



**We are
Called**

TO HEAL. TO UNITE. TO JUSTICE.

Team Reflection

No. 22: Allies in Eradicating Racism and Building Justice

Some say that racism is a white person's problem. After all, the attitudes, views, and actions of white and privileged individuals have resulted in the systemic structures of injustice experienced by people of color. At the same time, destructive behaviors, policies, and words impact everyone in a community. They tear apart the fabric that binds all peoples together.

Reconciliation always entails acknowledgment by the wrongdoer as the beginning of a healing process. Like wounds in the human body, some things heal slower than others, requiring special treatments and therapies. Among the actions to repair and eradicate racism are white people of privilege intentionally standing as allies with and alongside people of color.

An article in Forbes magazine describes allies as "any person that actively promotes and aspires to advance the culture of inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people as a whole." [22.1] Anyone can be an ally. As our communities reflect ever-greater diversity of peoples and lived experiences, any individual can become an ally for another. White men can be allies for women and people of color. Straight people can be allies for individuals in the gay community. Black leaders can be allies for immigrants and refugees, or Latinas can be allies for an Asian neighbor or an Alaska Native in their community. People of faith in one community can be allies for an individual of a different religious tradition.

Various characteristics and actions can identify an ally. First, allies listen - and they listen generously to the experiences of the other. They not only allow ample opportunity to bring diverse voices forward, they listen to learn, rather than defend. By listening, they glean insights underneath the present story that may illuminate a different view of the workplace or society, for example.

Second, building from the skill of listening, allies actively solicit feedback. This can be especially effective among diverse individuals represented among one's team or organization. Third, allies take responsibility for their own actions, and acknowledge their own biases and the privileges they enjoy.

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Lastly, allies speak up and advocate for others, especially when someone with privilege expresses harmful and unacceptable comments or ideas about others. When this occurs, it may be a pivotal moment for one who has accepted the role of ally. [22.2] The best of allies are those who sponsor the advancement of another.

Catholic health care would not exist to the extent it does today in the U.S. without countless allies. Nearly all founding congregations of women and men religious have stories of a courageous individual who advocated for others. St. Marianne Cope, OSF, took her healthcare experience to Hawaii to care and advocate for the people living in a distant and marginalized leper colony. St. Katharine Drexel used her inherited wealth and privilege for courageous initiatives addressing social injustices experienced by African Americans and Native Americans. In the 1960s Fr. Maurice Ouellet was the first white resident in Selma, Alabama to openly support justice for African Americans. [22.3] And in the late-1980s Sister Carol Baltosiewich, an ICU and ER nurse returned to her hometown of Belleville, Illinois to care for gay men dying of AIDS. A journalist wrote how she “learned to be an ally, to join in the fight for justice.” [22.3]

All those working in Catholic health facilities today have the opportunity to be an ally, not only for the sick in our care, but also for those in communities most affected by the injustices of racism and other prejudices.

Consider

- Who have been allies for me in my life and in my professional journey? What specific things did they do that let me know they supported me in a unique way?
- Have I ever acted as an ally to someone of a different race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or ability? If so, recall what it felt like to advocate for another? If not, can I identify why not or what has held me back?

Let us pray together,

O God, creator of all peoples

whose loving embrace includes every race, nation, language, culture, and tribe.

Your prophets of old used their word and deed

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*to proclaim justice in the midst of political strife,
to encourage and raise up those burdened by injustices,
to comfort the weary, the forgotten, the frail and frightened.
Stir within us a calling to follow their example,
to plant the seeds of your divine justice
in our workplaces and ministries
in our neighborhoods and communities,
and in our hearts, and the hearts of our children.
May we wait no longer for others to take the first steps,
rather, accompanied by your Spirit,
may we be the advocates constructing new structures of peace and justice.
May all we do reflect your just and abiding love among our human family
today, tomorrow, and forever. AMEN.*

[22.1] <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shereatcheson/2018/11/30/allyship-the-key-to-unlocking-the-power-of-diversity/?sh=7e24dcde49c6>

[22.2] <https://hbr.org/2020/11/be-a-better-ally> Also:
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/startswithabang/2019/10/25/6-steps-everyone-can-take-to-become-an-ally-in-white-male-dominated-workplaces/?sh=33232a7349fd>

[22.3] <https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/54-miles-freedom-catholics-were-prominent-1965-selma-march>

[22.4] <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-catholic-nun-who-came-to-new-york-to-confront-the-aids-crisis>