)
- Community members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DECISION-MAKERS</th>
<th>PEOPLE WHO INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community groups that support education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STRATEGY

Goals or asks are the specific changes you want to see. Be thoughtful about how you craft your asks. They should be strategic. This means that decision-makers can actually make the changes you want. They should also be effective. They will make a real difference for students if the demands are met. Here are some tips for how to craft demands:

- Base-building and relationships! Learn from other people about how school could be better for them.
- Power map! Figure out what kinds of decisions different people have the power to make. For example, your principal can often change school policies. But you must go to the school board or state legislature to demand bigger, district-wide changes.
- Learn about any existing school or district policies.

PRACTICE: POWER MAPPING & MAKING ASKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEXT TO THIS LIST OF ASKS, WRITE THE TITLE OF THE PERSON/GROUP WHO CAN MEET THOSE DEMANDS.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create policies against bigotry and harassment in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the dress code so that students may dye their hair any color they want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support strong student groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a trans-inclusive bathroom policy at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring in a digital literacy curriculum at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give more funding to public schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide books that represent many different communities in the school library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire enough counselors, social workers, and school nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish norms for classroom work and behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make symbols of inclusion more visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use restorative justice models and de-escalation strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a confidential reporting system for bigotry and harassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train all staff on how to recognize and respond to bigotry inside and outside of the classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Actions** are the ways that people show their support for an issue and influence decision-makers. There are many types of actions, including:

- signing petitions
- signing pledges
- writing letters
- wearing buttons/t-shirts with supportive messages
- sharing signs and posters
- showing up to rallies
- making phone calls

**Messaging** is the way you talk about an issue and possible solutions. One goal of organizing is to get as much support as possible. Your messaging should help new people understand how the issue affects them and interest them in action. Here are some messaging tips:

- Focus on the kind of school and community that you want to create
- Be clear about how change will make school better for everyone
- Focus on creating a healthy school community rather than punishment
- Do not try to argue with ideas using the language of bigoted movements
- Show the connections between bigoted groups and their big-picture goals, as well as their violent impact
- Take up a lot of space with positive messaging!
### Scenario 1: Students want to form a white-identity student group. They argue that since the school has a Black Student Union and Latin American Student Union, it is racist for the school not to allow white students to form an affinity group.

#### What is the problem?

**Sample:** Creating white-identity student groups is a key strategy of white nationalists. These groups are used to recruit young white people into the white nationalist movement. They are also used to normalize white nationalism by making a false equivalency with other identity-based affinity groups.

**Your answer:**

#### What goals would help you reach a solution?

**The school can:**
- create a policy to ensure student groups are aligned with school values.
- not allow this student group to form.
- release a statement affirming student inclusion.
- look at why a bigoted group targeted this school.
- make a plan to create a safe, inclusive environment for all students.

**Your answer:**

#### Base Building

**Who is your base?**

**Sample:**
- Black Student Union
- Latin American Student Union
- LGBTQ+ Affinity Group
- other students who are directly affected

**Your answer:**

**Who are your allies?**

**Sample:**
- Trusted teachers, some parents of students directly affected, vice principal, school counselor

**Your answer:**

**How will you build your base?**

**Sample:**
- Talk to at least 5 more teachers to ask for support.
- Hold an educational event about inclusive environments.

**Your answer:**

#### Power Mapping

**Who are the decision-makers who can make the changes you want?**

**Sample:** Principal and Vice Principal, School board members

**Your answer:**

**Who has influence over these decision-makers?**

**Sample:** Respected teachers, PTA, local elected officials, community groups.

**Your answer:**

**What can you and others do to get the decision-makers to listen to you?**

**Sample:** Attend a school board meeting, write a letter to your principal, and publish an op-ed in the school newspaper.

**Your answer:**

#### Strategy

**What actions could people take to show their support?**

**Sample:** Signing pledges or petitions; Wearing buttons or stickers.

**Your answer:**

**What messaging would get more people to take action?**

**Sample:** The school should be a safe and welcoming place for everybody. Bigoted rhetoric creates an unsafe school environment for everybody. Let’s work toward creating a community that supports the learning of all of us.

