Allyship Workshop
The Davis Center
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Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Williams College and Williamstown are built upon the ancestral lands of the Mahican and Mohawk people. We acknowledge that Williams College benefits from a history of colonialism, and that this colonization continues to this present day.
Guidelines for Conversation

→ This is a learning space. Nobody knows everything, but together we come to know, and can learn.
→ Assume good intentions. Speak from your own experience and avoid generalizations.
→ We learn the most when we challenge ourselves to step out of our comfort zones.
→ Our comfort zones look different: engaging in a conversation we are unfamiliar with, supporting others in their learning process, listening to understand the experiences of others, etc.
Goals

➔ Participants will be able to define and explore terms, including ally, accomplice, and co-conspirator.
➔ Participants will be able to identify the risks and the importance of being an ally.
➔ Participants will learn specific ways to be an ally within the Williams community.
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Definition of Concepts

ALLY

Allyship is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and traditionally oppressed groups of people.

➔ Allyship is an active practice that requires action.
➔ Allyship requires an understanding and self-awareness around power and privilege.
➔ Allyship’s purpose is to achieve equity and inclusion.
➔ Allyship requires us to hold ourselves accountable to advancing marginalized people’s needs.
ACCOMPlice

The Accomplice framework challenges the morality of the legal system — **just because a practice is legal and lawful does not mean it is moral or just**. Therefore, in order to achieve equity sometimes laws must be broken.

For example, segregation in the U.S. was legal *and* unjust. There are myriad of examples of people of all races breaking the law to integrate society and work to advance equity during segregation. The concept of Accompliceship is necessary as local and national laws and practices are still created to disenfranchise and marginalize different groups of people. Therefore, folks who are able to be Accomplices and take on the risks associated with breaking the law to achieve equity are needed.
Definition of Concepts

CO-CONSPIRATOR

A co-conspirator functions as a verb, not a noun. Co-conspirators work toward and understand the following:

➔ Understanding where we stand in relation to systems of privilege and oppression, and unlearning the habits and practices that protect those systems, which is lifelong work for all of us, without exception
➔ Authentic relationships of solidarity and mutuality, which are not possible when we try to avoid or transcend power imbalances
➔ Honestly acknowledging and confronting those imbalances to create authentic relationships
➔ Social change work is always rooted in collaboration, humility, and accountability
➔ The interior journey into silence, mediation, inner wisdom, and deep joy is inextricably linked to the outer work of social change
An ally will mostly engage in activism by standing with an individual or group in a marginalized community. An accomplice will focus more on dismantling the structures that oppress that individual or group—and such work will be directed by the stakeholders in the marginalized group.

Ex: An ally will “volunteer at a local racial justice-focused organization,” while an accomplice will “join an organization with an explicit aim of naming and disrupting racial injustice.”
# Ally & Accomplice on Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ally</strong></th>
<th><strong>Accomplice</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ally is typically considered a verb - one needs to act as an ally, and cannot 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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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These are terms that continue to be debated amongst folks doing social justice work. It is important to understand how these terms have been conceptualized, but not to get hung up on these definitions or labels.

At its core, being an ally/accomplice/co-conspirator is about action. Taking effective action requires a deep understanding of social identity, power & privilege. These actions are part of creating a more just & equitable society.

Being an ally is not an identity we get to claim! It is an invitation to consistently challenge ourselves to actively show up for others who lack power & privilege we hold. Instead of asking “what am I?” think “what can I do & how can I do it better?”
Social Identity Categories

- **Race**: appearance or phenotype
- **Ethnicity**: cultural connections
- **Socioeconomic Class**: beyond but including income, access to resources, education, and social capital
- **Religion**: belief and/or practice of any faith-based traditions
- **Physical Ability**: ability to move around in daily life
- **Mental Ability**: ability to learn and retain information to deal with problems or situations
- **Emotional Ability**: ability to monitor one’s own and other people’s emotions, to discern between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior
- **Citizenship Status/Country of Origin:** how you are classified by the U.S. govt/where you were born

- **Age:** significant for many reasons, age to vote, purchase and consume alcohol, but also perceptions of intelligence, experience, and worth

- **Other Social Group Memberships:** different cultures have different groups that may influence how people move through the world

To learn more, go to: [www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender)
Identity is Complicated

- We contain multitudes of identities that are constantly changing and interacting with one another and influence how we interact with other people.

