

Allyship – Equity Walked Out

Being an ally looks like something. It's not just a nice feeling. It's the practice of making spaces and building bigger tables. Allyship is the tangible by-product of an individual and organization that is committed to embodying a worldview rooted in gratitude, mutuality and collective flourishing. Allyship is a relational commitment to journey alongside marginalized communities until they can access the dignity and power that is the birthright of all humans.

So if we understand that allyship is a verb, the three "P"s will help us deepen our commitment to this restorative posture.

The Three P's of Allyship

Allyship is Personal

There is no "one size fits all" solution to embodying the principles of Allyship. Depending on each of our unique social locations - status, identities, experience and access to power; our responsibility will take on different shapes and expressions. But ultimately, each person is invited to carefully consider how they will consciously walk out their commitment to Allyship.

The recognition that Allyship is personal, is also a reminder to bring our full selves into the exchange - consciously inviting our minds, bodies and emotions to be present with the range of stories we tell ourselves when our biases are confronted. Oftentimes fear, lack and domination will surface as we unpack the scripts that dominant culture has handed us. Allowing the entirety of our personhood to participate in the practice of Allyship enables each person within our organization to enjoy the concentrated benefits of this posture.

Allyship is Practical

When something is damaged and in need of repair, it requires extra energy and attention. Allyship recognizes that marginalized communities have disproportionately experienced disparity and injustice and seeks to invest energy into repairing the damage of oppression. Repair finds ways to intentionally funnel our privilege and power into elevating and empowering marginalized communities. This energy exchange can take on numerous forms, including:

- **Investing in personal growth through education**

Burdens are built on information. The more we can learn about the impacts, culture and experiences of oppressed individuals, the more we will be able to

show up with empathy and compassion. Content consumption, curious conversation and relationship building are a few ways we can engage in continuous learning.

The other important part of learning is the equally important task of unlearning. This is the process of extracting toxic mindsets, beliefs and worldviews and replacing them with perspectives that are rooted in mutuality and respect. This process is not always easy or enjoyable but is necessary for us to evolve and for our organizations to step into their elevated potential.

- **Leveraging resources to restore equilibrium**

The impacts of oppression over time have resulted in limited access to assets, opportunities, money and platform for marginalized communities.

Because of the opportunities and ease our privilege has afforded us, we have had greater access to building wealth and stepping into opportunity. Finding ways to funnel energy into communities of difference is a practical way to help promote flourishing.

- **Prioritizing relationship building**

The most impactful and mutually beneficial way to grow as an ally is in and through relationships. Relationships create space for trust, understanding and perspective to organically blossom. They foster rapport building, honest exchange and relational equity on the side of both the giver and receiver. The fruit of leaning into our humanity and engaging allyship with our hearts incomes back to us as we are nourished by the fruit of mutual transformation.

Allyship is a Practice

Just like any other skill, our effectiveness and proficiency in the execution of Allyship will develop over time as we apply ourselves and create policies that nurture this culture in our organizations. If we don't stop learning and listening, we will continue to get better at this living practice as it evolves throughout the various seasons of our life.

Within the acknowledgement that we won't be pros at this overnight is an invitation into the practice of curiosity. Curiosity keeps our minds and hearts engaged with the deepening practice of Allyship. It builds off the understanding that as we foster relationships with the people and communities that have been victims of systematic oppression, we will discover new and unique ways to personally support them.

The more we learn and apply what we're learning, the more proficient we will become at spotting gaps and getting creative with how we can support communities in need. When

we understand that Allyship is a personal practice that takes on a practical posture, opportunities to incorporate these principles into our organizations will be endless.

At the heart of Allyship is celebration. Celebration is the public declaration of value. It is an energetic acknowledgement that the receiver is worthy of dignity and delight. It sees the experience, identity and humanity of another and validates it.

Celebration bestows pride. Pride breeds empowerment. And empowerment is the birthplace of collective liberation. In its most evolved and embodied expression, allyship is the joyful celebration of difference that draws us into deeper levels of seeing, supporting and sharing with communities that have traditionally been overlooked and excluded.

Now go personally practice allyship in a practical way!