**Your answer:**
**Scenario 2:** A few students have created a social media page where they post racist and transphobic jokes. Other students are sharing the page and echoing the jokes at school. Students argue they have freedom of speech and should be allowed to share different political views.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the problem?</th>
<th>What goals would help you reach a solution?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bigoted jokes create a hostile and unsafe learning environment, especially for students who are the targets of those jokes.</td>
<td>The school can:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; create guidelines for what is allowed to be shared at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; set up confidential reporting systems for students to share their concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; create accountability systems for students who break these guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; publicly share school values of inclusion, and integrate digital citizenship education into the curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Your answer:**

**Your answer:**

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**Base Building**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is your base?</th>
<th>Who are your allies?</th>
<th>How will you build your base?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Power Mapping**

<table>
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<th>Who are the decision-makers who can make the changes you want?</th>
<th>Who has influence over these decision-makers?</th>
<th>What can you and others do to get the decision-makers to listen to you?</th>
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**Strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What actions could people take to show their support?</th>
<th>What messaging would get more people to take action?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### SCENARIO 3: A group of parents opposes comprehensive sex education and wants to ban ethnic studies from being taught in the school district. They are disrupting school board meetings and harassing educators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the problem?</th>
<th>What goals would help you reach this solution?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Groups that seek to exclude important topics like these are trying to impose their political views on young people. They also create a weaker and more exclusionary curriculum and learning environment. | ➢ Community groups publicly support the work of the school district to be inclusive and offer age-appropriate education.  
➢ Parent and student groups can organize to attend school board meetings to support these issues.  
➢ Legislators speak out to support school board members and educators who have received threats from these parents.  
➢ The school board reaffirms the district’s commitment to including this in the curriculum. They reject attempts to undermine public education. The school board is supported by the community. |

Your answer:  
Your answer:

### Base Building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is your base?</th>
<th>Who are your allies?</th>
<th>How will you build your base?</th>
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### Power Mapping

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<th>Who are the decision-makers who can make the changes you want?</th>
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<th>What can you and others do to get the decision-makers to listen to you?</th>
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</table>

### Strategy

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<th>What actions could people take to show their support?</th>
<th>What messaging would get more people to take action?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Part 2: Organizing Against Bigoted Movements

What are bigoted movements?
Social movements are organized efforts by many people who want to make social change. Some social movements wish to expand rights for more people. But some movements want to take rights away from people. These are bigoted movements. Bigoted movements do not want some groups of people to have equal rights or to participate in society. There are many types of bigoted groups in the United States and around the world.

Bigoted and anti-democracy movements are very dangerous.
Some anti-democracy groups use violence against government agencies. The planned January 6th attack on the United States Capitol is one example of how bigoted movements have used violence to threaten the government. Some groups target everyday people who are just going about their lives. There are many tragic examples of this.

Anti-democracy movements do not want all people to have a voice in our government or to benefit from our government. They think only certain people should have political power.

What is democracy?
A simple definition of democracy is control of government by the people. The word comes from Greek demos [people] + kratia [power] — power of the people

Is the United States a democracy?
Sort of. Throughout the history of the United States, many people have been excluded from power. Black people, Native people, people of color, and women were all banned from voting or seeking elected office. These groups all experienced different kinds of violence from the United States government. They did not have the political power to influence the government.

Today, immigrants who are not US citizens, people under the age of 18, and many people who have served time in prison are not allowed to vote. Even some people who are allowed to vote can't really vote because they have to take time off work or don't have the correct identification.

People have fought for centuries to make the United States more democratic and won many victories. Many of us are still fighting.

But bigoted movements have fought against these pro-democracy wins. They don't want most of us to have political power.

Institutions like schools will respond to organizing in a society where most people can vote and people in power have to listen to them. Anti-democracy groups want to remove institutions that give students a voice and the ability to organize.
Many people with ties to bigoted movements are in powerful positions at all levels of government.

