

Riley Morse

P. Swinson

English 101

26 September 2021

College Campuses Should Not Be Safe Spaces Rhetorical Analysis

When most people talk to each other, they hold back and don't say everything we want to say. It's just easier to go along with the flow of other people, not provoke them. It is good to learn by experiencing other practices and ideas that are different from our own. This learning can be limited and even frowned upon when campuses have "safe spaces" that create the idea that saying things that may be taken as harmful should not be said. An atmosphere of fearing a differing opinion that may be harsh to others is created. Any discomfort is declared as out of bounds when challenging your own views and ideas is essential to learning. That is what makes safe spaces less productive for learning.

Jonathan Zimmerman makes his points against safe spaces on college campuses in a new article format. With a new president in office at the time, Donald Trump, provoked heaps of controversy in our own country. Many groups were protesting and rioting about social injustice and inequality still happening in our present state of the country. College is where people start to grow independent and form their own values and beliefs which creates a bigger need now more than ever, with the current events going on in the 2016-2017 area, for people to voice their opinions. College faculty, students, and families all around could be made aware of this argument against safe spaces in his article.

An example from Zimmerman's article is in 2016, students at Occidental College argued that the flag of the United States was endangering them because it was a symbol of

institutionalized violence that also did not promote diversity and equity. If everyone were to protest something that gave them discomfort or had differing views, it would lead to campuses being plain and barren of most monuments or emblems. The only way to be one hundred percent sure nobody would have an issue with any of these emblems would be to have none at all. Learning from other points of view and differing ideas is essential and could be limited by safe spaces.

Zimmerman did a good job of explaining how safe spaces weren't provoking learning at a full potential. Ethos was a heavy appeal in this article because of the use of examples of what is happening in universities, quotes from students and faculty, and other professors on how teaching without a safe space was beneficial. He adds how his own experience of teaching through the Bard Prison Initiative gave him opportunities to have the fullest and freest discussions he's ever held. These incarcerated students were not afraid to speak their mind and give offence leading to a good discussion with ample learning experience. Being witness to violence and crimes helps these students know the difference between actions and words. This is a strong argument that provides a good example of how without safe spaces, discussions are deeper and free, as they should be. A point that can be made against this type of example is that not everyone grows up exposed to violence and knows that actions are more meaningful than words can be. People take offense at different levels which can make it hard to have a full discussion that will go over topics that are discomforting to others. Through safe spaces, people believe that the words themselves are the danger and harm to others that think differently.

The use of examples was successful to lead back to a now, more understood topic of how safe spaces are limiting. Our own understanding and connection to the feelings brought out through a personal experience and survey of others appeals to the pathos rhetorical appeal. Not

everyone will feel the same about the examples, just like how not everyone will feel the same about certain emblems and monuments. A point of view is formed by going through the article and understanding where Zimmerman is coming from. The success is there, through explaining controversial issues through examples.

Many colleges offer inclusive and sensitivity training to encourage an inclusive learning environment. (TBS Staff) This article on what safe spaces are goes over how they are used in colleges and benefit marginalized communities. Zimmerman's points go against the sensitivity aspect of these safe spaces because of how it censors discussions. Safe spaces are beneficial in protecting groups of people that are normally excluded from mainstream culture and allow a non-hate environment. Zimmerman was successful to emphasize how these environments can lead to giving impressions of limiting words. A counter argument to this from Zimmerman is made through examples of personally holding free and thought provoking discussions without any censoring or hold-back of words by people in the discussion. The safe space doctrine holds uncomfortable dialogue to be out of bounds which goes against what advocates of safe spaces promote, protection to speak their minds.

Works cited

Zimmerman, Jonathan. "College Campuses Should Not Be Safe Spaces." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, The Chronicle of Higher Education, 22 July 2020, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/college-campuses-should-not-be-safe-spaces/>.

TBS Staff. "What Is a Safe Space in College?" *TheBestSchools.org*, 24 Mar. 2021, <https://thebestschools.org/resources/safe-space-college/>.