

How to Respond to White Supremacist Rallies on Campus

After the racist rally in Charlottesville, there is concern that there will be more rallies on college campuses in the future. Should one come to your area, here are few things to consider as you determine how to respond.

Acknowledge the need for justice and to stand against racism.

Identify Scriptures that can root your InterVarsity group in the biblical value of justice. (ie. Genesis 1:27, Luke 4, Isaiah 61, etc.) In preparation, review resources like *Loving Justice* or *The God of Justice*, two bible study guides from IVP that help you develop a biblical (not just cultural) view of justice. Then, unapologetically make a clear statement against racism.

Call your chapter to commit to fervent, sustained prayer.

This is spiritual warfare. There are strongholds around the idolatry of race and culture that are only defeated by the power and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." —Ephesians 6:12, NIV

Use InterVarsity Proxes prior to (and after) the event to change the campus conversation.

Several proxes address the issue of race directly: Better World, Beyond Colorblind, and Hope proxes. Others (e.g., the Awkward proxe) address how we can have difficult conversations with each other. Several of these come with large group and small group resources.

Encourage students to engage in the public conversation.

Christian students should contribute biblical perspectives in the campus paper and in classes.

Possible responses to a rally on campus.

Students may want to organize another event or to counter-protest. For some students that want to counter-protest, trying to convince them to not attend a counter-protest can invalidate the real pain they are experiencing.

1. **Hold another event.** Consider how you might coordinate with others on campus (both Christian and non-Christian) to ignore white supremacist groups, empty out the surrounding spaces, and make these rallies as disappointingly low-energy by hosting alternative events that reflect our values of hospitality, diversity, inclusion, and justice. The goal: keep the white supremacist groups from receiving attention because of public confrontations with counter-protestors. **These groups are choosing to rally and recruit on college campuses because they want to draw crowds of counter-protestors and generate media attention. Doing so makes their movement more impactful.**

2. **Attend a Counter-Protest.** If students determine they want to participate in counter-protests, you should take the following steps:
 - a. Prepare students spiritually and emotionally. Many have never faced overt hatred or threats of physical violence. How will you prepare them before (and debrief with them afterwards)?
 - b. Prepare students practically. We do not want to contribute to violence (physical, emotional, or verbal). Jesus calls us to respond to hate with love. Alexia Salvatierra always calls folks to pray for those in the midst of standing on the side of injustice. She also recommends singing as a powerful way to diffuse conflict.
 - c. Prepare leaders by consulting with campus security and community security to assess whether they intend to protect counter-protestors from physical confrontations with white supremacist demonstrators and their allies. This should include knowing (a) will security be provided, (b) will there be safety procedures taken (e.g., blocked streets), and (c) will there be an evacuation route identified. You should be clear what those plans are and that should affect how students engage in counter-protests.
 - d. Develop a communications and check-in plan with participants in case the counter-protest is disrupted. How will you alert people to withdraw? Identify how you will check in with each other and where might you meet up so that you know people are safe.