

Opportunities for White People in the Fight for Racial Justice

Moving from Actor → Ally → Accomplice¹



The chart below, very much a work in progress, has been developed to support White people to act for racial justice. It draws from ideas and resources developed mostly by Black, Brown and People of Color, and has been edited² by Black, Brown, and People of Color. I recognize that categorizing actions under the labels of Actor, Ally, and Accomplice is an oversimplification, but hopefully this chart challenges all of us White folks to go outside of our comfort zones, take some bigger risks, and make some more significant sacrifices because this is what we've been asked to do by those most impacted by racism, colonialism, patriarchy, white supremacy, xenophobia, and hyper-capitalism. I believe that for real change to occur, we must confront and challenge all people, policies, systems, etc., that maintain privileges and power for White people.

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STEP 1:

Identify the racial justice organizations in your area. Here are two lists of organizations ([Black Led Racial Justice Organizations](#) & [A Partial Map of Black-Led Black Liberation Organizing](#)) mostly led by “directly impacted” individuals (people who are most impacted by racist, xenophobic, and violent people/policies) and with missions to directly challenge institutionalized racism and White supremacy.

¹ When Malcolm X was asked how white people could be allies and accomplices with Black people in 1964, he responded: “By visibly hovering near us, they are ‘proving’ that they are ‘with us.’ But the hard truth is this isn’t helping to solve America’s racist problem. The Negroes aren’t the racists. Where the really sincere white people have got to do their ‘proving’ of themselves is not among the black victims, but out on the battle lines of where America’s racism really is — and that’s in their home communities; America’s racism is among their own fellow whites. That’s where sincere whites who really mean to accomplish something have got to work.”

² Thank you also to Bree Picower, Lauren Morse, Maureen Benson, Tanya Friedman, and other White people for their input and feedback

STEP 2:

Understand the distinction between Actors, Allies, and Accomplices.

Actor

The actions of an Actor do not disrupt the status quo, much the same as a spectator at a game, both have only a nominal effect in shifting an overall outcome. Such systems are challenged when actors shift or couple their actions with those from Allies and/or Accomplices.

The actions of an Actor do not explicitly name or challenge the pillars of White supremacy which is necessary for meaningful progress towards racial justice.

There is an excellent quote by Lilla Watson on need for Actors to shift to Accomplices: *"If you have come here to help me, you're wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."*

Ally

Ally is typically considered a verb - one needs to act as an ally, and can not bestow this title to themselves.

The actions of an Ally have greater likelihood to challenge institutionalized racism, and White supremacy. An Ally is like a disrupter and educator in spaces dominated by Whiteness.

An Ally might find themselves at a social gathering in which something inappropriate is being talked about. Instead of allowing that space to incubate Whiteness, the Ally wisely disrupts the conversation, and takes the opportunity to educate those present.

Being an Ally is not an invitation to be in Black and Brown spaces to gain brownie points, lead, take over, or explain. Keep in mind that as White people, whether as an Actor, Ally or Accomplice, we are still part of the 'oppressor class'. This means we have to be very creative in flipping our privilege to help Black, Brown and Indigenous peoples.

Allies constantly educate themselves, and do not take breaks.

Franchesca Ramsey's Video: [5 Ways of Being an Ally](#)

Accomplice

The actions of an Accomplice are meant to directly challenge institutionalized racism, colonization, and White supremacy by blocking or impeding racist people, policies, and structures.

Realizing that our freedoms and liberations are bound together, retreat or withdrawal in the face of oppressive structures is not an option.

Accomplices' actions are informed by, directed and often coordinated with leaders who are Black, Brown First Nations/Indigenous Peoples, and/or People of Color.

Accomplices actively listen with respect, and understand that oppressed people are not monolithic in their tactics and beliefs.

Accomplices aren't motivated by personal guilt or shame.

Accomplices build trust through consent and being accountable - this means not acting in isolation where there is no accountability.

STEP 3:

Commit to taking 3 actions in the next month, and share these with a trusted friend, colleague, or family member in order to increase your accountability to follow through on your commitment. Can you take at least one action in the next two weeks in the Ally or Accomplice category?

Where Do You Want To Start?



