

Redefining your Neighbor: What Does Being an Ally Look Like?

Poems read at today's Midday Mindfulness - <https://youtu.be/-jcW18ZkKto>

Let America be America Again by Langston Hughes – originally published in 1936

An Invitation to Brave Space by Micky Scott Bey Jones

Definitions for Difficult Conversations:

Global Majority - an intentional response to saying racial minorities, where we refer to people of color as the global majority. There is importance in recalibrating our minds through language and the way that we interpret in-group and out-group when thinking of these concepts.

Marginalized groups – groups who are frequently denied equal access to mainstream cultural, social, political, and economic activities. This includes many, many groups of people not limited to: LGBTQIA+, Racial/Cultural minorities (or the global majority), Persons with religious differences outside of the majority in a society, Senior citizens, Veterans, Hearing, visually, and Physically Challenged Persons, Persons with a serious and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI), Persons with Cognitive Impairments, and persons with body images that fall out of the norm.

Power dynamic/power gradient – Who holds the social/cultural power within a system or space? For difficult conversations, consider your involvement with this a relationship: when you are in a situation and there is a group that holds power in that situation, what is your relationship to that group?

Moving from Conversation to Action:

Engage and engage deeply – instead of saying “i’m afraid to engage because I don’t know what to say” or working to try and move the conversation or event to a more comfortable mode of sharing (consciously or unconsciously to make the people who hold power in the room feel comfortable), be willing to be uncomfortable, be raw, be open, be kind, and be real. Open yourself up to holding your mindful practice in spaces of uncomfortably like those who are marginalized or a part of the global majority do on a daily basis.

Work to desegregate your own spaces - studies have shown that by simply opening up your personal space to allow people with differences in your comfort zone, individuals have moved to change perspectives. Take a look at your friend groups. Look at your work groups. Look at your outside organization groups. Do you have people who are different than you in them? If not, change that!

Educate yourselves and then educate those who are like you! - It is not the job of those who might be underrepresented, marginalized, or oppressed to educate those who do not fall into those groups. However, if it happens that you are a person of power or privilege within a space, and you



are educated on something - the best thing you can do is listen first. And once you have listened, then translate that perspective to your own group. If you are in a group that has a lot of privilege and power, use it! Speak up and speak out!

Work to uplift the power of marginalized groups – Our societies have taken to telling made up stories that groups who are marginalized are underserved and so are undereducated, which turns into them being underseen. This continued ideology is not going to move our society forward. Give marginalized groups the platform and hand over the mic!

Normalize everyone else in your space – This can start with small changes like your social media: is it diverse? Your marketing: are you showing many different people? Your workbooks and texts in classes: do they include authors of different backgrounds? Your analogies when teaching: are you including folks who are not the same ethnicity, gender, body type, mental capacity or background as you? The people you suggest when you are giving someone advice? Who are the people you look to in high regard? It might be hard, but do the research! Diversify your space!

A mindful reminder: if all else fails and you don't know what to do to be an ally in a particular space instead of resorting to fear, shutting down, or stepping away, take a moment to use your practice. Step outside of yourself and the story for one moment. Be fully there in the situation with the other person, even if it's uncomfortable. Listen. See. Feel. Hear what is being said and *then* try to get some answers. Lead the charge by using mindfulness to open your ears and listen – especially if you are a person who frequently holds power within the dynamic. None of us know all the answers, but using your practice to hone in on listening, feeling, and being is a great way to hold space in difficulty.

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