One example of a bigoted movement is the white nationalist movement. White nationalism is trying to make the United States an all-white country. White nationalists target people they consider non-white. This includes Black and brown people, Muslims and Jewish people of all races, and anyone else they believe is inferior.\(^5\)

Christian nationalism is another bigoted movement that often overlaps with white nationalism. Its goal is to make the United States a Christian country. Christian nationalists want to take away the rights of LGBTQ+ people and limit health care like abortion and birth control. They believe that the laws of the United States should follow their interpretation of Christianity.\(^6\)

The end goal of bigoted movements is to build power, take over the government and control society.

HERE ARE SOME FACTS ABOUT HOW THESE MOVEMENTS WORK:

**Bigoted movements target schools.**
Bigoted groups want to control public education and prevent students from learning about diverse identities. This is because they know what students learn in school will shape how they view the world.

These groups claim they want to “protect children.” But really, they are making school more dangerous for young people.

**Bigoted movements are recruiting youth.**
Bigoted movements reach out to youth to get more members and build power. Like other movements, they are trying to develop the next generation of leaders.

At this point, you and your friends have probably encountered bigotry online. Maybe you stumbled on racist comments on an Instagram post. Or someone told a Holocaust joke while playing video games. Perhaps you searched for something and came across a YouTube channel where an influencer shares sexist ideas. The fact is that bigotry is everywhere in online spaces. Memes, jokes, and conspiracy theories are a few ways bigoted groups connect and try to manipulate people in online spaces.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS BIGOTED GROUPS SPREAD THEIR IDEAS:

**Memes and Jokes**
How often do you hear someone say something racist or sexist and then say, “It’s just a joke”? The truth is, it’s never just a joke. Humor is a common strategy bigoted groups use to get other people to spread their hateful ideas.

Bigoted memes and videos are made to be funny and “edgy” so that many people will watch and share them. If someone tries to point out that the jokes are hateful, the person sharing them can deny they meant any harm by saying they were “just joking.” This makes it tricky to stop these false ideas from spreading.

**Exploiting Algorithms**
Social media algorithms are designed to make specific posts go viral. This is another way hateful memes and jokes spread quickly. When someone starts watching a video on YouTube or sharing a meme on social media, the websites send more of the same type of content to that viewer. The algorithm creates a “rabbit hole” — a pattern of viewing only the same kind of material that makes it harder for someone to stop.

It’s not always obvious when you are looking at bigoted memes. But if you learn to recognize them, you can educate your peers and avoid spreading these messages further.
Here are some ways to check memes, videos, or other online content for bigoted ideas:

- Does it use jokes to mock people based on their identity?
- Does it blame society's problems on a group of people?
- Does it reinforce harmful ideas about certain groups of people?
- Does it promote fear or hatred of other people?

Creators of these jokes use humor to avoid blame. They want their audience to be unsure about whether they are joking. This way, people become used to seeing bigoted language all the time. Then, when someone expresses hatred in a more obvious way, the audience no longer rejects it. If you come across a joke or meme that you aren’t sure about, you can talk to a trusted adult or peers to see what they think. A parent, teacher, or librarian can help you find more information about it.

**Conspiracy theories and false information**

Have you heard anyone blame the world’s problems on a secret group of people? You’re probably dealing with a conspiracy theory.

Conspiracy theories argue that the world’s problems result from secret, evil plots by hidden people. They are often racist and antisemitic, blaming Jewish people for social problems. They distract people from the true causes of the world’s problems and blame them on a group of people.

False information exploded during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, people were scared and did not know who to believe. The lockdowns were hard on communities. People were dying of a mysterious illness. Many people were skeptical about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine. Amid this confusion, conspiracy theories spread about the virus and the vaccine. For example, that the vaccine was part of a secret plot to poison millions of people. Social media enabled rumors like these to spread quickly.

**Takeaways**

- Anti-democracy groups exploit people’s fear and confusion during a crisis
- They use rumors and conspiracy theories to spread bigotry
- Bigoted conspiracy theories spread rapidly over social media

Checking your facts is a crucial skill in countering the spread of false information. Here are some tips for fact-checking:

- **Read various sources.** Professional fact-checkers use a strategy called *lateral reading*. When
you read a new source or claim, open new tabs to check what other sources say about the topic. News outlets, science journals, government websites, and school books are credible sources. Lateral reading will help you determine whether the new claim is valid.

