



Organizational Racial Justice Practices

**Compiled by the Communities of Color Task Force
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These possibilities are listed in no particular order, and are not comprehensive. They provide a starting place for organizations looking to engage more deeply in anti-racism and racial justice work. Please see our website's Anti-Oppression and Equity page or contact us if you want examples of the below or for support implementing any of these practices.

1. Survey/self-assessment of organizational practices
2. Survey/assessment of needs of people of color in your community
3. Reading/self-education on race/racism in your community
4. Revise mission statement to reflect anti-racism, anti-oppression
 - a. This can dovetail into policies and can support anti-racism within the organization as well as with partners (eg, 'this is our mission, how does your work/our collaborative work align with that?')
5. Include anti-racism material in new staff orientation
6. Prioritize anti-oppression and anti-racism training as part of 40-hour training
7. Ongoing racial justice trainings for staff, Board and volunteers
8. Whole organization commitment (staff, Board, volunteers, other stakeholders)
9. At regular meetings ask questions such as 'how has race/racism affected your work this week/month?' and have everyone respond (20-30 min, monthly or quarterly) to help bring racial justice into focus for the entire team
10. Actively make your workplace a safe space for employees and participants to share their experiences of racism (whether internal or external)
11. Create an equity or racial justice committee that meets on a regular basis and is empowered to plan trainings and make policy change recommendations
12. Review demographics of people who have been exited from program
13. Use a decision-making lens or racial justice filters (a short list of questions to review as we make decisions, that helps us be mindful of impacts on communities of color)
14. Whistleblower protection policies (protect employees from retaliation when they have identified problems in the organization)
15. Find out what other organizations are doing; ask for mentorship/partnership
16. Refrain from re-centering whiteness
17. Actively challenge ourselves and our communities around racism and all forms of oppression, not only DV/SA/stalking
18. Practice compassionately interrupting racism with our own kids, family and friends



Phrases for Interrupting Oppressive Remarks

Educate (share information).

“What I know about that word is that it has been used to hurt people.”

“You know, even though it sounds like a compliment when you say ‘Asian people are so smart,’ I think it might not always feel like a compliment. I think it sets up a hard standard – what if you’re Asian and you struggle in school, or don’t feel like you’re smart? The message then is that you’re not a real Asian person if you’re not smart, and that there’s something wrong with you.”

“Really? That hasn’t been my experience with that group of people. Actually, I think it isn’t very useful to make generalizations about groups of people, because people are really quite different. This is what my experience has been...”

“I believe that everyone deserves to be safe. Women are sometimes hurt by other women in relationships, and lots of times they are afraid to talk about it because society has such negative views of lesbians. But I really believe that all people deserve to be safe and respected.”

“In my experience, people prefer to be called ‘Asian’ if you don’t know their specific nationality, rather than ‘Oriental.’ ‘Oriental’ refers to an object (like a rug or vase) and ‘Asian’ refers to people.”

“Often people ask me, ‘why doesn’t she just leave?’ I think that’s victim-blaming, and a more poignant question is, ‘why doesn’t he leave, or why doesn’t he stop abusing her?’”

“Sometimes people tell us stuff about others that isn’t true, or sometimes we get ideas about people before we get to know them. When I have learned is that people are all different. Some people are mean, some are nice, some are scary, and some are safe. The way people look doesn’t mean you can tell what they are like on the inside.”

“What you just said could be perceived as racially biased.”

Stop the behavior. Offer alternatives if you want to.

“What you just said isn’t ok with me. Please don’t say that around me again.”

“I would like you to stop using that word. You could use ____ instead.”

“I’m going to interrupt what you’re saying because you’ve just offended me.”

Present your thoughts – point out what you see happening.

“I noticed that you are talking really negatively about yourself.”

“I noticed that you used the word _____. What did you mean by that?”

“That sounds kind of racist to me.”

“It sounds to me like you’re uncomfortable with her because she’s _____.”

“It seems to me like you’re being pretty judgmental.”

