

POLICE FREE SCHOOLS DISCUSSION GUIDE



PURPOSE

We offer this collection of activities, resources, and experiences as a three-part discussion guide and educational series around the Trans and Queer experience with policing, with the intent to raise awareness of the specific issues facing the community, and to activate more people to organize and support ending policing in schools.

WHO WE ARE

GSA Network is a next-generation LGBTQ racial and gender justice organization that empowers and trains queer, trans and allied youth leaders to advocate, organize, and mobilize an intersectional movement for safer schools and healthier communities.

OUR VISION

GSA Network sees Police Free Schools as spaces where all young people, especially Trans and Queer youth of color, are able to exist, learn, grow, and are given full access, without being policed for their race, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, class, neurological differences, or ability.

In the spirit of the tireless work done by our ancestors, we recognize that beyond Police Free Schools, we need policing-free schools. Policing-Free Schools are spaces where all adults are educated on the ways in which policies and practices rooted in the concepts of policing, harm LGBTQ youth, and are holistically trained in restorative and transformative justice methods to ensure support for, and engage students, as well as maintain a peaceful and supportive school campus community.

IN THIS MOMENT, GSAN STANDS WITH YOUTH AND ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN CALLING FOR THE REMOVAL OF POLICE FROM OUR SCHOOLS AS THE FIRST STEP IN THE PROCESS OF CREATING POLICING FREE SCHOOLS.



Students from across the state of California came together in the Spring of 2019 to advocate for implementation of the California Health Youth Act (CHYA), new legislation that will ensure that students can receive comprehensive sexual education.

GSA DAY FOR RACIAL JUSTICE 2021 (#GSADAY4RJ)

Our theme this year for #GSADay4RJ is Police Free Schools and we call on GSAs and allies to discuss, envision and advocate for safe spaces where trans and queer youth can thrive and grow in their education.

The Police Free Schools movement is rooted in the belief that all children are worthy of a free, fair, equitable, accessible education. The call for Police Free Schools recognizes that police in schools, while believed to be there to maintain safety, have led to an overall rise in school-based arrests, and to the overt criminalization of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), which is exemplified through the fact that Black students are arrested at three times the rate of White students. Trans and Queer Youth, especially those of color, are also over-represented in discipline data, and are almost two times as likely as their peers to be subjected to school-based arrests.

MAKING SPACE

OPENING THE SPACE

Be sure to open each conversation with an opportunity for folks to share what they're bringing into the room and anything that's weighing on their heart/mind/spirit. We recognize there are a lot of outside conditions that impact folks at this moment. The world has an impact on us and how we navigate potentially heavy conversations. Remember to thank everyone for sharing!

EXAMPLE CHECK-IN QUESTION

- What is your name and pronouns?
- What is in your heart, mind, and body?
- Sum up how you're feeling in one word.

SHARE THEME FOR DAY OF ACTION

GSA DAY 4 RACIAL JUSTICE 2021

- Our theme this year for #GSADay4RJ is Police Free Schools and we call on GSAs and allies to discuss, envision and advocate for safe spaces where trans and queer youth can thrive and grow in their education.
- Police Free Schools are spaces where all young people, especially trans and queer youth of color are able to exist, learn, grow, and are given full access, without being policed for their race, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, class, neurological differences, or ability. They are spaces where all adults are educated on the ways in which youth are harmed by policing of any kind, and are accurately, consistently, and holistically trained in restorative and transformative justice methods to ensure support for, and engage students, as well as maintain a peaceful and supportive school campus community.

Remind folks that because of the nature of the theme, some conversations might be a lot. Let folks know to make space for themselves if needed. It would be good to come up with community agreements you all would like to follow as you share space together. We included some examples as a good starting point!

CREATING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

- **Make Space, Take Space** - Make sure everyone is mindful of the space they take up and allow for others to share
- **Speak from "I"** - We want to make sure we are all speaking from "I" to not make generalizations about people
- **Consider Power** - We all come from different walks of life and want to ensure we recognize the privileges we hold
- **Put up a "v" or say/chat "vocab check"** - For vocabulary check: People might say words others do not know and this would be a good practice to make sure everyone is on the same page

SETTING UP YOUR DISCUSSION SPACE

OPENING: 5 - 10 MINS

THEME & COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS:

5 MINS

TOTAL TIME: 10 -15 MINS

DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

The following activities are meant to support your GSA/LGBTQ club in holding conversations on student experiences within the school-to-prison-pipeline, mass incarceration in the U.S., and the historical criminalization of Trans and Queer communities of color. These activities can provide a starting place for understanding the conditions and call to action for Police Free Schools. We encourage you to engage with the activities in sequence though, ultimately, you can decide which activities best suit your GSA to engage in the #PoliceFreeSchools conversation.

