

# **COUNTERING RELIGIOUS BULLYING & SPIRITUAL VIOLENCE AIMED AT LGBT YOUTH**

An individual is being **BULLIED** whenever s/he is exposed repeatedly to negative actions on the part of others which involve harm to that individual's person, self-esteem, or social acceptance.

The Bully-Victim relationship is based on a significant imbalance of power, and a sense of entitlement or superiority on the part of the bully.

- **85% of LGBT students report being verbally harassed**
- **40% report being physically harassed**
- **20% report being physically assaulted**
- **30% missed at least one day of school a month**
- **61% report feeling “unsafe” at school**
- **28% drop out of school because of harassment**
- **LGBT students 4 times more likely to be threatened with a weapon**
- **LGBT bullying has been linked to 75% of school-shooting incidents**
- **LGBT teens are 2-3 times more likely to attempt suicide<sup>1</sup>**
- **66% of Americans believe LGBT people commit suicide because of messages coming out of churches and other places of worship!<sup>2</sup>**
- **Gays remain the most targeted minority in America<sup>3</sup>**

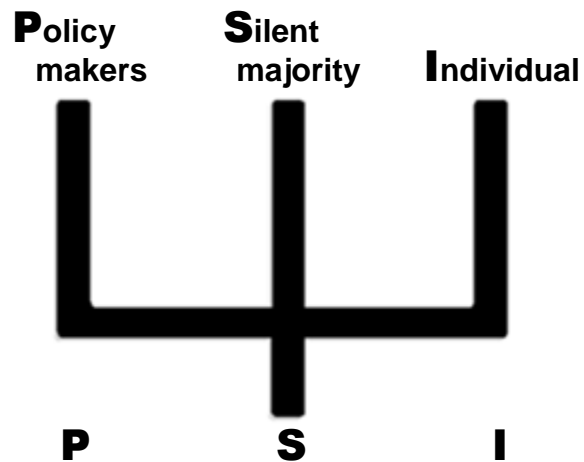
<sup>1</sup> *GLSEN National School Climate Survey (2009)*

<sup>2</sup> *Public Religion Research Institute (2010)*

<sup>3</sup> *Southern Poverty Law Center (2010)*

# P-S-I

## A Three-Pronged Approach to Bullying Prevention



- *Enlist the support of POLICY MAKERS.*
- *Mobilize the SILENT MAJORITY.*
- *Validate and support the INDIVIDUAL.*

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## Enlisting the support of POLICY MAKERS

### Advocating for SAFER SCHOOLS

- Know where decisions are made (superintendent, school board, principal, teachers, counselors).
- Push for a zero-tolerance anti-bullying policy that includes race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender expression/identity.
- Staff training to enable school staff to identify and address anti-LGBT bullying and harassment.
- Age-appropriate, inclusive curricula to help students understand and respect differences.
- *Never engage in religious discussions of any kind with school personnel!*



INTERWEAVE  
[www.interweaveuu.org](http://www.interweaveuu.org)

## Mobilizing the SILENT MAJORITY

- Encourage and support student efforts to address anti-LGBT bullying and harassment on campus (Gay-Straight Alliance, National Day of Silence).
- Encourage LGBT students to share their stories.
- Make materials available to help educate teachers, students and parents about the issues faced by LGBT students.
- Seek the involvement of LGBT-supportive clergy and community leaders.
- Build coalitions-- reach out to youth agencies, human rights organizations, churches and synagogues, parents groups, and local LGBT organizations.

## Validating and Supporting INDIVIDUALS

Research has shown that the most effective thing in preventing suicide among LGBT youth is support from significant others, especially parents!<sup>1</sup>

- Students who are being bullied need support & protection from adults.
- DO tell kids who are being bullied to:
  - Always tell an adult.
  - Stay in a group.
  - Do not try to reason or argue with a bully.
  - When in doubt, walk away.
  - Never engage in religious debates with bullies.
  - Take part in activities to meet other kids.
  - Talk to a supportive clergy person or mental health professional.
- DON'T tell kids who are being bullied to:
  - Ignore it.
  - Stand up for yourself.
  - Don't let it bother you; just make a joke of it.
  - You must be doing something to encourage it.
  - Handle it; try to work things out.
  - Don't be a tattler.

<sup>1</sup> Eisenberg & Resnick(2006); Hershberger & D'Augelli (1995); Ryan (2010)

## RELIGIOUS ISSUES

- What DID Jesus say about homosexuality? **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!**
- Never, *EVER*, debate religion with non-allies!
- Seek out a Welcoming Church; talk to an LGBT-friendly clergy person.
- In the end, it's really about one's relationship with the Divine and how one treats other people.
- Have available good (LGBT-affirming) resources about Biblical teachings on homosexuality.

## REAL FAMILY VALUES

Honesty; Integrity; Respect; Gratitude; Reverence;  
Tolerance; Peace; Liberty; Compassion in human relations;  
Justice for people everywhere; Inherent worth and dignity of all people.

## **RESOURCES**

### Books:

***Bulletproof Faith*** (Candace Chellew-Hodge)  
***Gay Christian 101: Spiritual Self-Defense for Gay Christians*** (Rick Brentlinger)  
***Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America*** (Mel White)  
***Unprotected Texts: The Bible's Surprising Contradictions about Sex and Desire*** (Jennifer Wright Knust)  
***What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*** (Daniel Helminiak)

### Films & DVDs:

***A Jihad for Love***  
***Bullied*** ([www.tolerance.org/bullied](http://www.tolerance.org/bullied))  
***Fish Out of Water*** ([www.fishoutofwaterfilm.com](http://www.fishoutofwaterfilm.com))  
***For the Bible Tells Me So***  
***Prayers for Bobby***  
***Trembling Before G-d***

### Websites & Organizations:

**American Psychological Association:** [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)  
**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:** [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)  
**American Academy of Pediatrics:** [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)  
**American Psychological Association:** [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)  
**American School Counselor Association:** [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org)  
**Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists:** [www.aglp.org](http://www.aglp.org)  
**Bulletproof Faith:** [www.bulletproofbook.com](http://www.bulletproofbook.com)  
**The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network:** [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)  
**Human Rights Campaign:** [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)  
**Interweave Continental:** [www.interweaveuu.org](http://www.interweaveuu.org)  
**It Gets Better Project:** [www.itgetsbetter.org](http://www.itgetsbetter.org)  
**National Gay & Lesbian Task Force:** [www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org)  
**PFLAG:** [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)  
**Stop Bullying Now:** [www.stopbullyingnow.com](http://www.stopbullyingnow.com)  
**Teaching Tolerance (Southern Poverty Law Center):** [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)  
**The Trevor Project:** [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)  
**Unitarian Universalist Association:** [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org)  
**Whosoever Magazine:** [www.whosoever.org](http://www.whosoever.org)

