# Safe Spaces PIC/DA

## 1NC – PIC

#### Text: Public colleges and universities in the United States ought recognize safe spaces, and remove restrictions on all other constitutionally protected speech

**Richardson**: Richardson, Bradford [Contributor, The Washington Times] “‘Safe spaces’ balloon on college campuses following Donald Trump win.” The Washington Times. November 2016. RP

**Colleges and universities across America responded to the shocking general election victory of President-elect Donald Trump in the only way they know how: by creating “safe spaces” for distressed students. The multicultural center at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis encouraged students to stop by for a “space to process or reflect” on the election results. “**Election processing space,” a note taped to the door of the center read, The College Fix [reported](http://www.thecollegefix.com/post/29876/). “Feel free to come in and join the conversation.” **The Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor similarly offered itself as an “open space of support” for students dismayed by Mr. Trump’s electoral college victory. And in an email to his classmates, George Mason University student body president Nathan Pittman recommended the services of a “healing space” on campus “in the wake of yesterday’s presidential election,” The Fix noted**. At the University of Michigan Flint, students were informed of counseling services in three separate emails over a span of five hours, and a “vigil” was reportedly in the works. Economics Professor Mark Perry wondered if those services would have been available in the event of a Hillary Clinton victory.

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**Fox:** Fox News. “‘Safe Spaces' on College Campuses Run at Odds with First Amendment, say Law Experts.” Fox News, November 2015. RP

**So-called ‘safe spaces’ -- where students can shield themselves from uncomfortable or dissenting viewpoints -- might be all the rage on college campuses, but they would not have been too popular with the founding fathers, say Constitutional law experts. "I think the problem is they're trying to use this word 'safe' – which conveys the image of a violent attack – and turning it into safe from ideas and statements we find offensive," said UCLA law professor Eugene Volokh. "There is no right to be safe from that.**" "That is directly contrary to what universities are all about," Volokh told FoxNews.com Friday. The controversy over such zones comes after a string of recent, racially-charged incidents at universities nationwide that -- while different -- share a common denominator: the promotion of a "PC culture" where real or perceived threatening thoughts or ideas should not be tolerated. Such a heated debate played out on the campus of Yale University last week -- one over culturally sensitive Halloween costumes that was recorded in a video that has since gone viral. On Oct. 30, Erika Christakis, Yale faculty member and associate "master" of Silliman College -- a residential community within the university -- sent an e-mail to students in which she questioned an earlier missive by the university that urged students to "take the time to consider their [Halloween] costumes and the impact it may have" -- including feathered headdresses, turbans, wearing "war paint" or changing the color of one's skin tone. "Dear Sillimanders," Christakis' e-mail began. "I don’t wish to trivialize genuine concerns about cultural and personal representation, and other challenges to our lived experience in a plural community. I know that many decent people have proposed guidelines on Halloween costumes from a spirit of avoiding hurt and offense. I laud those goals, in theory, as most of us do." "But in practice, I wonder if we should reflect more transparently, as a community, on the consequences of an institutional (which is to say: bureaucratic and administrative) exercise of implied control over college students," Christaki said. Referring to her husband, Silliman College "master" and Yale professor, Christakis added, "Nicholas says, if you don’t like a costume someone is wearing, look away, or tell them you are offended. Talk to each other. Free speech and the ability to tolerate offence are the hallmarks of a free and open society." Christakis' e-mail spurred outrage among a large group of students at Yale, who staged a massive protest -- called the "March of Resiliency" -- during which they called for inclusiveness on the college campus. Students of color also confronted Nicholas Christakis -- in a video that has since been shared thousands of times on the Internet -- and accused him of not wanting to create a "safe space" for all students. Several of the students called for Christakis and his wife to resign from their posts at the university. Samantha Harris, attorney and directory of police research for the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education [FIRE], described Erika Christakis' note to students as a "thoughtfully-worded e-mail" that invited open, intellectual dialogue. “**Demanding that someone step down for expressing an opinion for which you disagree is** patently illiberal,” Harris told FoxNews.com. "The idea that people have the right to absolute emotional comfort at all times is very troubling," she said. "And it's anti-intellectual." "This is destructive to the university as a place for debate and the pursuit of truth," added Volokh. "If we allow this to happen -- as citizens, as alumni -- the results will be very bad for higher education and for the country." "What I would say to people on the left, I would remind them that so many of the movements they hold dear got where they got because of free speech -- like the Civil Rights movement," he said. "The more you try to insulate yourself from contrary ideas, the weaker your arguments are going to be." At the University of Missouri, meanwhile, racially-charged protests also led to the demand for "safe spaces"-- and energized students at other colleges, like Yale and Michigan, to advocate better treatment for black students. Missouri's president resigned Monday after protesters accused him of ignoring racial attacks on students. Interim University of Missouri system's president Mike Middleton said he advocates such so-called safe zones but noted schools must walk a "delicate balance" between safe spaces and free speech rights. "I think safe spaces are critical," Middleton said at a press conference Thursday afternoon. "I think students need spaces where they can feel comfortable. Where they can interact without fear." "But I think if you’re asking in the context of first amendment and free speech issues, it’s a very delicate balance. Both are essential to our way of life in this country and the trick is to find that balance, the point where you are accommodating both interests as much as you can," Middleton said. Other legal experts, like famed attorney Alan Dershowitz, went even further in criticizing the creation of safe zones on college campuses, arguing a "fog of fascism is descending quickly over many American universities." "These are the same people who claim they are seeking diversity," Dershowitz told Fox News Thursday. "The last thing these students want is real diversity, diversity of ideas. They may want superficial diversity, diversity of gender, diversity of color, but they do not want diversity of ideas." "It is the worst kind of hypocrisy," noted Dershowitz. "They want complete control over their personal lives, over their sex lives, over the use of drugs, but they want mommy and daddy dean to please give them a safe place, to protect them from ideas that maybe are insensitive, maybe will make them think." "It is **free speech for me, but not for thee**" he said. "Universities should not tolerate this kind of hypocrisy, double standard."

