

# By Any Other Name: White Students Get Safe Space at This University

Use of terms such as “safe space” and “white privilege” is increasingly common on college campuses, but when the University of Maryland at College Park announced creation of a weekly “safe space for white students” called White Awake, the negative response quickly prompted the school to change the name.

Campus Reform reported the renaming Friday, appearing to take some credit for the change after [publishing an article](#) earlier on White Awake and criticism by students.

Some said the name was insulting and questioned the need for a group “for white students to talk about race.”

The new name for the group, set to meet weekly for 90 minutes at 10 a.m. Thursdays, is the Anti-Racism and Ally Building Group.

“This is, to say the least, a sad and dispiriting development,” Mike Gonzalez, a senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation’s Institute for International Studies, told The Daily Signal.

According to an earlier tweet from a student featuring a photo of what appears to be a promotional poster or pamphlet, the group White Awake “offers a safe space for white students to explore their experience, questions, reactions, and feelings.”

*I am ashamed over the execution of white awake nor do I fully understand its clause. “How they can fit into a diverse world”? Why do they need to attend therapy sessions on how to be a decent human being in society? Why do they need to have*

these sessions to learn how to coexist?  
[pic.twitter.com/AaPOLz05vu](https://pic.twitter.com/AaPOLz05vu)

– Alysa Conway (@LoveConweezy27) [September 13, 2018](#)

Campus Reform, a nonprofit, bills itself as a “watchdog to the nation’s higher education system,” exposing “bias and abuse on the nation’s college campuses.”

Campus Reform reported that the University of Maryland issued a statement explaining the name change from White Awake:

*Our Counseling Center acknowledges that we did not choose the right words in raising awareness about this research-based initiative, and how this group has been perceived is counter to the values of inclusiveness and diversity that we embody. Therefore, we are renaming the group to better reflect our intention and values.*

The aim of the newly renamed group is for members to “support and share feedback with each other as they learn more about themselves and how they can fit into a diverse world,” according to the university counseling center’s web page.

“Do you want to improve your ability to relate to and connect with people different from yourself? Do you want to become a better ally?” asks the description for the group.

The photo of the promotional material in the student’s tweet indicates the group is for white students who “sometimes feel uncomfortable and confused before, during, or after interactions with racial and ethnic minorities.”

The student who tweeted it questioned the need for such a group.

“I am ashamed over the execution of white awake, nor do I fully understand its clause ‘How they can fit into a diverse

world,'" she wrote. "Why do they need to attend therapy sessions on how to be a decent human being in society? Why do they need to have these sessions to learn how to coexist?"

The new group is one of what the university calls its four Diversity Issues therapy groups.

Others listed on the university's website are Circle of Sisters; LGBTQIA Support; and Entre Nosotrxs Latinx Support Group, which offer support to female students and those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or something else.

Heritage's Gonzalez told The Daily Signal in an email:

*Students have enough to do with [classes] and homework without having to put up with 'consciousness-raising re-education camps' that bring to mind Mao and Pol Pot, not Aristotle, Aquinas, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Locke, or the Founding Fathers.*

*These 'White Awake' safe spaces make the whole university unsafe, because they emphasize racial division and strife.*

*The use of the word 'ally' [in the new name] is specially disconcerting. One only needs allies in a war.*

The Anti-Racism and Ally Building Group will be run by [Noah Collins](#), a group therapist who works at the counseling center and whose research interests lie "in the areas of racial and cultural awareness," according to his faculty biography.

Collins could not be reached for comment.

"Although it is our intent to promote anti-racism, we acknowledge that there are members of our community that may have felt harmed by the naming of this group," the University of Maryland at College Park said in an email to The Daily Signal, adding:

*The purpose of this effort is to promote anti-racism and becoming a better and more informed ally. Our Counseling Center acknowledges that we did not choose the right words in raising awareness about this research-based initiative, and how this group has been perceived is counter to the values of inclusiveness and diversity that we embody. Therefore, we are renaming the group to better reflect our intention and values.*

*Peter Parisi contributed to this report, which was modified to include the university's comment.*

—

*This [article](#) has been republished with permission from The Daily Signal.*