

How to Be Real: Accomplices, Allies and Anti-Oppression

Created by: Power Shift Network members - New York Communities for Change, RYSE Youth Council and 350 DC

Workshop level: Intermediate - Attendees should already have a working knowledge of privilege and oppression

Time: 90 Minutes

Suggested audience size: 50-70

Suggested room arrangement:

- Room large enough to for a of 50-70 people comfortably - this is especially important for the privilege walk activity
- 50-70 Chairs in a circle for the large group discussion - people can move their chairs when you split into small groups

Needs/Materials

- 2-3 Speakers (See the “story-sharing” part of this workshop for details)
- 8-10 small group facilitators (See “small group discussion” part of this workshop for details)
- At least 1 sticky note for everyone in the room
- Flip chart or butcher paper
- Tape
- Markers

WORKSHOP OUTLINE/AGENDA

Intros and framing the space and our objectives (10 minutes)

- Welcome and thank everybody. Then have a facilitator frame the space: This space is for folks who already have some sort of understanding of privilege and oppression and who are already committed to creating a more equitable and just movement. Here are some of our objectives:
 - **This is a space to:**
 - To learn and explore the framework of being an ally and an accomplice
 - To learn examples and tools for how those with privilege can show up and build solidarity with the oppressed as an accomplice
 - To give voice to historically disenfranchised people who are already leaders in this movement

- For descendants of colonizers and people with privilege to listen and learn from what they're hearing rather than dictate the conversation
 - **This is not necessarily a space to:**
 - Get into the details of oppressive systems and the root causes of injustice
 - offer a list of readings/resources to people (like any of the resources in the Power Shift Network Anti-Oppression Curriculum and Resource Bank)
 - Dive deep into guilt of privileged people
- Have a facilitator go over and write some ground rules and take input from the group. Make sure to prepare some ground rules already written to start the conversation. Some examples include:
 1. Listen actively to what others are saying
 2. Respect the people chosen to facilitate the discussion
 3. Share the air – let other people who haven't spoken contribute before you speak a second or third time
 4. Don't make assumptions about people's motives and ask clarifying questions if someone says something that you find confusing
 5. Try to understand the arguments being made in an article first before listing what is missing - and keep in mind that a single article can't say everything
 6. Chatham House Rules
 - 7+. Get input from 4-5 group members

Use an interactive activity to get people in right frame of thinking about privilege, oppressive systems and justice (15 minutes).

- We would recommend starting with a privilege walk:
 - Have everyone line up in a single line across the room
 - **INSTRUCTIONS:** Announce that you will be reading a series of statements asking folks to step forward or back based on if they identify with the statement or not. (Example statements are given at the end of this workshop outline). Make it clear that if a person does not feel comfortable indicating whether or not they identify with a statement that they do not have to move. This activity is for reflection only, not to shame or guilt anyone based on the privilege they have or do not have. The activity can be powerful to: Reflect on how privilege manifests in everyday life, think about who is overrepresented in the room or in our movement, who is underrepresented?
 - **NOTE:** Some questions in this activity may be a trigger for some people in the room. Take care to respond to the atmosphere in the room. Thank people for

their vulnerability if they decide to open up. Be respectful and appreciative if people are honest that they do not feel comfortable being vulnerable. Remind the room that this activity is meant for reflection and not to expose or guilt anybody based on their privilege or lack thereof.

- **Example statements for the privilege walk activity are given at end of this workshop outline.**
- Follow up the activity with a short debrief/discussion. Example discussion questions include:
 - What are some initial reactions to this activity? How did this activity make you feel?
 - Were there any statements that you never considered before?
 - Were there any statements that especially resonated with you?
 - What question made you think most? If you could add a question, what would it be?
 - How can your understanding of your privileges or marginalizations improve your existing relationships with yourself and others?

Ally Vs. Accomplice (10 minutes)

- **Intro to this section:**
 - Ask the room if anybody has heard of the term ally? The term accomplice? The term co-conspirator?
 - State that this session is not necessarily to tell you which terms are right or wrong, but rather explore the meaning of these terms and how you can use them in your organizing work, activism or everyday life. There are many ways that people have described these terms, so let's try to arrive at some sort of collective definition by discussing these quotes:
- **Present these quotes written on large pieces of flip-chart paper. Go around the room and ask for volunteers to read each of the quotes out loud to the group.**
 - "If you come here to help me, you're wasting your time. If you come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." - Lilla Watson
 - The risks of an ally who provides support or solidarity (usually on a temporary basis) in a fight are much different than that of an accomplice. When we fight back or forward, together, becoming complicit in a struggle towards liberation, we are accomplices - [Indigenous Action Media](#)
 - "And that's part of the problem is that so many of us are not willing to lose anything, and we're not willing to stand up and we're not willing to tell that truth in the difficult situation, and we have to recognize that's where change happens"
- **Discussion questions for the group:**

- What are some initial reactions to these quotes?
- Are there any words that particularly stick out in one or more of these quotes?
- Do you see any similarities in the quotes? Differences?
- What are some themes presented by these quotes? (Examples: sacrifice, loss, liberation, togetherness, truth.)
- Why do you think we chose these quotes to give more context to the term accomplice?