## 1NC – Black Spaces PIC

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**Jackson:** Jackson, Symone [Contributor, Fusion] “5 Things Black Students Say Will End Racism On Campuses.” *Fusion.* April 2016. RP

**Earlier this year, the Black Student Union at Oberlin University asked for the creation of exclusively black “safe spaces” on campus and were denied by the university president. Conservative media outlets were enraged by the BSU request, which they deemed “segregation.” Oberlin wasn’t the only place students were asking for these spaces. Black students at NYU, UC Berkeley, Scripps and Pomona colleges have made similar requests. Some students have even taken it upon themselves to create safe spaces informally in areas nearby their campuses. Late last year, when a 19-year old white Mizzou student threatened to “stand my ground tomorrow and shoot every black person I see" and students on campus reported hearing gunshots fired shortly thereafter, black students living off campus and nearby alumni opened their homes to provide refuge for black students who were evacuating campus. “I know that once I became more involved on campus and met more people like me that I could identify with, my academic success began to rise,” said Sesley Lewis, the BSU president at California State University, Los Angeles. “Does that mean we’re promoting segregation [by asking for safe spaces]? Absolutely not. It’s essential to have spaces where we can vent and feel comfortable. If we’re not able to ground each other and hold each other down, that’s another thing that feeds into us not succeeding.”**

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## 1NC - DA

#### Uniqueness -- campus safe spaces are increasing on campuses in the status quo in response to Trump.

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"If we allow this to happen -- as citizens, as alumni -- the results will be very bad for higher education and for the country." "What I would say to people on the left, I would remind them that so many of the movements they hold dear got where they got because of free speech -- like the Civil Rights movement," he said. "The more you try to insulate yourself from contrary ideas, the weaker your arguments are going to be." At the University of Missouri, meanwhile, racially-charged protests also led to the demand for "safe spaces"-- and energized students at other colleges, like Yale and Michigan, to advocate better treatment for black students. Missouri's president resigned Monday after protesters accused him of ignoring racial attacks on students. Interim University of Missouri system's president Mike Middleton said he advocates such so-called safe zones but noted schools must walk a "delicate balance" between safe spaces and free speech rights. 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## Add Ons

### Black Safe Spaces Module

#### Black safe spaces are substantially increasing now

**Furedi:** Furedi, Frank [Frank Furedi is emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Kent, Canterbury, England. He is the author of “What’s Happened to the University? A Sociological Exploration of Its Infantilisation.”] “Op-Ed:Campuses are breaking apart into ‘safe spaces’.” January 2017. RP