Your Protesting



Your Money



Your White Communities



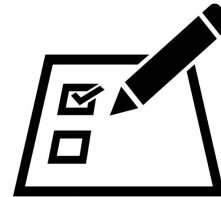
Your Advocacy



Your Job



Your Time / Volunteering



Your Vote / Electoral Politics



Interrupting Violence/Intimidation



Your Self-Education



Your Children







Your Art







Your Home

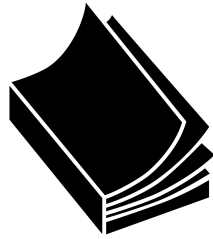
| | Actor | Ally | Accomplice | |
|--|--|--|---|---|
|  <p>Protesting</p> | <p>Attend marches, vigils that are “comfortable” and perhaps even fun. Includes most events led by White people.</p> | <p>Organize protests that interrupt “business as usual” and force other white people to confront / recognize the comfort we live with. If these actions are not forcing other White people to experience some discomfort, they are comparable to those in the Actor category. The exception could be getting other White people who normally don’t attend such events to show up for anything.</p> | <p>Engage in or support civil disobedience organized by Black People and People of Color.</p> <p>One of the most important things that can be done as an Ally and Accomplice is be cautious on how you take up space at direct actions and protests. Ask yourself these series of questions before and while attending such events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I following what the leadership is asking of me? • Am I directing media to designated Black, Brown or Indigenous People? • Am I being cautious not to control or criticize the actions of Black, Brown, or Indigenous Peoples? • Am I checking other White People for not being good accomplices? | <p>Check out The Ruckus Society to learn a lot more about Direct Action and Civil Disobedience.</p> <p>White anti-racist organizers at the Catalyst Project will keep you educated and updated with lots of opportunities for action.</p> |

| | Actor | Ally | Accomplice | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
|  <p>Your Money</p> | <p>Donate to political candidates or organizations that don't have an explicit racial justice mission or that are not led by directly impacted individuals</p> | <p>Donate money explicitly to organizations with an explicit racial justice mission, led by directly impacted individuals. Also donate to bail funds for Black, Brown and Indigenous activists.</p> <p>Use your economic capital to support businesses owned by people of Color. Boycott companies owned by or working with Trump and other White supremacists. Be public (ex. on social media) about your actions to encourage other White people to join you to amplify your impact</p> <p>Educate yourself on issues such as reparations, returning stolen land, and Black, Brown and Indigenous Labor and their relationship to capitalism. Use this as a lens to help guide your actions involving money.</p> | <p>Raise funds and bundle money for organizations with an explicit racial justice mission, led by directly impacted individuals. Raise money publicly, but donate more silently, as this is not for boosting your ego.</p> <p>Find ways of using your privilege and access to capital and funnel that to Black, Brown, and Indigenous grassroots organizations and peoples.</p> | |
|  <p>Your White Communities</p> | <p>Reach out to other White people in your life (family members, old friends, distant social media connections) to engage them in conversations about racism, Whiteness, etc. Bonus points for seeking out and engaging (White) Trump voters in your personal networks.</p> | <p>Organize and engage White friends, family members, neighbors to take group / collective action (actions that are in the Ally or Accomplice category) to amplify your impact.</p> <p>Participate in organizations that engage White people in the struggle to advance racial justice (like SURJ - Showing Up for Racial Justice)</p> | <p>Coordinate (and pay for) organizations that conduct anti-racism trainings to facilitate their workshops within your school, church/synagogue, neighborhood, workplace.</p> <p>Purposefully disrupt White spaces, meaning, create discomfort in places where other White people and <i>Whiteness</i> would otherwise exist in comfort. White community is a support pillar of White supremacy.</p> | <p>Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)</p> <p>Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere (AWARE)</p> <p>Border Crossers (school based)</p> |



| | Actor | Ally | Accomplice | |
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|  <p>Your Advocacy</p> | <p>Make phone calls and send emails (at the city/state level, with school districts, etc.) advocating on behalf of policies being put forth by racial justice organizations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're His Problem Now - calling sheet guide | <p>Attend meetings, hearings, and other public events to advocate in person on behalf of policies being put forth by racial justice organizations.</p> | <p>Diversify your social media. Follow radical/progressive Black, Brown, Indigenous figureheads and leaders in the movement. Then do your best to share and amplify their voice with your white social circles. This is a great way to culture shift ideas, art, and media.</p> <p>In quoting Amanda Gelender: <i>“Amplifying voices of color to your network is an important part of solidarity work. We are not the experts on race, but we have an opportunity to learn from so many experts and boost their influence.”</i></p> | |
|  <p>Your Job</p> | <p>Any job that doesn't somehow challenge institutionalized racism.</p> | <p>A job that is service-oriented towards helping people from marginalized backgrounds.</p> <p>Be extremely cautious of these jobs, because they can easily have very negative impacts on the communities they espouse to serve. Too many organizations slip into a dominant role, and only end up enabling/ harming disenfranchised communities instead of alleviating the oppressive conditions that prevent the community from empowering themselves.</p> <p>Use your job position to help Black, Brown, and Indigenous People. Ex: purposefully seek out Black and Brown people to interview for jobs, and use Black caterers, or Indigenous speakers.</p> | <p>A job that involves organizing internally and externally to fight against institutionalized racism and white supremacy and/or that supports these efforts.</p> <p>In other words, your work should focus on alleviating the oppressive conditions that prevent disenfranchised communities from empowering themselves.</p> <p>The reality is ANY job you already have or choose to apply for, you can use your position to become a collaborator with Black, Brown and Indigenous Peoples; and thus a traitor to White supremacy.</p> | |

