

Context:

At your predominantly White institution (PWI), you've witnessed a lot of offensive costumes that perpetuate harmful stereotypes about marginalized groups. You decide to make the "Culture, Not Costume" posters the first campaign of the year. After a few weeks, you start receiving feedback....

Text

Figure

Branding

Text:

Color - some students think that the red lettering is aggressively accusatory, and that you're calling them all racist.

Option 1: Argument

You explain the poster's argument to the students, and let them know that it isn't calling *them* racist, but highlighting how a person from a marginalized group might feel in that specific situation.

Discussion ?s : What does the red emphasis do for the posters argument? Why was red chosen as the emphasis color? Would the poster have had the same reaction with a different color? Why or why not?

Option 2: Creation

The students offer to create their own poster. Same argument, less accusatory.

Discussion ?s : As the RA, do you think students are reacting only to the text color? What else might be "coloring" their perception of the poster? Is their offer to create a new campaign reasonable? Does it address their concerns? What concerns would you have?

Figure (situation 1):

Dismissal - the posters have been up for a few weeks, and you've overheard conversations about how "whiny" and "entitled" they are. A few of the posters have been torn down.

↓

Audience - you think having a conversation with your hall about the purpose of the posters might help.

Discussion ?s : What is the purpose of these posters? What is the argument? Who is the intended audience? Who might the students think the audience is? [reword this]

↓

Parody - A few days after your discussion, you begin to see parody posters pop up all over the hall.

Discussion: What appeal (ethos/pathos/logos) does this parody make? Why might it be successful in derailing the conversation? What discussions could this provide opportunities for? [reword]

Figure (situation 2):

Confusion - a student comes to you genuinely confused about the poster. They don't understand what is happening in the picture, and why it's not okay. It's Halloween, after all - aren't you supposed to be something you're not?

Option 1: History

You explain, briefly, the concept of blackface and its harmful history. The student seems shocked. They don't say anything else, but don't complain about the posters either.

Discussion ?s : What elements of the poster could be missed due to cultural ignorance? What could you do as an RA to preemptively combat this?

Option 2: Holiday Talk

You hold an event for your hall that explains the history of Halloween and why people dress up in costume. You show the offensive costumes, and have the students debate on whether or not they align with the spirit of the holiday. You get them to talk about why people make these kinds of costumes.

Discussion ?s : Does this talk address the visuals in the posters sufficiently? Why/how might this talk be derailed, so that the point of the poster is missed/not discussed?

Branding:

Our Own Work - students respond relatively positively to the poster - a few of them even tell you cringe-worthy stories of costumes they've seen. But the students take issue with using another school's campaign, and volunteer to create their own.

Option 1: Posters

The students create their own posters similar to the "Culture, Not Costume" ones, and get them approved by the Dean of Students.

Discussion ?s : Why might school-specific branding help the credibility of the poster campaign? Why might this backfire?

Option 2: YouTube

With your help, your hall comes together to create a series of YouTube PSAs with a message similar to the "Culture, Not Costume" campaign. The Dean of Students approves them, and agrees to put them up on the Student Activities YouTube account.

Discussion ?s : What would the visual medium of video add to the message? How would branding work with video rather than a poster? Would the branding distract from the message?