**The meaning of a “safe space” has shifted dramatically on college campuses. Until about two years ago, a safe space referred to a room where people — often gay and transgender students — could discuss problems they shared in a forum where they were sheltered from epithets and other attacks.** Then temporary meeting spaces morphed into permanent ones. More recently, some advocates have turned their attention to student housing, which they want to turn into safe spaces by segregating student living quarters. Who would have imagined that the original safe space motive — to explore issues in an inclusive environment — would so quickly give way to the impulse to quarantine oneself and create de facto cultural segregation? Safe space activism stems primarily from the separatist impulses associated with the politics of identity, already rampant on campus. For some individuals, the attraction of a safe space is that it insulates them from not just hostility, but the views of people who are not like them. Students’ frequent demand for protection from uncomfortable ideas on campus — such as so-called trigger warnings — is now paralleled by calls to be physically separated too. Groups contend that their well-being depends on living with their own kind**. In 2015 and 2016, students of color at many colleges called for segregated safe spaces. For example, among the 14-page list of demands made by a group of Oberlin students was that “spaces throughout the Oberlin College campus be designated as a safe space for Africana identifying students**.” Oberlin’s president refused, noting the whole list “[explicitly rejects the notion of collaborative engagement](https://oncampus.oberlin.edu/source/articles/2016/01/20/response-student-demands).”But other administrators appear to be falling over themselves to satisfy such demands. **After the UC Irvine Black Student Union demanded the creation of a Black Scholars’ Hall  (“a safe space where Black history, culture, and intellectual thought is celebrated,” according to the petition) in 2015, the initiative was approved within the year. Under the guise of establishing so-called living-learning communities, similar accommodation is provided at UC Santa Barbara and UC Berkeley. The**[**Social Justice Living Learning Community**](https://und.edu/student-life/housing/residence-halls/social-justice-community.cfm)**offered by the University of North Dakota indicates that the balkanization of accommodation extends beyond ethnicity to students’ political convictions, too. It seems the cultivation of identity has encouraged such a psychic and emotional distance between people that some prefer to stay in their bubble everywhere they go. In this vein, Northwestern President Morton Schapiro wrote in the Washington Post last year that it is understandable that black students eating in the cafeteria would not want white undergraduates to join them. “We all deserve safe spaces,” he wrote, and “black students had every right to enjoy their lunches in peace**.” Schapiro’s premise is that everyone should have a place — apparently even a place in the dining hall — where they are sheltered from dissimilar people. He enthusiastically cited a Jewish Northwestern graduate’s endorsement of her own safe space, Hillel House. “She knew that when she was there,” he commented, “she could relax and not worry about being interrogated by non-Jews about Israeli politics or other concerns.”Encouraging students to engage with the unfamiliar and account for their ideas used to be one of attributes of a vibrant academic institution. Today’s university managers, however, are more likely to be complicit in relieving students of the uncomfortable burden of “being interrogated.”There are worrying signs that future undergraduates will be even more disposed to embrace such self-segregation than their predecessors. The campaign for establishing a Queer Housing Program at Haverford College expresses the spirit of the times. The president of [Brown University](http://www.latimes.com/topic/education/colleges-universities/brown-university-OREDU0000183-topic.html) Students for Israel, Ben Gladstone, has argued that Hillel House “should serve as a safe space for Zionists on campus.” A leader of UCLA’s Bruin Republicans describes her group as “a space for conservative students to share their opinion [without facing criticism or attacks](https://dailybruin.com/2016/11/17/bruin-republicans-members-encourage-students-to-accept-election-results/) from faculty and students who disagree with them.”These divisive trends came to a head in November during a UC Students of Color Conference that had as its objective the creation of a space to discuss, dissect and create relevant solutions to issues for this diverse group. [According to one account](https://dailybruin.com/2016/11/30/jacqueline-alvarez-campus-safe-spaces-prevent-students-from-engaging-in-honest-dialogue/) the conference turned into “a kind of ‘oppression Olympics,’ where students argued over which minority group was oppressed the most rather than finding solidarity and understanding amongst each other.”

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#### Empirics confirm that safe spaces provide an outlet for minorities

**Okeke:** Okeke, Cameron [Cameron Okeke is currently earning a master's in bioethics at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Berman Institute of Bioethics in Baltimore, Maryland. His views are his own and do not represent those of the institution he currently attends] “I’m a black UChicago graduate. Safe spaces got me through college.” *Vox.* August 2016. RP

The University of Chicago sent a dizzying letter to its freshman class last week, pledging its allegiance to two principles: academic freedom and freedom of expression. The letter expressed this commitment by denouncing "so-called trigger warnings" and "intellectual ‘safe spaces.’" To those unfamiliar with the UChicago’s abysmal campus climate, a strong stance against echo chambers may seem reasonable. But marginalized students know that this declaration ignores the real problems on campus: sexual assault, racial profiling, and other troubling issues. I would know. During my four years as an undergraduate at UChicago from 2011 to 2015, I grew increasingly dissatisfied with the university’s willful ignorance of students’ concerns, especially students of color. **As a first-generation black student, I needed safe spaces like the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs — not to "hide from ideas and perspectives at odds with my own," but to heal from relentless hate and ignorance, to hear and be heard. My ideas were always challenged, but never my humanity. I mattered. Full of robust dialogue, safe spaces are not a bubbled-wrapped echo chamber, but a places where "civility and mutual respect" actually matter. Though spacious, the multicultural student affairs office was always full of students sharing their struggles and grappling with oppression. Underfunded and understaffed, it was a house-turned- sanctuary for students and student groups alike. I even slept there during a particularly brutal finals week. I, like many other students, wouldn’t have survived UChicago without this place to call my home**. If you want diversity, you have to have safe spaces Alas, UChicago does not seem to get it. The university claims that it values diversity, boasting about its history of championing black, LGBTQ, poor, and femme-identified students. But you do not get our "diversity" without safe spaces, trigger warnings, or some institutionalized form of respect for people with different experiences. You want the perspective of someone with PTSD, then you better be prepared to do the work to make them comfortable enough to speak up in class, and that means giving them a heads up when discussing potentially triggering topics. Classrooms should not be a form of exposure therapy. The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs always started its dialogs with trigger warnings and had people on staff trained to handle PTSD flashbacks. You want the greatness femme-identified folks have to offer, then you have to support them in their endeavors and take sexual assault and harassment seriously. While the university continually failed to take rape and rape threat seriously, the Phoenix Survivor Alliance held solidarity circles to support survivors at Hull Gate. **You want low-income and first-generation students to focus in class and thrive in your elitist institution, then you better fund the Student Support Services (for undocumented and low-income students) and address the classist onslaught inherent in UChicago culture.** When the dining halls closed on Saturday nights, low-income students (myself included) went hungry. Where did we go? The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs. You want trans and LGBTQ students to show up to class and elevate the conversation with their brilliance, then you need to create a culture where misgendering and deadnaming are taboo. Fully staff the Office of LGBTQ Student Life and make more places where these students can speak freely about their struggles. You want me to elevate mediocre conversations about race with my personal experience and critical lens, then you better do something about the students muttering about affirmative action every time I speak, or the campus police who stop me on the street for not looking "UChicago enough." **During my time on campus, I met more than couple people who believed in the genetic inferiority of black people. I was never afraid of their thinly veiled bigotry, just bored and disappointed. I needed a space where I, a biology major, was not expected to give free race theory classes**. You want black women and other women of color to do anything at all for your gentrifying, police-protected institution, then you better just do better. If you want a university with people who have experienced "real life," then you need to listen to them, address their problems, and create places where they can heal. One house is not enough. Do not disparage the tools we have created as a show of intellectual bravado, then claim our success as your own. How trigger warnings and safe spaces encourage the academic freedom UChicago says it wants If, on the other hand, you only want the boring babblings of rich, white, cis, straight men whose worst experience was burying their fourth family pet, then keep doing what you have been doing since your inception. Keep pandering to the politically incorrect and the privileged if you want, but do not expect the depth and nuance that experience brings. Don’t expect us to show up. UChicago should know that trigger warnings and safe spaces exist to give those with firsthand experience a way to engage without sacrificing their well-being or safety. This accessibility is the key to a truly open marketplace of ideas and an essential pillar of academic freedom. Recklessly painting trigger warnings and safe spaces as enemies to academic freedom will only make UChicago a more hostile environment for marginalized first-years. Being diverse isn't easy and our diversity ain’t free. Don’t let us in if you can’t make room for us.

