

Dr. King used the concept of allyship with regard to his fight for Social Justice. Explain the importance of allyship with regard to social Justice. Who is your ally and what has that journey been? What do you do to be an ally in your community?

I stand as a Black woman, navigating life in a world that was not built for me. Fighting for my identity in a society that continuously tries to wipe it away, yet I stand firm. I carry not only the past of my ancestors, but also the change that will inspire future generations.

In the spirit of Martin Luther King's legacy, allyship is more than sympathy. True allyship is dedicated to challenging injustices and dismantling systems that continuously perpetuate inequality. Allyship is important to social justice because it forces individuals to recognize their privilege, embrace hard realities, and tear down institutional obstacles in the way of achieving equality for all. Social justice can be understood in various ways. Social justice is activism, equality, equity, rights, and freedoms. Social justice is the understanding that all people are equal and deserving of all things pertaining to healthcare, housing, employment, education, etc., regardless of the color of their skin, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or age. Social justice is a fight for the othered. "While we are not meant to carry the world on our shoulders, we must find a way to fulfill our duty to help repair it." (Dorff and Ruttenerg, 2009, p.142). Social justice fights to fulfill that duty and help repair what has been broken. Allyship is vital to social justice because it involves individuals who belong to the dominant group. These individuals utilize their privilege to advocate for marginalized communities that are often silenced, challenge systemic injustices, create inclusive spaces, and promote equity and equal allocation of resources. Allyship is important to social justice because privilege paves the way for social injustices to be heard and taken seriously.

Writing this essay as a Black woman, I realize that being an ally becomes a deep-rooted commitment. Being an ally means intertwining your own battles with those facing adversity,

even when it may send shivers down your spine. This requires an acknowledgment that personal discomfort must never overshadow the realities of those who are marginalized. It is more than just words or being passive. Allyship is a call to dismantle the oppressive structures that destroy the marginalized community and forge a path toward justice with an unyielding and unapologetic stance.

I've noticed Madonna attempting to become allies with marginalized groups. I see posters and signs on doors that say, "All Are Welcomed." While that is a positive gesture, being an ally goes beyond symbolic gestures. True allyship involves active support, understanding, and advocating. Engaging in ongoing education about different cultures, experiences, and histories is crucial. Madonna University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion standpoint has improved since the time I started here in 2020. There have been staff and student conversations and invitations to events that focus on our differences. However, I have yet to find my ally here at this school. Though I see an effort from the staff, there is still a sense of otherness that persists. Once, when hosting a gathering following all guidelines, Black students were subjected to mistreatment at the hands of Campus Safety and RA's on duty. So, as I continue to pursue connections and Madonna University continues to enhance its role in allyship, the longing for a true ally lingers.

In a shared journey of self-identity, I realized that my close friends and loved ones are my allies. They not only offer empathy but actively engage in self-educating to comprehend the distinctions of my intersectional experience. Their commitment extends beyond acceptance; they foster an environment where inclusivity is celebrated. My allies stand as the power of genuine friendship, where compassion and continuous learning pave the way for authentic connections.

Being a stronger ally involves a continuous commitment to learning and understanding. Actively listening to experiences and perspectives of marginalized communities, allowing their

voices to take center stage. Rather than immediately providing alternative insights, strive to empathize and absorb the diverse narratives that exist. Take the initiative to educate yourself about the historical context, systemic issues, and current challenges faced by different groups. Cultivate a heightened awareness of your own biases and privileges, recognizing the importance of humility in this journey. When faced with uncertainty, don't hesitate to ask questions, but ensure that you've put in the effort to research and understand the basics independently. Additionally, challenge the notion of colorblindness, recognizing the importance of acknowledging and celebrating differences rather than ignoring them. Above all, actively work towards dismantling ignorance by staying informed, engaging in open conversations, and actively participating in efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

Every story has a beginning, middle, and end and I consider myself still at the beginning. So, while it may feel like my journey has been long, by the grace of God, I hope that it continues. Being a Black woman, my journey in fostering allyship unfolds through various channels. Previously, holding the position of vice president of the Black Student Union at Madonna University, I actively worked to cultivate a supportive community, advocating for the needs and voices of my fellow members, while offering a sense of belonging. Through my contributions to my school newsletter, I feel as though I amplify marginalized perspectives, providing a platform for storytelling. Engaging in conversations across campus, even when I find myself as the lone Black presence in the room, shows my resilience and commitment to broadening understanding. I take the initiative to speak first during uncomfortable discussions, recognizing the power of my voice to encourage others to share their experiences. Beyond the racial dynamics, I actively advocate for and support the rights and equality of all genders. As a feminist, it goes beyond my

personal experiences. By promoting gender inclusivity and challenging norms, I contribute to creating a more equitable and just environment for everyone.

Moreover, my support for the Black community extends to uplifting and celebrating the achievements of fellow Black individuals. “Rooting For Everybody Black” is not just a slogan but a genuine expression of solidarity, recognizing the importance of unity and collective progress. My fist raised while saying “Black Lives Matter” or “Black Power” is not rage. I am standing in unity with who we are as people. Learning my history, being one with myself, and loving the skin that I am in. I am not an angry Black woman; I simply just want to be treated better.

Speaking out against societal wrongs is not just a choice but a responsibility I am willing to shoulder, as I strive to be an ally who challenges and confronts injustices on every front. So, this is not just an essay; it is my plea for understanding, empathy, and a reckoning with a past that refuses to loosen its grip. Every word I write carries the weight of my history, a history that has silenced us.

References

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