What is an Ally?

…An ally is one who acts in opposition to oppression…

We believe that anyone can be an ally and interrupt acts of oppression or discrimination…

An ally to 'who'?!?
...One can be an ally to any oppressed group or target of mistreatment. One can be an ally to people of color, Muslim people, etc. It's also important to recognize that we all have multiple identities that intersect in unique ways. When we think about 'allies', we might consider ourselves to be allies to groups where two or more identities intersect, such as allying with 'women who are not US citizens', 'lesbians of color', 'Jewish alcoholies', etc…

Since oppression and mistreatment exists in several different areas, allyhood does as well. Allies exist in individual, institutional, and societal/cultural areas…

What if I'm not ready to be an ally?

Allyhood is a process, not an outcome. One never reaches a space of optimal allyhood, but is rather constantly challenged by one's own beliefs, bias, internationalization of previous experiences, and general stereotypes and resistance.

As a developing ally, it is important to engage in self-reflection regarding the ways that we might perpetuate oppression and mistreatment, consciously or unconsciously…

The Four Basic Levels of Becoming an Ally
♦ Awareness: Explore how you are different from and similar to others. Gain this awareness through talking with others by attending workshops, and through self-examination.
♦ Knowledge/Education: Begin to understand policies, laws and practices and how they affect others. Educate yourself.
♦ Skills: This is an area that is difficult for many people. You must learn to take your awareness and knowledge and communicate it to others. You can acquire these skills by attending workshops, role-playing with friends or peers, and developing support connections.
♦ Action: This is the most important and frightening step. Despite the fear, action is the only way to cause change in society as a whole.

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Here is a list of ways we might resist thinking critically about this:

**Individual Area**
- Beliefs in agent supremacy
- Lack of skill in intergroup communication
- Ignorance of cultural differences
- Defense of privilege
- Fear of conflict
- Fear of exposing ignorance and incompetence

**Institutional Area**
- Defense of power and privilege
- Commitment to traditions and symbols
- Acceptance of status quo
- Concern about colleague’s reactions
- Concern about inefficiency /noise /conflict
- Perceptions of low reward for innovation/change

**Societal /Cultural Area**
- Engagement in culture of agent supremacy
- Engagement in culture of individualism
- Engagement in culture of blaming targets of oppression
- Engagement in systemic privilege for agents
- Acceptance of recorded history and traditions
- Acceptance of imbalance in political power for agents

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