#### Black counter-spaces function as a response to microaggressions and centers of Black activism

**Solorzano et al:** Daniel Solorzano, Miguel Ceja, Tara Yosso [Researchers, UC Schools] “Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students.” *Journal of Negro Education,* Volume 69. Spring 2000. RP

**In response to the daily barrage of racial microaggressions that they endure both in and outside of their classes, the African American students who participated in our focus groups indicated that they are creating academic and social "counter-spaces" on and off their campuses. These counter-spaces serve as sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained. Counter-spaces on the three campuses participating in our study were created within African American student organizations, organizations or offices that pro- vide services to African American and other students, Black fraternities and sororities, peer groups, and Black student-organized academic study halls. Some of these counter- spaces were co-created with African American faculty and exist within classrooms. Others existed within more social settings. As Solorzano and Villalpando (1998) have determined, academic counter-spaces allow African American students to foster their own learning and to nurture a supportive environment wherein their experiences are validated and viewed as important knowledge. According to our focus group participants, social counter-spaces were important because they afforded African American students with space, outside of the classroom confines, to vent their frustrations and to get to know others who shared their experiences of microaggressions and/or overt discrimination**. For example, one male student explained that he sought out such a counter-space for support at his university: ... that was one of the reasons why I chose to live on the African American theme floor [among the campus dormitories] ... because if I go home [at the end of the day] and I don't have the support, then that can really be discouraging.... [Y]ou need some type of support to get through this thing ... and if you're a freshman coming in, you don't know African American faces ... you need somewhere to start. Two African American female students shared similar conclusions: ... I just feel more comfortable dealing with African American people in every aspect ... counseling, financial aid. I just look for the first African American face I find because I feel like they're going to be more sympathetic. You know how you have African American crews, African American fraternities, and so forth. And then my sophomore year here, I was thinking about joining an African American sorority, and [a White fellow student] said, "Why do you want to join a African American sorority? Are those other sororities not good enough? You think that we're only White?" I said, "I don't think they're only White. It's just that ... I don't want to say [they're] anti-African American, but I don't feel welcome in your sorority." And she said, "What do you think we are, the Klan?" [and] I was like, "Okay, we're not going to go there." Many social counter-spaces also serve as academic counter spaces and vice-versa. For example, some students indicated that their study groups evolved into friendship groups and community outreach groups that provide them with educational, emotional, and cultural support. As a female African American student related: .. . the benefit that I have gained from [a study group of African American students] is that my involvement in the African American community has grown, and that's where I found a lot of my support. Even in terms of academics, I go study with the "homies" all the time. Go to [a certain student lounge] and you're going to see a million African American faces, and it's going to be cool.... You might not get that much studying done, but it's a cool little network that's created because classes are so uncomfortable.

### Mpx – Emotional Trauma

#### EMOTIONAL TRAUMA: denying safe spaces makes learning harder.

**Pickett:** Pickett, RaeAnn. [Senior Director of Communications & Public Affairs, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health] “Trigger Warnings and Safe Spaces are Necessary.” *Time Magazine*, August 2016. RP