K-12 GAME OF LIFE

STUDENT EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON-PIPELINE

The Game of K-12 Life is meant to help students understand how the school-to-prison pipeline impacts youth and introduce ways that students can push back.

OBJECTIVES

- Deepen understanding of the school-to-prison pipeline
- Understand how students are pushed out of school and how the experiences vary
- Learn the importance of being a social justice club

MATERIALS NEEDED

- [The Game of K-12 Life Powerpoint](#)
- [Game of K-12 Life Facilitators Scripts](#)

ACTIVITY #1

K-12 GAME OF LIFE

TOTAL TIME: 45 - 60 MINS

TYPE OF ACTIVITY:

GAME WORKSHOP, PRESENTATION,
& DISCUSSION

- 2 six-sided dice
- Facilitation questions
- Report cards
- Pen for each participant/team

Virtual meeting modifications: video conferencing application needed, broadcast powerpoint slides, have participants re-create "report card" worksheet or email PDF "report card" to participants beforehand, access virtual dice via google

RECAP SCHOOL-TO-PRISON-PIPELINE (5 MINS)

- Start off the workshop with PowerPoint up and ready to share with the group. This portion of the presentation will last about 5 minutes.
- **OPENING STATEMENT:** Welcome to the Game of K-12 Life workshop. This workshop will help illustrate the reality of everyday life for students in schools, and begin deepening our understanding of school pushout and the school-to-prison pipeline as it relates to our school and state.
- **SAY:** So let us begin with a quick recap of our last discussion on the school-to-prison pipeline. Can I have a couple of volunteers to answer the following questions?

POWERPOINT SLIDE

- In your own words, what is the school-to-prison pipeline? What are some examples of school push out? Who does the school-to-prison pipeline affect and in what ways?
- **SAY:** So now that we've had a refresher on what the school-to-prison pipeline is, we are going to do an activity to help illustrate how it works.

ACTIVITY - GAME OF K-12 LIFE (20 MINS)

- [K-12 Game of Life Facilitators Script](#)
- [K-12 Game of Life Powerpoint](#)
- This activity will last about 20 minutes

CONCLUSION: GSAS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (5 MINS)

SAY: Can I have a couple of volunteers answer these questions? NOTE: Take 2-3 responses for each question. violates your right to be free from harassment at school. This portion should last about 5 minutes.

GAME OF LIFE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (15 MINS)

- Who won, who got what?
- Why do you think some youth had to roll different numbers? What might that reflect in real life?
- What experiences in the game were similar to things that have happened to you or your friends?
- Do you think this is realistic of what's happening to students in our school/state?
- What do you think should be done differently to make it so all students in the game could graduate?

CLOSING THE SPACE (5-15 MINS)

Notes for Facilitator: Make sure to thank folks for participating and being vulnerable, and remind them that when we share our stories, we become a little more free together. We encourage you to sum up final thoughts, and to invite folks to check out with a question.

It could be:

- a one word response, like, "What's one word that sums up how you feel about _____."
- An affirmation for someone in the group, or for something shared;
- a temperature check about how they feel after the conversation, or;
- if there's something that they learned today that surprised or inspired them.

CLOSING STATEMENT (1 MIN)

- **SAY:** It is important to recognize that there are tons of systems of oppression and -isms that keep us from being our whole selves in school, at home, and in our social lives. As GSA clubs, our presence on campus alone is a move for social justice and a move towards dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline

'13TH' WATCH PARTY & DISCUSSION

PURPOSE

In watching the 13th, a documentary focused on the prison system, and the impacts of policing and the police state in this country, we are learning about the base principles and ideologies that have created our current system. By learning of these conditions we can begin to learn how we can uproot systemic racial biases. The conversation proceeding the screening will be focused on the intersection between Trans and Queer students and policing experiences within our own lives, schools and communities.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

- For students to learn about the Prison Industrial Complex, it's connection to the school-to-prison-pipeline, and the idea of Police Free Schools
- To dialogue about the experiences of Trans and Queer youth in the education system as it pertains to policing systems.

