

ANTI-RACISM AD CAMPAIGN INVITES OUTRAGE IN WHITE DOMINATED DULUTH



A University campaign to dare and undermine "white privilege" in the white dominated city of Duluth, Minnesota has ignited a wave of condemnation and outrage. The ad shows whites in poor light and portrays them as unjust, dim-witted and immature. The 'Un-Fair Campaign' is sponsored by the University of Minnesota-Duluth, the NAACP, League of Women Voters, the YWCA and the City of Duluth, whose non-white population is in a miniscule minority of 10 percent. The sponsoring coalition hopes their efforts will "result in fundamental, systemic change towards racial justice." The campaign enquires of people, do they really comprehend the privileges of their color of skin, provides them with and do they feel enough guilt for getting benefits, just because they are of a particular hue. The campaigners ask, 'Is White skin really fair skin?' Every poster has a common tagline that says, 'If you see racism, speak up, break the silence. The campaign asks the local citizens to 'learn anti-racist language and behavior' and beseeches them not to tolerate racist behavior and to report abusive, what they call, 'white privilege.' The campaigners are keen to change the demographic make-up of their city as surveys have shown that cities, across the Midwest, with diverse populations are performing better economically. Duluth has a population that is 90 percent white. In the 2010 census only 2 percent of Duluth's 86,265 people identified themselves as black. According to its website, the campaign's intention is to "raise awareness about white privilege in our community, provide resources for understanding and action, and facilitate dialogue and partnership that result in fundamental, systemic change towards racial justice." The posters have some very interesting statements, one reads, 'You give me better jobs, better pay, better treatment, and a better chance - all because of the color of my skin.' The anti-racism drive has posters of white men and women covered in 'Examples of White Privilege', such as 'I can come to my meeting late and not have my lateness attributed to race' and 'We're lucky we don't get stared at every time we walk into a room,' and "We're lucky car doors don't get locked when we walk by." Critics are very critical of the ads and say that they are making a blanket generalization of all white people and branding them all as racists. Phil Pierson who has started a STOP Racist Unfair Campaign wrote in Facebook, "You can't open a discussion on race and hope to see it move in a positive direction when you raise the topic by stereotyping an entire race. It will be perceived as biased and accusatory. Instead of spreading love and togetherness, it spreads animosity and hate, teaches a new generation to point fingers and focus on the color of our skin instead of the idea that we're all human, and we're all in this together." However, fears that this could alienate the majority white community, the University of Duluth released a statement Friday, that although they agreed with the basic principles of the campaign, they found the advertisements "divisive" and expressed reservations over the "creative strategy." "UMD expressed displeasure to the partnership that the PSAs were aired without a chance for our review," the statement said. "We will continue to discuss our concerns with the partnership and will require review of all future campaign materials and efforts to ensure they foster constructive dialogue and do not alienate people in our community." Adding that they were not the only sponsors of the campaign, but part of a 18 group coalition, the university further said, "As a community, we believe it is critical to have a serious discussion about diversity and racial equity. Duluth has had a difficult and long history of challenges regarding racial equity and justice that we have not entirely overcome."

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