After the birth of my first son, I had postpartum depression. I was a mess emotionally, and I was in desperate need of feeling safe. I had no idea what "trigger warnings" or "safe spaces" were, but I had been using them internally for days—avoiding the mommy movies and choosing not to go to the breastfeeding support group where I felt like a failure. Being able to know beforehand what experiences I should avoid and create an environment where I felt safe made it easier for me to share my struggles and move past them. Everyone deserves that opportunity. The **University of Chicago recently to put an end to** trigger warnings—advance notice of subject material that might upset students—and **safe spaces—places where students can avoid those subjects.** The university’s reasoning for ending these voluntary practices was a “commitment to academic freedom.” **In reality, this policy puts many students in the uncomfortable position of entering spaces that** may or **may not be safe for them to learn, interact and share in—and puts the onus on them to leave or to endure the situation.** The decision doesn't take students wants or needs into account. As the National Coalition Against Censorship notes: “In many cases, the request for trigger warnings comes from students themselves.” **And [S]afe spaces can have powerful therapeutic purposes for those who enter them. In fact, the university's new policy does the exact** opposite **of what it is purported to do: instead of fostering academic freedom, it could foster mistrust and negatively affect survivors of trauma, including p**eople **o**f **c**olor**. If students cannot trust that spaces they enter are going to keep them safe, they are less able to feel secure enough to learn. Safe spaces and trigger warnings can help support victims of assault, PTSD and violence.** Organizations have made great strides in ending stigma for sexual assault survivors and have called for increasing trigger warnings for sensitive content. **A lack of safe spaces can also compound the mental toll of racism,** even subtle racism. Past experience with bullying plays a role here: Of the 160,000 children bullied every day, 31% are multiracial, according to Clemson University’s “2013 report. Racial bullying often goes unnoticed or unreported due to how teachers perceive interethnic relationships. Psychologist Morris Rosenberg found that African-Americans showed surprisingly high rates of self-esteem when they compared themselves with other African-Americans, but when they compared themselves to white peers, self-esteem levels dropped. Safe spaces can help minorities feel empowered to speak up. Some may say a commitment to free speech, by any means necessary, does more to foster a positive academic setting than safe spaces and trigger warnings. But the bigger question is: whose speech is being protected by these policies? They certainly don’t always foster a healthy relationship with students of color or survivors of trauma or those who live at the intersection of both. Sitting in the dark holding my newborn and struggling with undiagnosed postpartum depression, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder were some of the darkest days of my life. But because of ratings systems on movies and descriptions on the TV guide, I was able to take small steps every day to commit to keeping myself mentally healthy. The pressure of living up to the stereotype of a proud, wise, confident Latina mother kept me from seeking help for a long time. But when my first postpartum depression support group facilitator said in a hushed, happy voice that this was a safe space, I felt the weight slowly start to lift from my chest. All the pent-up anxiety I had felt was dissapating—just by knowing that the physical place I chose to be in was filled with people who understood me and could help me find the tools to get well. **Being able to make informed decisions about which spaces students chose to enter and not enter is critical in helping them stay well and take control over the information they decide to receive and how to receive it**. A critical phase of healing involves reclaiming power and control positive ways. Our universities should be at the vanguard of modeling the way forward—not backward.

### Mpx – Fem

#### Safe spaces are key to female empowerment and inclusion

**Ferguson:** Ferguson, Sian [Sian Ferguson is a Contributing Writer at Everyday Feminism. She is a South African feminist currently studying toward a Bachelors of Social Science degree majoring in English Language and Literature and Gender Studies at the University of Cape Town. She has been featured as a guest writer on websites such as [Women24](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCcQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.women24.com%2F&ei=qtoZU67PDc3okQeWm4DYAg&usg=AFQjCNHZTAeP65BSbdB6FjYzlpSjAMF6Dg&bvm=bv.62578216,d.eW0) and Foxy Box, while also writing for [her personal blog](http://justasouthafricanwoman.blogspot.com/).] “6 Reasons Why We Need Safe Spaces.” *Everyday Feminism*. August 2014. RP