MATERIALS

- 13th Documentary and Discussion Questions

OPENING (5 MINS)

Introduce the film and the purpose of today's discussion.

SCREEN THE FILM (1 HOUR & 40 MINS)

- [Watch for free on YouTube](#)
- If you are interested in making this a school event, [Netflix permits educational screenings](#) and you may use this page as proof of license

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (20-40 MINS)

- **OPENING STATEMENT:** I know that was a lot, and I want to honor that we probably have a lot of thoughts and feelings right now.
- **Optional grounding (breathing) exercise:** I'd like us to take a couple deep breaths, and then we can get into

ACTIVITY #2

'13TH' WATCH PARTY

TOTAL TIME: 2 - 2.5 HOURS

TYPE OF ACTIVITY:

DOCUMENTARY FILM DISCUSSION

framing this conversation. Sound good? Let's take three deep breaths, inhaling for as long as we can, holding it in for as long as we can, and stretching our exhale to as long as we can. We're going to do this three times. Remember to think about your breath and adjust as needed to a comfortable relaxed position. (Do breaths)

- **SAY:** First, I want to remind us to be respectful, to be aware of how deeply this has affected some of us, and to be focused on understanding. Let's also remember that what's said here stays here, but what's learned here leaves here. Peoples' personal information, considering how sensitive the topic is, should be protected; but the spirit of their story should be taken from here with you into the work that you do. Is that something that everyone can agree to? (ask for some kind of confirmation-thumbs up, smiles, nods, etc.)

DISCUSS

- This film addresses the injustice of mass incarceration and race- specifically, the disproportionate incarceration of poor people of color, particularly Black and brown males. **How does the film explain this phenomena? Why is this happening, and how? And do we see the same thing happening in our schools?**
- The documentary goes into the ways in which certain communities would be punished more harshly than others, oftentimes for a similar infraction. In the film the example was the criminalization of crack at a higher consequence than cocaine, which was used primarily by white communities. **Do you see disparities in the ways in which certain behaviors or instances are more harshly punished than another community? How so? Does this ever happen specifically to Trans and Queer students?**

- In the US, there are at least 2300 youth detention facilities, around half of which are privately run, and at least 4,535 young people are held in actual adult jails. ***Were you aware that there are also private youth prisons? How many youth in these detention centers do you think would be Trans or Queer, and why?***
- According to an updated report from the Prison Policy Initiative, while 14% of all youth under 18 in the U.S. are Black, 42% of boys and 35% of girls in juvenile facilities are Black. LGBTQ students make up about 5 - 7% of the nation's youth, but 13-15% of the incarcerated youth. ***How are Black youth targeted in our school systems? What ideas or stereotypes cause this to happen? What are common beliefs or misconceptions that Trans & Queer students face in schools, and how does that affect their treatment and experience in schools?***
- ***Are there alternatives that exist in your school or community instead of calling the police? If you cant think of any, what resources need to exist to support Black, Trans, Queer, students of disabilities, low income and or students of color to thrive?***

CLOSING THE SPACE (5 MINS)

Notes for Facilitator: Make sure to thank folks for participating and being vulnerable, and remind them that when we share our stories, we become a little more free together. We encourage you to sum up final thoughts, and to invite folks to check out with a question. It could be:

- a one word response, like, "What's one word that sums up how you feel about _____."
- An affirmation for someone in the group, or for something shared;
- a temperature check about how they feel after the conversation, or;
- if there's something that they learned today that surprised or inspired them.

ACTIVITY #3
A HXSTORY OF TRANS
AND QUEER CRIMINALITY
TOTAL TIME: 30 - 45 MINS
TYPE OF ACTIVITY:
CASE STUDY & READING DISCUSSION

READINGS: A HXSTORY OF TRANS & QUEER CRIMINALITY

PURPOSE

- Share a historical perspective on "othering" and criminalization of Trans & Queer identity through a narrative case study
- Facilitate a conversation bridging historical and current day experiences around policing

MATERIALS

- [Cooper's Do-nuts Riot & Compton Cafeteria Case Study](#)
- Discussion Questions

Virtual meeting modifications: video conferencing application needed, broadcast case study PDF via screen sharing or email case study PDF to participants prior to activity

INSTRUCTIONS

- Depending the size of your group, you can facilitate the activity as a large group or in smaller breakouts
- Read the overview and watch the optional media clip
- Skim through the rest of the case study, either reading out loud as a group or reading individually
- After reading case study, facilitate discussion using the provided question below
- Depending on the length of the workshop, facilitators may ask you to write down bullet points to answer the discussion questions and share important highlights.