| | Actor | Ally | Accomplice | |
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|  <p>Your Time / Volunteerism</p> | <p>Volunteer at a service-oriented organization (tutoring, meal delivery, collecting canned goods, clothing drives)</p> | <p>Volunteer at a local racial justice-focused organization (see resources here)</p> | <p>Join an organization with an explicit aim of naming and disrupting racial injustice</p> | |
|  <p>Electoral Politics</p> | <p>Vote for Democrats. Exception could be voting for candidates of color in elections where a White person and a person of Color are running for the same position from the same political party.</p> | <p>Donate to campaigns of progressive people of Color running for political offices.</p> <p>Donate to campaigns of local progressive politicians in other cities/States who are trying to unseat incumbent Republicans/conservatives.</p> | <p>Actively fundraise for and campaign on behalf of progressive/radical politicians (especially non-White people), including those running in local elections (school boards, transportation agencies, housing authorities, city councils).</p> <p>Volunteer with and fundraise for organizations led by directly impacted individuals to support voter registration efforts within their communities. Don't tell Black, Brown and Indigenous People how or whom to vote for. Use your energy and resources to organize White communities to support progressive/radical politicians and policies.</p> | |

| | Actor | Ally | Accomplice | |
|--|--|--|--|---|
|  <p>Confronting Violence, Intimidation, and Micro-Agressions</p> | <p>Use proximity (stand close and watch) when you observe any form of intimidation, harassment, or violence against a person of Color by another white person or police officer.</p> | <p>Film any such confrontations.</p> <p>Shout as a way to try to stop such a confrontation.</p> <p>Engage White people in conversation about their actions (perhaps focusing on intent v. impact) when you observe or hear about racialized microaggressions.</p> | <p>Physically intervene in such confrontations.</p> <p>Here's how to respond if you see a Hijab getting pulled off.</p> <p>Here's another illustrated guide for directly challenging/interrupting Islamophobia</p> | |
|  <p>Your Children</p> | <p>Ensure that the reading material you provide for your children explicitly addresses issues of justice and equity. Expose children to books, movies, and TV that feature people of Color as protagonists and heroes. Enroll in public, district-run schools, not private or charter schools.</p> | <p>1) Take your young (age 0-16) children to events where adults (people of Color and other white people) are speaking about racism, violence against communities of Color, white supremacy, etc. 2) Talk with your children about these issues explicitly, including where they/you fit into these systems including the privileges they occupy.</p> <p>2) Organizing and educating other people's children to develop critical consciousness (like a great teacher might do)</p> | <p>Take <u>your</u> children to events, or organize events, where facilitators explicitly work with kids to explore intersection between race, power, privilege, etc.</p> | <p>Abundant Beginnings - Child Activism</p> <p>40 Children's Books About Human Right & Social Justice</p> <p>Using Their Words: Social Justice Children's Literature</p> <p>Raising Race Conscious Children</p> |



**Your
Self-
Education**

| | Actor | Ally | Accomplice | |
|--|--|---|---|--|
|  <p>Your Art</p> | <p>Consume (enjoy, purchase) art, in all forms, produced by non-white people. Could include attending performances, choosing specific movies and documentaries, etc. (See Self-Education above).</p> | <p>Create visual art, poetry, films, websites, social media campaigns, etc., that address what you see as the role for white people in struggles for racial justice</p> | <p>Organize and fund opportunities for people from directly impacted communities to share their art.</p> | |
|  <p>Your Home</p> | <p>Put up signs in your windows, on your lawn, inside, like a Black Lives Matter poster</p> | <p>Make your home available to organizers who need safe, accessible, welcoming spaces to meet, plan actions, etc.</p> | <p>Provide free housing (do you have an extra bedroom?) to activists, organizers, or educators of Color</p> | |

Additional Facebook pages to “Like” that are written/edited by Black, Brown and Indigenous people and have a focus on racial justice:

- [Colorlines](#)
- [ColorOfChange.org](#)
- [For Harriet](#)
- [The BlackOut Collective](#)
- [Everyday Feminism](#)
- [Urban Cusp](#)
- [Black Girl Dangerous](#)
- [Darkmatter](#)
- [HuffPost Black Voices](#)
- [Black Lives Matter Bay Area](#)
- [Michelle Alexander](#)
- [Brittney C Cooper, Ph.D.](#)
- [Crunk Feminist Collective](#)
- [Rahiel Tesfamariam](#)
- [The Root](#)
- [Trans Women of Color Collective of Greater New York](#)
- [Audre Lorde Project](#)
- [Black Girls Code](#)

(Thanks to <https://medium.com/@agelender/6-action-items-for-white-people-in-the-workplace-beyond-ecf87271e89a#.zns8p706d> for the sources)