**I’m quite involved in a number of online feminist communities, most of which attempt to be** [**safe spaces**](http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Safe_space)**. And lately, I’ve been hearing plenty of criticisms of these spaces. There are some useful criticisms that point out how our communities should be more inclusive, less oppressive, and more accommodating to marginalized groups.** As feminism has traditionally excluded many marginalized groups of people, it’s important that we center on oppressed voices. Then, there are some criticisms that are less useful. In every single feminist safe space I’ve been, someone – usually someone who is more privileged than most people in the group – will call the space an “echo chamber” or, to use a more vulgar term, a “circlejerk.” An echo chamber is a space where people repeat and agree with certain ideas, patting one another on the back instead of contributing new thoughts. An echo chamber is thought to be useless because nobody is learning anything new or expanding their perspectives. But there’s a difference between an echo chamber and a safe space. So, firstly, what is a safe space? **Safe spaces are places or communities – either online or off – where bigotry and oppressive views are not tolerated. They are controlled environments (insofar as they can be) in which people can discuss certain issues and support one another. Usually safe spaces will focus on specific issues, like sexism, racism, or transantagonism. They commonly have** [**rules**](http://everydayfeminism.com/about-ef/comments-policy/) **to ensure that the participants know what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.** If the participants violate these rules, they are usually warned, removed, or blocked. Essentially, safe spaces provide a network of support and understanding. **They are an oasis for some groups who are otherwise denied safety and respect by the world.** In order to keep a space safe, we need to have rules. Safe spaces don’t tolerate certain (oppressive) views, and they value safety over debate. There are things that are not up for debate and discussion. Because of this, many people argue that these spaces are echo chambers and therefore useless to discussion and to feminism. And I understand why people think this. People, particularly those living in liberal, Westernized spaces, are taught that we should question everything, that debate is of paramount importance, and that freedom of expression is an inalienable right. But in this context, this line of thinking is problematic. Safe spaces are extremely useful and are of the utmost importance to the feminist movement. And I’ll tell you why. I come from South Africa. Up until recently, freedom of expression was not a right our citizens had. I know that it’s an extremely important right, and I know why it is valuable. But consider this: Because most of the Internet is unmoderated, I have only a handful of places on the Internet where I know I can be my true self without being disrespected, silenced, or trolled. **I need these spaces to remain safe for the sake of my emotional and psychological health.** You have the entire Internet to use your freedom of expression. If you feel like you’re unsafe on the rest of the Internet, make your own safe spaces with your own rules, or lack thereof. Respecting one space – a space you’re not forced to enter – isn’t going to result in loss of your freedom of expression. Debate is important. But it’s also overrated. People often assume that debate is of paramount importance to progress. And indeed, debate can encourage people to be thoughtful and to open their minds. However, focusing on oppressed groups is also important. **Creating spaces where those people can heal and connect with one another is necessary.** **In absolutely every safe space I’ve occupied, I’ve seen privileged people entering the groups simply because they enjoy debate. This becomes a problem because, for the oppressed members of the group, it’s a space for healing.** For the privileged members of the group, it’s a fun intellectual exercise. When the oppressed people speak out against being treated as debate topics, the privileged accuse them of stifling debate. The moderators of the group have to come up with a set of rules. If the healing of the oppressed isn’t prioritized over debate, the space becomes unsafe and is dominated by privileged people. For this reason, it’s important that safe spaces prioritize healing over debate. Discussion can be awesome, but what is the value of discussion if you’re dehumanizing oppressed people in the process? The idea that all debate is progressive comes with the idea that everything should be up for debate. For example, I’m a part of an online group of [South African feminists](https://www.facebook.com/groups/619203161497099/). One of our rules is that victim-blaming is absolutely forbidden; we assume that everyone in the group knows that victim-blaming is wrong. On a thread that discussed rape culture, a member of the group said, to paraphrase, “But hang on! The assumption that victim-blaming is wrong should be debated. Victims should take responsibility for their actions.” He then proceeded to make a common, unoriginal argument to justify victim-blaming. This was problematic on two counts. Firstly, it triggered the rape survivors and victims in the group. Secondly, the commenter assumed that we were closed-minded because we didn’t want to hear his argument – as if we had never been exposed to this debate before. As a rape victim, I am constantly exposed to the notion that I deserve to be blamed for my trauma. I know those debates better than anyone else. I’ve been forced to have those debates a thousand times over, and I’m too tired to have it again — especially in my safe space. The assumption my safe space makes – that I should not be blamed for my rape – is already challenged constantly by most of society. A safe space is an opportunity to connect with other people who recognize that society’s mainstream, oppressive messages are bullshit. Sometimes, online spaces are exclusively for people of a certain oppressed group. Some spaces are for women only. Some spaces are exclusively for queer people. Some are for people of color. Most of the time, these spaces are for people within oppressed groups to connect and share their experiences and perspectives. They are for healing, networking, and developing a community. **These spaces are extremely important because the world caters to privileged people at the expense of the oppressed. It is therefore revolutionary to have a space that focuses entirely on an oppressed group.** An argument against safe spaces is that they don’t encourage a diversity of perspectives. Because certain comments are not allowed, it’s argued, you’ll only receive one viewpoint. I argue that the opposite is true. Making a space safe for oppressed groups of people means that they’re more likely to feel comfortable enough to contribute to the discussion. Think about it: If a space isn’t safe from transantagonism, it’s unlikely that trans\* people will share their perspective. If a space isn’t safe from racism, it is unlikely that anyone who isn’t white will contribute to the discussion. In unsafe spaces, privileged voices are more likely to dominate the discussion. Safe spaces mean that certain voices – marginalized, often underrepresented voices – get a chance to speak without fear of hostility. Futhermore, the notion that agreement creates an echo chamber is downright false. Sometimes, advanced feminist spaces like [Guerrilla Feminism](https://www.facebook.com/guerrillafeminism) or [Shakesville](http://www.shakesville.com/) have very specific comment guidelines. These guidelines require agreement on certain issues. For example, Guerrilla Feminism [does not allow](http://www.guerrillafem.com/discuss/comment-policy/) pro-choice versus anti-choice debates, the assertion that reverse racism is a thing, or victim-blaming of any kind. They also don’t do feminism 101 education on demand. They expect their members to understand basic feminist theory and the concept of intersectionality. When I explained Guerrilla Feminism’s comment policy to an acquaintance, they immediately said, “But that just means everyone will agree with one another! Nobody will learn anything.” Just because people agree on basic issues doesn’t mean that they’ll agree on everything else. Agreeing on those basic issues means that we can have advanced discussions without getting caught up in debates we are tired of having. Additionally, these spaces can be very educational. Saying that advanced feminist spaces aren’t educational because they don’t do basic debates or 101 education is like saying that a third-year college course isn’t educational because they don’t give lessons for first-year students. Agreeing on a few basic tenets does not make a space an echo chamber. And, anyway… The biggest echo chambers I’ve ever been in were outside of safe spaces. We all live in an echo chamber: It’s called the [kyriarchy](http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/04/kyriarchy-101/). The media, the educational system, religious institutions, the judicial system, and other institutions all form part of one huge echo chamber that maintains the oppressive status quo. What is an echo chamber if not an interdependent network of entities that repeat and perpetuate one another’s ideas? To the oppressed, the echoes keep on repeating that we are not human. With this in mind, ask yourself: What’s wrong with being in an echo chamber if all that is being echoed is the idea that you are human and worthy of respect? In a world that tries to deny the oppressed their humanity, there is nothing dogmatic about a safe space. On the contrary, safe spaces are fucking revolutionary. I see the current feminist movement – and social justice activism of all kinds – as people-focused activism. More specifically, it centers on the healing of those who are hurt by the kyriarchy. For this reason, safe spaces are extremely important. Dismissing them as echo chambers doesn’t do the movement any favors.

