

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

["Can't view the email? Click here."](#)



Thank you for walking through your race and equity journey with the MRPA Race and Equity Advisory Committee. Today's email helps us understand and challenges us to move from allyship to accomplice to co-conspirator!

This 4 minute video shares clearly how people can use their privilege to speak up and stand next to those who may not have a voice.

<https://criticalmediaproject.org/racial-discrimination-white-privilege-and-standing-up-to-systemic-inequality-joy-degruy-a-trip-to-the-grocery-store/>

The Differences Between Allies, Accomplices & Co-Conspirators May Surprise You

Dr. Tiffany Jana

<https://aninjusticemag.com/>

There was a time when being considered an ally was a compliment. In the context of racial justice, white allyship was an aspirational status. Yet, as the collective consciousness about the unconscionable atrocities against Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) expands, allyship is no longer enough.

Allyship—The thinking and learning stage

In today's world, an ally is mostly someone who believes in the equal rights of all people, or a specific group of people. An ally is someone who supports equal justice in theory — often with thoughts and prayers, and sometimes with words in small group settings. I believe that contemporary allyship remains entirely too personal and self-centered. You can be an ally and do nearly nothing. If the boundaries of your allyship extend to reading, learning, watching, and privately discussing the much-deserved freedoms of others — that's a great first step. BIPOC allies read books by authors of color to deepen their understanding of racial inequities. LGBTQIA+ allies memorize the acronym and endure the mental acrobatics of requesting and navigating pronouns. They also solidly understand the differences between the acronym's representative identities. Allies begin to level up the more they start speaking up about these ideas, especially in mixed company when people actively disagree or remain clueless about justice issues. Posting supportive and informative content on social media is nice, but it's not enough. Ally privilege is the ability to care about social justice issues without actually showing up and doing anything about it. A privileged ally often lacks deep, authentic relationships with people in the demographics they "support."

Accomplice—The reactive response

Accomplices actively work to dismantle systems of oppression. They have passed through the initial phase of allyship and done the requisite work of learning and understanding their roles in upholding unjust structures. Accomplices flip the dynamic and use what they've learned and whatever access they have to help course correct systemic bias. [I've written extensively on how to do this in the context of racial justice](#) on Medium, and [social justice broadly in my books](#). Accomplices begin to tap their [privilege](#) (any personal advantage—earned or unearned—that makes your life easier) in service of justice. Some accomplices disrupt and interrogate institutional bias without having access to or relationships with colleagues of color. Being an accomplice is strengthened by underrepresented demographic proximity, but it's not impossible in its absence.

Co-conspirator—The proactive phase

Co-conspirators work alongside the communities they support. They have, seek, and create meaningful relationships with the people they actively support. Co-conspirators show up with (not just for) BIPOC people and/or LGBTQIA+ folks and they listen. They do not co-opt the cause, instead, they respect the work already being done by leaders in justice spaces and offer meaningful support. Co-conspirators are not trying to be saviors and do not fancy themselves superior to the people they work alongside. Instead, they are conscious of their privilege and they use it as fuel to help erode barriers that are tougher for affected constituencies to surmount. Co-conspirators ask how they can show up for the people already doing the work and they leverage their privilege in service of freedoms that they already enjoy. I believe what separates co-conspirators from allies is the willingness to put yourself on the line. Whether it's assets, reputation, time, connections or other resources—co-conspirators always have skin in the game.

The journey

As you move along the continuum from allyship to co-conspirator, know that there will be setbacks. You will make mistakes all along the way—but that should not stop you. Remember that the people you aspire to empower and help liberate, don't get the choice to opt out. We live with systemic injustice that affects us and the people we love, every single day. When you mess up, apologize and do better next time. Nurture your own cultural humility and learn from your missteps, then show up again. Remember that being called-in is a sacred gift. When someone from a protected group makes you aware of a gap in your cultural fluency, we are putting ourselves on the line in service of your liberation and growth. People who don't hold you accountable, likely don't believe in your capacity to be a better person, or the risk to themselves isn't worth their effort. You will never evolve past your growing edges if no one tells you when you've slipped up, so be gracious and learn as you go.

Here are some other resources to help you on your journey.

- Watch: [Go further than being an ally, be an accomplice for a change](#)
- Watch: [How to Be An Antiracist](#)
- Read: [Your Black Colleagues May Look Like They Are Okay – Chances Are They Are Not](#)
- Read: [A Sociologist Examines The "White Fragility" That Prevents White Americans From Confronting Racism](#)

The MRPA Race and Equity Advisory Committee will send articles, images, and quotes to help you move through your race equity journey. Let's learn, grow, and evolve together!