

HOW TO BE AN ALLY BLACK LIVES MATTER



PURPOSE:

This handout is a starting point for individuals searching for ways to better identify and align with their peers, colleagues and the community they serve. This handout will provide you with some information that may help to reveal information you may or may not have known before. We encourage you to continue evolving your own personal knowledge in addition to the bite-size information provided here.

WHERE TO BEGIN:

To be an ally means to have an active and ongoing, committed practice of unlearning and re-educating oneself in order to stand in solidarity with others who have been dis-empowered. This must be established in order to counter the oppressors and help the oppressed to move forward in solidarity.

KEY STEP 1: EMBRACE INTERNAL FEELINGS

Be comfortable with feeling uncomfortable. Learn how to better understand different cultures by asking the question you may not know, or feel is something you “should know.” For example, first become more knowledgeable of the general history behind individuals, in general, from other cultures or backgrounds that are different from yours. Additionally, try starting your questions with different opening phrases such as: “I’d like to better understand something related to your culture” or “I have been exposed to some information, but I

would like to know based on your experience, how do you feel about....”

These phrases will help the receiver understand that you do not know and are genuinely asking to better understand them as an individual.

KEY STEP 2: VERBIAGE MATTERS

Be aware of the verbiage you are using and the tone in which you use that verbiage as well. For example, when speaking with individuals that are different from yourself, speak to those individuals as though you do not know anything, regardless of what you “think” you may currently know at that time.

For example, while in conversation, avoid demanding tones and leverage a tone of curiosity that ends in a question format, such as: “From your experience...”, “Can you help me better understand...”, “How would you say this..... if you were me, from the outside looking in”?

KEY STEP 3: BODY LANGUAGE SPEAKS VOLUMES

Remain aware of your non-verbal cues and gestures when speaking and listening to other individuals. Non-verbal cues can be related to your facial expressions, crossing your arms, or hands on your hip, and more. At times, silence can be louder than words.

In light of Black or African American History Month, we would also like to provide you with a list of both past and present heroes you may or may not be aware of, just to name a very few:

- Ruby Bridges (still alive today!)
- Shirley Chisholm.
- Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.
- Frederick Douglass
- Legendary Leader: Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Thurgood Marshall
- Rosa Parks
- Denmark Vesey
- Sojourner Truth
- Bessie Coleman
- Serena Jameka Williams
- Mary Fields
- Claudette Colvin
- Harriet Tubman
- Octavius V. Catto
- Phillis Wheatley
- Muddy Waters
- Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander
- Maya Angelou
- Arthur Ashe
- Nipsey Huddle
- Harriet Jacobs
- Cecil B. Moore
- Nina Simone
- Big Mama Thornton
- And MORE!