# Safe Spaces for Marginalized Students

## Introduction and Claim

Safe spaces refer to the institutions within colleges and universities that offer support and cater for the needs of marginalized groups (Woodson 807). In most schools, safe spaces can be physical places or organizations that hold special gatherings for marginalized students. These organizations offer services such as academic programs and social events that focus on cultural appreciation or discussing issues that are specific to marginalized groups. The activities and discussions set aside for marginalized students enable them to feel comfortable and get support in a dominantly white population (Doe 83). However, there have been criticisms about the existence of safe spaces in universities. Some of the most common criticisms of safe spaces are that they promote racism on campus and inhibit the benefits of learning in a diverse educational environment. Despite the criticisms, Safe spaces are necessary for students from different races or ethnic groups who want to learn in a supportive and comfortable environment without the fear of being judged for being different.

## Background

Safe spaces began as a result of student activism. Safe spaces offer students the opportunity to share information on the rights they were fighting for which led to more political and social activism. The term “safe” was used in the context that it allows marginalized students to express opinions about conversations that are not held in mainstream campus forums. The idea is also based on the idea of historically black colleges, which were considered a comfortable environment for marginalized students (Darrell, Melissa & Earlie 43). Therefore, Safe spaces are designed to enable students get the support needed to learn comfortably in a diverse environment.

## Body

Safe spaces offer support for marginalized students. Safe spaces help to get rid of the feelings of isolations while adjusting to life on campuses that are predominantly white. Safe spaces provide different forms of support, which include social support. Students are able to socialize with individuals they can relate to and get assistance on adjusting with the social campus life. It is easier for most new students to form relationships with individuals who are similar to them. Having safe spaces in schools allows marginalized students to identify with students who are similar to them and to create friendships that will prevent isolation (Woodson 807). Safe spaces also provide cultural support. Students are able to appreciate their culture and feel comfortable without the fear of being misunderstood by other students. Students are also able to get emotional support from other marginalized students. Safe spaces initiate conversations on racial issues which allows a student to experience emotional support. In addition, safe spaces provide academic support by having programs that ensure marginalized students are able to achieve their full academic potential.

Safe spaces have been criticized based on the assumption that they promote racism and prevent students from getting the full experience of learning in a diverse environment. Most critics assume that safe spaces promote segregation and are unwelcoming for white students. Safe spaces are viewed as a way to promote racism because it involves groupings of individuals from certain groups (Deo 87). Other critics argue that safe spaces limit student’s abilities to adjust to diverse environments by limiting their interactions with students who are different. Another argument against safe spaces is that they go against the purpose of social development in university (Harpalani 78). Critics believe that students have to learn to cope and flourish in a diverse environment.

The claim that safe spaces could contribute to racism and inequality is valid. This is based on the fact that safe spaces allow for marginalized students to form their own groupings to discuss matters that affect them. However, these critics fail to consider, the importance of creating a safe environment to discuss issues and feel comfortable about being different. In addition, safe spaces only limit the social development of students if these spaces are not managed well. Poor social development can occur for students who only rely on interactions within the safe spaces (Mae, Derek & Raymond 5). On the other hand, critics need to realize that students need to be comfortable with their identity before they can develop healthy relationships with other students.

The views expressed by the critics of safe spaces are valid but they fail to see the bigger picture. Institutions have policies and arrangements that allow for safe spaces to be managed in ways that do not promote segregation. Safe spaces are not only open for specific groups of minority students but they also include a diverse population of minority groups. Public portrayal of safe spaces fails to acknowledge the positive aspects of safe spaces that encourage the development of students. Safe spaces offer support in educational and social activities which enable a student to develop in a comfortable environment.

## Conclusion

Safe spaces are significant in providing marginalized students with the support needed to learn in a comfortable environment. Safe spaces offer students with emotional, social and academic support which allows them to become comfortable with their identity. Safe spaces allow students to develop social skills in a comfortable environment and they can use the skills learnt in their interactions with other students. Critics claim that safe spaces could promote segregation and impede student development. However, with the right policies and arrangements, safe spaces could provide supportive environments for students to learn and to develop intellectually and socially.

## Works Cited

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