✔ Consider who wrote it. Check if the author or group is known for sharing accurate information. ✔ Look for evidence and supporting documents. Is there good evidence to support the author’s claims? Check for citations, references, or links to trusted sources. Be careful with claims that only rely on personal stories.

✔ Use fact-checking websites like Snopes or FactCheck.org to verify information.

✔ Get help from your teachers or school librarian. They can direct you to credible sources. If you read something you aren’t sure about, check in with a trusted adult. Don’t let the algorithms trick you or your friends. As you learn more, you will better recognize and interrupt bigotry.

STRATEGIES FOR KEEPING HATE OUT OF OUR SCHOOLS!

Now, let’s discuss creative strategies for organizing against bigotry at school.

Bigoted social movements thrive on division. They want us to turn against each other and blame people with less power for society’s problems. We must build a powerful counter-movement based on a vision of the future that includes ALL of us. We can build this movement wherever we live, work, or attend school.

Here are some ideas for creating an inclusive and fun culture at school:

Reject Hate and Bigotry

✔ Ask your principal to ensure a policy against harassment and bigotry being spread on school grounds, in the school paper, or on social media.

✔ Speak out when you hear bigoted ideas shared in any space.

✔ Don’t let bigoted groups start chapters at your school. These groups must be shut down with clear and consistent NOs. These chapters can spread fast, and their existence creates a dangerous school environment.

✔ Don’t let someone who is a known member of a bigoted group — or has known ties to bigoted groups — speak at your school.

✔ Push for solid school policies against hatred and bigotry.

✔ If a bigoted action has happened, organize a rally, vigil, or teach-in in response.

✔ Use school assignments to learn more about political groups working to undermine educational institutions.

Foster a Supportive and Inclusive Community

✔ Build and maintain relationships. You may disagree with or dislike some other people doing this with you. But keep working together and looking out for one another.

✔ Be in solidarity. We are safer if we look out for each other. Center those who are most impacted.

✔ Share stories. Find your voice. This is especially important when you’re directly impacted or targeted. Create spaces where youth can express themselves and support each other.

✔ Advocate for mental health resources. Mental health support can help address the root causes of isolation and violence.

✔ Share resources. Educate each other about issues that affect youth. Ask your teachers to teach these topics. Push your school and district to support education on these issues.
Create a Positive Culture

- Create or share buttons, stickers, t-shirts, and posters with supportive messaging. You can ask teachers to put stickers and posters like those from GLSEN’s safe space kit.
- Host speakers, bands, and artists who share your values. Create and share zines or comics that promote inclusion and justice.
- Write articles for the school paper that highlight issues of inclusion.
- Lead workshops and offer peer mentoring.
- Form inclusive student groups based on shared interests.

Find ways to bring more play into your school culture. Athletics, tabletop games, and karaoke are simple ways to connect with peers and build community.

Call out jokes among your peers that make fun of or demean other people or groups of people.

Promote Information Literacy and Critical Thinking

- Push for accurate history to be taught at school.
- Host teach-ins and or discussion forums.
- Collaborate with librarians on research projects.
- Ask teachers to include the use of credible sources in their grading rubrics.
SAFETY

When dealing with organized bigotry, it is important to consider your safety. This is especially true if your identity makes you a target. There may be students or adults at your school who support bigoted movements. There may also be people outside your school who want to stop you from organizing.

Building your base, finding allies, and being in solidarity will help create safety for everyone. Make sure that you take action with other people and groups.

Here are some other ideas for protecting yourself in physical and online spaces.

Safety in Physical Space

- Bigoted groups are dangerous. Never attempt to confront a bigoted group directly. If you are worried, talk to more than one trusted adult.
- Some events may attract bigoted groups. These could be protests against police brutality, a cultural event, or a Pride event. When you attend these events, go with a “squad,” a group of people...

