



When Safe Is Not Enough: Creating Brave Spaces at the Libraries

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ABSTRACT

With the Black History Month Read-a-Thon in February 2020, the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee launched its new Brave Spaces program. Based on the Brave Spaces principles laid out by Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens in their work "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces,"¹ and as an extension of last year's Safe Space program developed for the Libraries, Brave Spaces are designed to encourage challenging conversations around principles of "IDEA". The Committee recognizes that tolerance is not enough, that as Library employees we need to move into affirmation and action.

SAFE SPACES

Safe spaces in higher education have traditionally been defined as "faculty, staff, and students can feel secure and free to express themselves, learn, and achieve without censure or harm."²

In 2018, the UMD Libraries launched the "safe and welcoming" platform which came on the heels of the killing of Lt. Collins on campus and the campus surveys where minorities expressed that they did not feel safe on campus.

Safe and Welcoming signage deployed throughout the library, on computer screens and posters. It was also key language in our diversity statement.



BRAVE SPACE PRINCIPLES

IDEA Committee Theme:

We are all in this together

Safe Spaces were expanded in 2013 to create Brave Spaces with the principles:³

- Assume the best intentions
- Time is valuable
- Affirmation
- Wait Time
- Draw expertise from your students
- Check your privilege
- Hold everyone accountable



REFERENCES

- ¹Arao, B., & Clemens, K. (2013). *From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: a new way to frame dialogue around diversity and social justice*. In Landreman, L. (Ed.), *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators* (pp. 135-150). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- ²Wexelbaum, R. (2016). *The library as Safe Space*. In *The Future of Library Space* (Vol. 36, pp. 37-78). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0732-06712016000036002>
- ³Creating a Brave Space for dialogue. Available from https://campfire.org/officeofeducation/amp/offer-creating_a_brave_space.pdf

MOVE TO BRAVE SPACES

The 2020 Black History Month Read-a-Thon hosted by the IDEA Committee at McKeldin Library launched our Brave Spaces campaign, designed to facilitate productive and constructive dialogues around race and racism.



INTRODUCTIONS

(Nneka) Hello welcome to The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) committee's Poster Session --- When Safe Is Not Enough: Creating Brave Spaces at the Libraries ---

(Nneka + Coordinator of Employee Development and Faculty Services and then Tahirah + Subject Liaison for African American Studies and the College of Education, Co-Chair of IDEA Committee)

HISTORY OF SAFE & WELCOMING CAMPAIGN TO BRAVE SPACE ON CAMPUS

(Nneka) In 2018 the Safe and Welcoming Campaign began as the Libraries' response to racial violence on campus and the campus surveys noting many people of color felt "unsafe on campus."

BRAVE SPACES

(Tahirah) We launched the Braves spaces library-wide campaign in February and

used it to kick-off our Black History Month (BHM) program. In promoting the event we asked participants people utilized the concept of Brave spaces to discuss the BHM themes.

(Tahirah) We define Brave Spaces as “a space where participants feel comfortable learning, sharing, and growing. A brave space is inclusive to all races, sexes, genders, abilities, immigration status, and lived experiences. Everyone in the space acknowledges that there may be some discomfort due to discussing topics that may be uncomfortable in nature. In the established brave space, participants honor each other's experiences and opinions---- with respect---- to achieve a place of understanding. The most important part of a brave space is inclusion of all.” **Unquote CREATING A BRAVE SPACE FOR DIALOGUE**

(Tahirah) I would like to thank Jonathan England, Professor and Director of African American Studies, who participated in the library’s Diversity Immersion Institute (DII). He taught a session in campus regarding Brave Spaces (Rest in Power). DII is dedicated to increasing diversity in LIS and is a social justice project.

(Nneka) Acknowledging a brave space is critical when teaching about identity and American values. A brave space allows individuals to express themselves, challenge one another in a positive way, and learn from one another. On the poster there is a link to a facilitator's guide which can be useful for educators as they guide the conversation in a way that encourages respect, inclusion, compassion, and courageous intervention.



Activity

(Tahirah) Today our framework will be centered around Brave spaces. We are going to model with you what a Brave space looks like and ask for your participation. We have a series of images and questions. We ask that you write down your answers. You do not have to share your answers with us but we hope that they will spark future conversations.

(Tahirah)

Question 1: In the wake of the murder of Lt. Richard Collins at UMD and George Floyd from Minnesota, have you had discussions about racism, discrimination and/or white privilege?



Question 2: What does this statement mean to you?



Question 3: Have you had discussions with friends and family about the Black Lives Matter movement? Do you think it's needed in American culture?

An Anti Racist is an individual who opposes racism and promotes racial tolerance



Question 4: How do you envision anti-racist work looking on an institutional level?

Again, my name is **Tahirah Akbar-Williams** and my name is **Nneka Chisholm Edwards**. We hope that this overview of Brave spaces was helpful and you continue to create Brave spaces that will engender substantive dialogue. As you go through your days, challenge yourself and others and discuss the questions posed to you during this session.

Remember, **We are All in this together** ~ Thank you!