- The interaction of our various identities are further complicated by the fact that some social identities have been treated as “in-groups,” or groups that historically have privilege(s), while others are treated as “out groups,” or groups that have been historically marginalized or oppressed.
Privilege, Marginalization, and Oppression

- Privilege, or a special right, advantage, or immunity available only to a particular person or group of people, is complex and constantly subject to change based on where you are, who you’re with, and other circumstances. In other words, privilege is relative.

- Marginalization and oppression, refers both to the absence of privilege (s) and historical outgroups’ experiences of indirect and direct violence, discrimination, and inhibited access to resources
Examples of Privilege

● Example of societal accommodation as privilege:
  ○ As a cis woman, or person whose gender identity aligns with my sex assigned at birth, I know that every building will have a bathroom I feel comfortable using.

● Example of special rights as privilege:
  ○ Before 2015, only straight couples had the federally enforced right to marriage, and the consequential social, economic, and political benefits of matrimony.

● Example of immunity as privilege:
  ○ As a U.S. Citizen, I am immune to prosecution or surveillance from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).
# Systems of Privilege and Oppression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Identity Category</th>
<th>System of Oppression</th>
<th>Systems of Privilege</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>White supremacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender/Sex</td>
<td>Sexism, Cissexism</td>
<td>Patriarchy, Cisgender Privilege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Heterosexism</td>
<td>Heteronormativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Anti-Semitism, anti-Islam</td>
<td>Normalized religious practices and holidays (often Christian practices in the U.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical, Developmental, or Mental Ability</td>
<td>Ableism</td>
<td>Able-bodiedness and neurotypicality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Classism</td>
<td>Middle class, Upper-middle class, ruling class ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Ageism</td>
<td>Young and Middle-aged Adults</td>
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Social Identity: Power & Privilege

Think of Power & Privilege as your sword and shield. The privileged social identities you hold are your shield: they protect you from the oppression other people face. Your sword is your ability to fight back and show up for those that don't have your privileges.

We all hold privilege (context-based), and the more aware we are of those privileges, the more effective allies we can be.

Also, the more power and privilege we hold in our social identities (based on race, class, sex, sexual orientation, immigration status, age, etc...) the more opportunities we have to show up for those without those privileges. We have a responsibility to do this!

Ex: Someone who identifies as a male doesn't have to worry about being interrupted or having ideas stolen in the classroom. In this case, his power and privilege is a shield (protects him from experiences of sexism) and making space for a student that identifies as a woman is the sword (small act that limits sexism).
Risks of being an Ally

➔ Make a lot of sacrifices such as your comfort, reputation, energy, time, and more.
➔ It is inconvenient.
➔ You have to constantly attack the very systems that benefit you.
➔ Making mistakes. We will ALL make mistakes, and that is not a reason not to take action.
➔ Physical risks.

These struggles are real & allies should understand these risks. However, if you’re ever grappling with these struggles, remember: people with marginalized identities have faced greater risks in a society that continues to oppress them. These risks can even be matters of life & death.

Being an ally is an intentional choice.
This is a privilege in and of itself!
By using the power and privileges of our different social identities, we are able to level the playing field.

Marginalized people will not get as far speaking solely for themselves because they lack certain powers and privileges. Nor is it fair to expect oppressed groups to fight for their liberation alone.

None of us are free until we all are free.

Ex. Both the oppressed and the oppressor suffer from the oppression, albeit not to the same extent. Women battle misogyny, men battle toxic masculinity, but both stem from patriarchy. Black people battle racism, white people battle white guilt, but both stem from White Supremacy.
How to Be a True Ally

**ACT** - Confront & interrupt oppression, show up and speak up!

**LISTEN** - Trust marginalized peoples’ lived experiences, do not invalidate them

**LEARN** - Educate yourself about privilege and structures of oppression; Ask questions, be curious, and do your own research

**YIELD** - Be aware of how much space you are occupying and resist the urge to “save” people (marginalized groups should always be at the front of this work)

Remember: A.L.L.Y.
Allies, Beware of:

➔ Being an ally/accomplice/co-conspirator is not an identity

➔ Performative Allyship & ally theater, which increases one’s social capital by doing the bare minimum rather than one’s devotion to a cause.
   ◆ Ex: posting a Black square but not doing anything active, such as donating, signing petitions, & educating yourself

➔ People with marginalized identities do not need saving

➔ Not stopping if you make a mistake
# How to Be an Ally on Campus

## Visibility

"Acknowledge me, a Black square isn’t enough. If you see me on campus, make eye contact, say hi, don’t pretend I don’t exist. I want to be respected and not ignored in group settings."