### Mpx – Minority Inclusion

#### MINORITY EXCLUSION: safe spaces give minorities a needed outlet – empirics prove.

**Okeke:** Okeke, Cameron. [MA., Bioethics, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health] “I’m a Black UChicago Graduate. Safe Spaces Got Me Through College.” *Vox*,August 2016. RP

The University of Chicago sent a dizzying letter to its freshman class last week, pledging its allegiance to two principles: academic freedom and freedom of expression. The letter expressed this commitment by denouncing "so-called trigger warnings" and "intellectual ‘safe spaces.’" To those unfamiliar with the UChicago’s abysmal campus climate, a strong stance against echo chambers may seem reasonable. But marginalized students know that this declaration ignores the real problems on campus: sexual assault, racial profiling, and other troubling issues. I would know. During my four years as an undergraduate at UChicago from 2011 to 2015, I grew increasingly dissatisfied with the university’s willful ignorance of students’ concerns, especially students of color. **As a first-generation black student, I** needed **safe spaces like the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs — not to ‘hide from ideas and perspectives at odds with my own,’ but to heal from relentless hate and ignorance, to hear and be heard.** My ideas were always challenged, but never my humanity. I mattered. Full of robust dialogue, **safe spaces are not a bubbled-wrapped echo chamber, but a place where ‘civility and mutual respect’ actually matter** Though spacious, the multicultural student affairs office was always **full of students sharing their struggles and grappling with oppression**. Underfunded and understaffed, it was a house-turned- sanctuary for students and student groups alike. I even slept there during a particularly brutal finals week. **I, like many other students, wouldn’t have survived UChicago without this place to call my home. If you want diversity, you have to have safe spaces** Alas, UChicago does not seem to get it. The university claims that it values diversity, boasting about its history of championing black, LGBTQ, poor, and femme-identified students. But you do not get our "diversity" without safe spaces, trigger warnings, or some institutionalized form of respect for people with different experiences. You want the perspective of someone with PTSD, then you better be prepared to do the work to make them comfortable enough to speak up in class, and that means giving them a heads up when discussing potentially triggering topics. Classrooms should not be a form of exposure therapy. The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs always started its dialogs with trigger warnings and had people on staff trained to handle PTSD flashbacks. 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Fully staff the Office of LGBTQ Student Life and make more places where these students can speak freely about their struggles. You want me to elevate mediocre conversations about race with my personal experience and critical lens, then you better do something about the students muttering about affirmative action every time I speak, or the campus police who stop me on the street for not looking "UChicago enough." **During my time on campus, I met more than [a] couple people who believed in the genetic inferiority of black people. I was never afraid of their thinly veiled bigotry, just bored and disappointed. I needed a space where I, a biology major,** was not expected to give free race theory classes. You want black women and other women of color to do anything at all for your gentrifying, police-protected institution, then you better just do better. 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This accessibility is the key to a truly open marketplace of ideas and an essential pillar of academic freedom. Recklessly painting trigger warnings and safe spaces as enemies to academic freedom will only make UChicago a more hostile environment for marginalized first-years. Being diverse isn't easy and our diversity ain’t free. Don’t let us in if you can’t make room for us.

### Mpx – Race

#### INEQUALITY: whites are allowed to have safe spaces, so Blacks should, too.

**Jones 1:** Jones, Michal MJ. [Contributor, *Everyday Feminism*] “5 Reasons We Need Black-Only Spaces (And No, Reverse Racism Isn’t One of Them).” *Everyday Feminism*,September 2015. RP

It was mid-summer and I was on my way to a social justice and anti-oppression conference when I first learned of the Charleston church shooting. Relatively new to community organizing, I’d been looking forward to networking with radical activists of color for many months. I couldn’t wait to bring new skills, connections, and ideas back to the Black liberation groups of which I was a part. **But as I sat in the airport watching images of slain Black faces blast over the TV monitors, I broke down. I covered my face with a blanket, and I wept. When I was finally settled in my hotel room, I slept for many hours.** As I moved through the conference space, I could feel the shattering hearts of other Black attendees, but I saw no official response to Charleston from the organizers. Instead, instances of anti-Black violence permeated the conference experience: Black femme and trans attendees had racist and oppressive encounters at conference-sponsored venues and non-Black folks entered spaces that were designated for us and us only. **This conference, which was powerful in other ways, still showed me that [T]he erasure of Black experience knows no bounds – it even happens within radical spaces and around folks with positive intentions. And [T]he most powerful, healing, and transformative spaces were those that Black presenters and organizers created[.]**, for ourselves, in the midst of ongoing tragedy. As a result, the conference, more than anything else, reminded me of how vital all-Black radical spaces are. And in that way, it was beautiful and liberating. The fact remains, however, that all-**Black spaces are still** constantly **questioned, attacked, and made invisible within mainstream society and in “anti-oppressive” spaces. While white privilege allows large groups of white** folk**s to gather together without question, Black** folk**s can’t even hold public space without being views as suspicious or troublesome. We continue to be perceived as “violent” (even when no harm or destruction is present). These conditions show how, more than ever,** [A]ll **Black spaces continue to be vital for Black survival, resistance, and healing. Here are some reasons why we need them.**