“I’m sure you didn’t mean to offend me, but you did, and let me tell you how...”

“Ouch! I did not like that.”

“I can’t believe you just said that.”

“It surprises me that you think it’s okay to comment on other people’s bodies.”

Ask open-ended questions; get genuinely curious.

“It sounds like you think all _____ people are _____. Can you help me understand how you got to that perspective?”

“What do you mean when you say _____?”

“Can you imagine how what you said might hurt someone’s feelings?”

“Can you say more about what you mean?”

“What does that person’s [race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability] have to do with this conversation? Do you specify if someone is white, heterosexual, or able-bodied?”

“Do you know how that word has been used historically?”

Use humor.

“You know every single person who is _____, and they are all exactly like that?”

[When someone says ‘that’s so gay’ or similar...] “I know, I love it too!!”



Working Definition of Allyship

What is allyship?¹

Allyship is an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating in which a person holding systemic power seeks to end oppressions in solidarity with a group of people who are systemically disempowered.

Since everyone holds systemic power in some areas and lacks it in others, everyone has areas in which they can practice allyship.

How do I practice allyship?

- Listen. For real.
- Respect lived experience. The experts on any form of oppression are the people most directly affected by it, and their analysis of that oppression always takes precedence over the opinions of people who don't experience it.
- Provide unconditional solidarity. That means no "I'd be on your side if you didn't act so angry" (e.g.). You don't get to decide when someone is being too emotional, too rash, too mean, or otherwise undeserving of your support. Your allyship is not a favor that you can retract when someone responds to their oppression in a way you don't like. You just have to be there.
- Don't assume your presence or opinion is desired or necessary. You are not entitled to space in the community you mean to ally with. Show up when you are invited, and gracefully remove yourself when you are not.
- Stand beside, not in front of. Allying with a movement does not mean leading it.
- Provide the forms of support you're asked for, rather than the forms of support you imagine would be helpful. The latter can be condescending or actually a hindrance.
- Respect the history of the resistance movements you're stepping into. Don't act like the party started once you arrived.
- Learn to acknowledge and articulate, without guilt or apology, how oppressive systems operate.²

¹Definition adapted from www.theantioppressionnetwork.wordpress.com/allyship/.

²"Privilege, Allyship, & Safe Space" pamphlet, Multicultural Resource Center, Oberlin College (new.oberlin.edu/dotAsset/2012201.pdf).

- Get ready to make mistakes, because you will. Apologize (briefly, without asking forgiveness), fix it, and move on.
- Don't ask for emotional energy from the group you're allying with. Your feelings do matter, but this is not the space to get your feelings validated. The group is not obligated to like you, thank you, feel sorry for you, or forgive you.
- Don't treat the group you mean to ally with as homogenous. If one person shares their experiences with you or asks for your support in a particular way, don't assume they're speaking for the whole group.
- Interrupt stuff. There is no neutral under oppression.
- Teach other people with your privileges how to practice better allyship.
- Don't try to speak for people in the group you mean to ally with. Instead, help boost the visibility of their own work (e.g., instead of making a documentary about their experiences, figure out if they have already done work to document and share their own experiences, and offer to publicize that work more).
- Don't refer to yourself as an ally. "Ally" is not a status that can be concretely attained. Allyship is a process that requires constant work. Only the people you mean to ally with can accurately assess how you're doing at it (but don't ask them for kudos!!!!).³
- Practice allyship because none of us are free until all of us are free. Show up for collective liberation (yours and theirs), not to help.
- Don't expect to take breaks from allyship. People in the group you mean to ally with don't have a choice about whether or not they're going to deal with that form of oppression today. Neither do you.⁴

⁴Mia McKenzie, "No More 'Allies,'" in *Black Girl Dangerous on Race, Queerness, Class and Gender* (2014).

⁵Jamie Utt, "So You Call Yourself an Ally: 10 Things All 'Allies' Need to Know," on everydayfeminism.com (2013).