Countering Bigoted Speech

As students, one of the most effective ways to counter bigoted speech is by raising your voice in opposition. Bigoted actors often try to avoid consequences by focusing on their right to free speech. You can avoid this trap by refusing to argue about what speech is allowed, and instead rallying your community to roundly reject bigotry.

Bigots have free speech, but so do each of us.

It’s also true that schools can limit some speech. Let’s first understand what “freedom of expression” means. Freedom of expression is protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. It means people can share their thoughts and ideas without the government stopping them. This also applies to students in public schools.

However, schools can place rules on what students say or do to ensure everyone is safe. Here are some examples of speech not protected in schools:

- **Disruptive Speech:** Schools can say “no” to speech that disrupts learning or makes others feel unsafe. For example, yelling obscenities during class or harassing other students.

- **Hate Speech and Bullying:** Schools can ban hate speech and harassment to make sure all students feel safe and respected. But what counts as hate speech will vary depending on local laws and the specific situation.

- **Threats and Violence:** Schools can ban speech that threatens to hurt people or encourages others to be violent.

- **Obscenity and Inappropriate Content:** Schools can limit speech that is vulgar, sexually explicit, or inappropriate for the student’s age group.

Schools can and should have strong policies restricting bigoted speech while ensuring students can express themselves in ways that do not harm others. School administrators must use many different strategies to reject bigotry, including restricting bigoted speech that undermines a safe learning environment and raising their own voices for inclusive education.
you trust who can look out for each other. Do not travel to and from these events alone. Make sure your parents or guardians know where you are.

➤ Trust your gut. If something feels wrong in a situation, then leave.
➤ Be aware of what is happening inside your school and surrounding neighborhood.
➤ Always consider safety when planning or participating in any in-person actions. Ask trusted adults to help you with safety planning.

Safety in Online Spaces
➤ Be watchful in any online spaces you are part of. You will likely run into posts, comments, or discussions with bigoted and hateful language.
➤ If someone you don’t know shares bigoted content with you, take a screenshot of the interaction and block the user.
➤ If you or someone you know is being targeted or trolled online, block the trolls immediately. Do not try to chat, argue, or post about it. Instead, take screenshots, record the date and time, and share this with an adult who can support you.
➤ Online trolling and harassment can be scary and quickly get worse. Take a break from the internet and find support from people you trust.
➤ Get the algorithms to send you content that makes you happy and fits your values. Follow pages that are antiracist, have social justice values, or are cute and fun!

Reporting Bigotry if it is safe to do so
Often, students are the first to witness bigotry at school or online. It is essential to document and report what you have seen. Here are some tips for reporting:

➤ Use your school’s reporting system. Some schools let you report anonymously. Ask your school if they have a way to do this.
➤ Talk to a trusted adult. If you don’t want to tell your school leaders directly, talk to an adult you trust, like a parent or family member. They can help you figure out what to do.
➤ Online reporting. If you see hate speech online, report it to the website. Most social media platforms have reporting tools for dangerous or bigoted content.
➤ Learn your school’s policies. Find out your school’s rules on reporting hate speech. They usually have steps to follow.
➤ Document. Keep a record of what happened. Write down the date/time, location, and people involved. Keep screenshots, pictures, or messages if you have them.
Conclusion

It can be scary to think about the worldwide problems we are facing. Bigoted movements are growing, and they are dangerous. But when you see the world as an organizer, you can always find ways to take collective action, be hopeful and create solutions.

It’s important to know that not every campaign will succeed right away. It can be discouraging when change doesn’t happen as quickly as you’d like. Remember that social movements take time. Today’s struggles are part of a long history of fighting for a better world. The people who fought before you — your movement elders — dedicated their lives to improving the world. They have valuable knowledge and skills that they’re passing down to you. You carry their legacy and work towards a fair and equal society.

While you’re organizing, don’t forget to take care of yourself. Spend time with loved ones, do things that make you happy, and make sure you take breaks and rest. Taking care of yourself isn’t selfish. It is necessary to keep your passion alive in the face of challenges. Do not let organized bigotry rob you of your peace and joy.
Endnotes

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