#### WHITE SUPREMACY: losing safe spaces means Blacks lack a tool against oppression.

**Jones :** Jones, Michal MJ. [Contributor, *Everyday Feminism*] “5 Reasons We Need Black-Only Spaces (And No, Reverse Racism Isn’t One of Them).” *Everyday Feminism*,September 2015. RP

**The very need to defend all-Black solidarity spaces shows us the extent and hypocrisy of anti- Black racism in the US and abroad. When Black people create our own spaces, businesses, and gatherings, our behavior is often perceived as “reverse racism.”** We encounter frustrated exclamations of “If white people created a white-only group, we would be called racist!” or “Why isn’t there a white student union? **But** it is vital to understand that **these spaces are often in** response **to oppression – we need to be with each other and away from the abuse of racism and white supremacy. And in reality, Black folks actually aren’t safe gathering and organizing – the Charleston massacre and the series of arsons against Black churches this past summer demonstrate that even our prayer and healing spaces remain targeted. The reason Black communities and spaces are often attacked usually isn’t because white and non-Black folks “can’t” join in. The unspoken truth behind the backlash is that Black folks are directly challenging white supremacy, which seeks to divide and destroy us, not see us unified.**

# DA Frontlines

## Uniqueness

### Black Space Specific

#### University of Connecticut is the perfect example – they created living spaces just for black men

**Deruy:** Deruy, Emily [Contributor, The Atlantic] “The Fine Line Between Safe Space and Segregation.” *The Atlantic.* August 2016. RP

**That’s one reason another institution, the University of Connecticut, earlier this year announced a living community specifically for black men. Erik Hines, an assistant professor who was set to serve as a faculty advisor to residents, told The Atlantic at the time that the space was in part an attempt to address the fact that black men graduate from college at a lower rate than many of their peers. While graduation rates for white, Latino, and Asian students, as well as black women, are in the 70s and 80s at the school, graduation rates for black men are in the 50s. The school pointed out that young men of all backgrounds will be permitted to apply to the living community, and that the housing isn’t meant to exclude anyone, but to provide a safe space for students who may feel detached from the university community more broadly. The community is an attempt, Hines said, to give black students who may be in majors with just one or two other black students a chance to connect with other people who may feel isolated and may also feel burdened with representing the black community as a whole.**

#### Uniqueness -- black safe spaces are increasing on campuses in the squo – Northwestern proves.

**Maxwell:** Maxwell, Peter. [Master’s Degree in Communication and Media Studies, Lynn University] “Northwestern Plans to Quadruple Safe Spaces for Black Students, Conduct ‘Cultural Audit.’” *The College Fix*, October 2016. RP

**Northwestern University is planning to** quadruple **the number of safe spaces on campus for black students, according to a task force report released last month on the “Black Student Experience.” The 149-page report says the black student community at NU feels “dissatisfied, exhausted and alienated on campus**.” It lists more than 40 “campus bias incidents” dating to 2006 in one of its eight appendices, which total 90 pages. Basic math is the biggest problem at Northwestern, according to the report: Fewer than one in 10 students is black. The task force recommends increasing the number of black students – by giving them more attractive financial-aid packages – and “relentless[ly]” recruiting black faculty and giving them “research opportunities.” The report also recommends that Northwestern “[e]mbed opportunities into the fabric of Northwestern where students learn about and are challenged to wrestle with issues of diversity, social inequalities, social justice, and inclusion.” It tells undergraduate schools that have not approved a United States-focused “social inequalities and diversity course” to hurry up their review of the proposed course requirement. The university should conduct a “cultural audit” of all Northwestern buildings and spaces to ensure that they are “representative of the diversity that exists within the University.” **Perhaps most important for black social life, the report recommends the designation of three more black-focused spaces on campus for both “large social events” and “more intimate gatherings,” because not everyone feels welcome at the Black House.**

## Link

### A2 Isolation

#### Safe spaces for Black students don’t isolate them – it just gives them a potential outlet if they need.

**Deruy:** Deruy, Emily [Contributor, The Atlantic] “The Fine Line Between Safe Space and Segregation.” *The Atlantic.* August 2016. RP

**Where most universities were designed around the needs and lives of white students, she said, and most white students can—and do—still avoid having uncomfortable conversations about race, black students “are never at a shortage” for uncomfortable racial conversations. In other words, white students can often elect not to engage in such conversations, where black students cannot escape them. To carve out a safe space on campus where black students can get support from people who look like them and share similar backgrounds may ultimately help these students feel a sense of belonging and safety. These students are not cloistered away, McMillan Cottom pointed out. They still attend classes, eat in dining halls, and go to sporting events that are campus-wide.** What white people often mean when they argue that creating such spaces is segregation, McMillan Cottom suggested, is that they also want the ability to self-segregate. The idea that black and white students come to campus with the same needs and concerns and deserve the exact same treatment is a “false equivalence,” she said. Black students are far more likely to come from high schools that lack advanced courses, to be low-income, and to be first-generation students from families unfamiliar with the college process.