CASE STUDY

[Cooper's Do-nuts Riot & Compton Cafeteria Case Study](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What happened? What were the successes? What were the challenges?
- What does this case study show about the movement at the time, specifically related to Trans & Queer communities of color?
- How might this case study relate to your struggles or the struggles of our communities today? What lessons can we learn from it?
- In the case study, the author mentions how, “[police] would raid gay bars, marching the queers out in a line and arresting anyone whose perceived gender didn’t match what was on their ID.” Do you ever see LGBTQ youth being punished for their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity? How so?
- Why do you think this history isn’t widely taught? What does hearing these stories and information make you think/feel?

CLOSING THE SPACE: REFLECTION & COMMITMENT

Make sure to thank folks for participating and being vulnerable, and remind them that when we share our stories, we become a little more free together. We encourage you to sum up final thoughts, read the quote below out loud, invite folks to reflect and share with the suggested prompts below:

Quote from Audre Lorde, a famous writer, theorist, and Black queer feminist

“MY SILENCES HAD NOT PROTECTED ME. YOUR SILENCE WILL NOT PROTECT YOU. BUT FOR EVERY REAL WORD SPOKEN, FOR EVERY ATTEMPT I HAD EVER MADE TO SPEAK THOSE TRUTHS FOR WHICH I AM STILL SEEKING, I HAD MADE CONTACT WITH OTHER WOMEN WHILE WE EXAMINED THE WORDS TO FIT A WORLD IN WHICH WE ALL BELIEVED, BRIDGING OUR DIFFERENCES.”

“MY SILENCES HAD NOT PROTECTED ME. YOUR SILENCE WILL NOT PROTECT YOU.”

--AUDRE LORDE

SAY: The ‘silences’ that Lorde is speaking about happens in our daily lives, homes, schools and communities. What are ways that you are committed to speaking up? How are you going to make sure that others are also able to use their voice?

Prompts for participants to share:

- “I’m committed to speaking up by _____”;
- “I’m committed to supporting the voices of _____ by _____.”

AFTER THE DISCUSSION: WAYS TO TAKE ACTION

START A GSA AT YOUR SCHOOL

Learn about what a Genders & Sexualities Alliance club is, why you should join yours, and how you can make your school & community a better place for Trans & Queer students! EVERY school should have a GSA! Don't have one? [Let us help you organize yours TODAY!](#)

FIGHT FOR POLICE FREE SCHOOLS!

[Learn more](#) about the history of policing in schools, the national conversation about what we can do to remove police from schools, and the recommendations that you can make to your local district from this report by the Advancement Project.

Share the policy recommendations from [Dignity In Schools](#) with your local district about key alternatives they can implement by redistributing funds from policing to make schools a safer place for Trans & Queer students.

If you're in California, check out Dignity in Schools - California's [DSC-CA State Policy Framework for Abolishing Police In Schools](#) around specific policy recommendations that state and local legislators can take.

Raise awareness of the issues! Share thought-provoking questions & key data about Trans & Queer students' experiences with policing from this discussion guide.

Join with local organizations fighting for racial justice & Trans & Queer youth in your communities & support the fight! Our liberation is INTERSECTIONAL. For California, check out organizations like [these](#).

Take a look at GSA Network's [National list of partners](#) committed to racial justice and supporting local GSAs.

Like and follow GSA on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) and amplify the voices of Trans and Queer Youth!

Share your experiences as a Trans/Queer youth & find a community of support! Write a blog, share a poem, or just share a video & tag us! **#GSADay4RacialJustice**

RESOURCES

- [GSAN Educational Justice Workshop Series](#)
- [Virtual GSAs In Action: Digital Organizing Toolkit](#)

FOOTNOTE & LINKS

- **"LGBTQ Youth of Color: Discipline Disparities, School Push-Out, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline!"** GSA Network, 2015. gsanetwork.org/resources/lgbtq-youth-of-color-discipline-disparities-school-push-out-and-the-school-to-prison-pipeline/.
- **"LGBTQ+ Youth of Color Need #PoliceFree-Schools!"** Edited by Michelle Guevara-Pozas, GSA Network, 25 June 2020, gsanetwork.org/press-releases/lgbtq-youth-of-color-need-policefreeschools/.