Story sharing from 2-3 prepared speakers (15 minutes)

- **Speakers take turns talking about an experience where an oppressed community or organization representing this community led a campaign/project/action and people/organizations with privilege effectively supported them as accomplices and followed their lead**
 - Make this section more intimate by having the speakers be a part of the group rather than in front of the group.
- **Make sure the speakers include:**
 - What were some of the challenges working between the groups - both for the community leading the campaign and the community showing up to support
 - Why was their campaign/project/action successful
 - How can their example apply more broadly to how communities can work together and organize more effectively with one another?

Small Group Discussions - Drawing from the panelist stories, what do people think it means to be an ally? To be an accomplice? (35 minutes)

- Split up the room into small groups of 8-12
- Each group should have at least **1 small group moderator** trained and prepared in advance to keep time and facilitate the conversation
- **Small group moderators should facilitate the discussion:**
 - Go around the circle for introductions - where are you from, pronouns, org affiliations
 - Reiterate some relevant norms:
 - Move up move back
 - Challenge the idea not the person
 - Reiterate relevant goals:
 - To arrive at an understanding of what an accomplice is
 - Do not dwell on mistakes of the past or guilt but DO get ideas and examples of how to organize better

- Make personal commitments for being an accomplice based on what you heard from the panel and what we discuss in this circle
- **Discussion guide and guiding questions for the small group:**
 - What are your reactions to the panelists/what resonated with you? (hearing the group members' reactions will allow you to gauge where the group is at in terms of understanding how to be an accomplice)
 - Why are the stories of the speakers important?
 - How do their stories and actions relate to the framework of ally vs accomplice?
 - How did the speakers call upon others to act as accomplices? OR How do you think the speakers act(ed) as accomplices?
 - Steer the conversation towards a broader analysis of the political moment. An example question could be: Why is it important that we act as accomplices and not just allies given the current administration and attacks on communities of color and frontline communities of the climate crisis?
- **Commitment activity**
 - In the same small groups have everyone go around and share how they can be an accomplice in work they're doing back home
 - Ask them to write down their commitments on a post-it that they will keep

Closing - sharing resources & next steps (5 minutes)

- Thank the group for their time and willingness to share!
- Let them know that this workshop is not the end of the conversation, but rather part of a series of conversations and actions that need to happen for us to show up better for people at the frontlines of the climate crisis.
- **Resources to share with the group:**
 - [Power Shift Network Anti-Oppression Curriculum and Resource Bank](#) - Feel free to share with anyone and everyone
 - If they want to continue having similar discussions with peers join the Power Shift Network Slack communication tool and join the #Anti-Oppression channel by going to: powershiftnetwork.herokuapp.com

STATEMENTS FOR THE PRIVILEGE WALK ACTIVITY

*F = “Step forward if”

*B = “Step backwards if”

- **F:** It was assumed from a young age that you would go to college
- **F:** Your parents and grandparents were able to purchase or rent housing in any neighborhood they could afford
- **B:** You took out loans to pay for your education
- **F:** Growing up your family had more than one car
- **F:** Growing up you traveled outside of the country for vacation
- **F:** You have access to reliable public transportation
- **B:** Asthma is prevalent in your community
- **F:** You were taught about the science of climate change at home or in school
- **B:** You had more than 30 or more kids per teacher in grade school
- **B:** You are supporting (or are expected to support) your parents or other family members financially
- **F:** You own a bike
- **F:** You have public parks within walking distance from where you live
- **B:** You have been impacted by a chemical and/or oil spill
- **F:** You never think twice about calling the police when trouble occurs
- **B:** Your house has been or needs to be treated for lead
- **B:** You or your family have ever been forced to move
- **F:** You have ever been camping for leisure
- **B:** You do not see wide, fair representation of people who look like you in the media (TV, movies, news etc.)
- **F:** You can drink your tap water
- **F:** Schools in your community teach about your race and heritage and present it in positive ways