"Don’t turn around to the only Black person in class when Black topics come up, it isolates me, reminds me that I’m different."

## Action

"Stand alongside me publicly when you witness my exclusion."

"At the very least, attendance and attention. I expect them to show up and speak up. I expect them to check other students."

"Respecting and understanding the culture of others."

"Allyship is throwing away white guilt and ignorance and showing up to do the work."

"At the very least allow me to speak for myself and support and make space for me when I do."

## Accountability

"Taking accountability for former [offensive] mistakes."

"Stop the use of slurs whether it’d be in public or private."

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*Quotes from Williams students that have marginalized identities*
Addressing Contradictions

Knowing when to step up and step back takes practice & reflection and depends on context. Here are some tips:

**Step Up:**

➔ When you hear inappropriate comments made about marginalized groups
➔ When you hear racial slurs or derogatory term
➔ When you hear or see a microaggression or macroaggressions
➔ When a marginalized person is being excluded or harmed
➔ Before asking questions, assess if it is the right time to ask

*Mith:* Stepping up is the only way to be an effective ally. Stepping back is also active and intentional, and can also be allyship!

**Golden rule:** Silence allows oppression to continue. If it feels wrong, say something and do something.

**Step Back:**

➔ When oppressed groups are speaking about their experiences
➔ When it is a topic or subject you know nothing or very little about
➔ When your questions are being answered, be engaged

*MYTH:* In a conversation about -isms, the oppressed group should not contribute.

**Golden rule:** It is not about you.
Allyship in Practice

Ex. of Allyship

1859 John Brown’s Raid “dress rehearsal for the Civil War”

1940s Germans hiding Jews from Nazis

1968 Olympics Black Power salute

1977 Disability Rights sit-in, the Black Panthers (having little resources themselves) provided protestors with food

2015 Bree Newsome & James Tyson removing Confederate Flag over South Carolina’s State House

Questions to consider

Who is missing from the “room” or conversation and why is that a problem?

How can I amplify folks who hold marginalized identities?

How can I work with folks who share my privileges to do the same?
White protestors form a shield to protect Black protestors from Louisville Metro Police in a demonstration asking for justice for Breonna Taylor.

Examples of Allyship

1968 Olympics Black Power salute: two African-American athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, each raised a black-gloved fist during the playing of the US national anthem. Smith, Carlos, and Australian silver medalist Peter Norman all wore human-rights badges on their jackets.
Scenarios

A student in your class who identifies as a woman keeps being interrupted, what do you do?

You hear your white friend say the N word while singing to a rap song in hoxsey.

Your friend that identifies as a woman is scared to walk back to her dorm alone.

After a nonbinary student in your class made their pronouns clear, your professor continuously misgenders them.

In your class, the professor speaks very softly and you know there’s a student with hearing difficulties in your class.

Any other scenarios you have witnessed and/or experienced?
Activity

On the shield, write down the privileges you hold and reflect on how they protect you on campus, at home, and at large.

On the sword, brainstorm ways you can fight back on systems of oppression and support marginalized students. Think of examples that demonstrate different levels of engagement and risk i.e. being an ally, accomplice, and co-conspirator.
References

Indigenous Rights Movement

Bettina Love

Allies for Change


http://www.blackgirldangerous.com/2015/11/ally-theater/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDeSX2y9U_M

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfbDFAUINaQ

https://www.thereadyset.co/ally-skills-workshop

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZVILjJPreM
https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/ally-or-accomplice-the-language-of-activism
Thanks!

Have any questions? Come see us at the **Davis Center**!

➔ We offer workshops on inclusive awareness, microaggressions, social identity, community building, calling in vs. calling out.
➔ We serve students through one-on-one or group advising and mentoring.
➔ Resources on inclusivity and much, much more!