

XOLANI KACELA, PH.D.

Jumpstart Your Allyship

Five Easy Steps to Ally with BIPOCs



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First edition

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I dedicate this booklet to persons who do this work of allyship with Black, Indigenous people, and other people of color (BIPOCs); dismantling White supremacy culture; and keeping it 100.

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I

Jumpstart Your Allyship Now: Five Easy Steps to Ally with BIPOCs

1

Jumpstart Your Allyship Now

Let's begin with the basics

What is an ally? An ally is a person who stands by, supports, and acts on behalf of a person or group when they need help. An ally may be a friend, coworker, church member, or even someone you meet on the street. Their role is one of support and companionship.

Allies vs. advocates

Many people consider themselves allies, but they are in reality advocates. They show up in word, but not deed. An advocate offers moral support but bails when the stuff hits the fan. Advocates offer advice. They may give money. They listen and even craft solutions the affected person must carry out alone. At that point, an advocate draws the line and ends their aid.

Allies come through with purpose. They arrive ready to act, be emotionally present, and “go through” with the affected person or people. A true ally knows when to show up. They offer more than encouraging words.

White allyship

White allyship is the act of showing up for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOCs). It is about putting the ally's support into action and staying in the fight.

Anti-racism is paramount

White people often believe that they are allies because they believe they

are not racist and speak against racism. However, not being racist and even speaking against racism are not enough. You become an ally when you become actively anti-racist. That entails changing one's mindset and taking actions that end racism.

You may be against racism, but are you an anti-racist? BIPOCs need allies who are anti-racist. For more guidance, read *How to be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi.

This booklet you are reading is not about anti-racism *per se*, although I strongly support allies' anti-racist efforts. Instead, I focus this book on the ways of allyship.

Jumpstarting Your Allyship

This book was written to be a quick read. I promise you can tackle it in less than 30 minutes. If you can sit still, you can get it done. It is not complicated nor hard to read. However, the work I propose will take longer.

I'm offering you Five Steps to jumpstart your allyship. You can do this work alone or find a committed partner or partners to join you. Either way, the book is written so that you can begin immediately becoming a committed ally. As soon as you read the first step, you will be positioned to jumpstart your allyship.

What do I mean by jumpstarting? Think of a car that won't crank. You turn the key and hear a clicking sound or a turning sound. But the engine won't turn over and start. If you have jumper cables, you connect your car to a car that is running. You put the red cable on the battery's positive post and the black cable on the negative post. Once the cables are connected between the batteries, you turn the key and (hopefully) your car will crank. The live battery starts the dead battery. That is the definition of jumpstarting.

This booklet was "jumpstarted" from my book, *The Black UU Survival Guide: Ten Steps for Surviving as a Black Unitarian Universalist and How Allies Can Keep It 100*. The work detailed in this book goes into more detail about allies keeping it 100 (or keeping it real).

Now, the main event.

II

Five Easy Steps

Step 1 - Stop Being a Bystander

What is a bystander? The term describes a person who witnesses an unjust act against another person without offering help. Most people have been a bystander. Why? Because bullies exist in abundance and courage exists in short supply. Most groups have a bully. Lots of people are willing to decry bullying generally, but few people are willing to call it out or defend a bully's victim(s) in real-time.

My story of being a bystander when I was in the 5th grade

When I was in the 5th grade, my friend, Greg, who lived across the street from me, came from different circumstances than I did. His family didn't have the financial resources that mine had. One day, as we arrived at school, a group of kids in the schoolyard began making fun of Greg's shoes because they had holes in the soles. I watched kids give Greg a hard time but didn't speak up.

I, for one, was a scrawny little kid. Still, I could have spoken up and offered some defense for Greg. But, instead, I stood by and watched. I've regretted my lack of action for years because I was a pathetic bystander.

Learn from my mistake

To become a reliable ally, you must stop bystanding. When you see or hear people treating BIPOCs poorly, you must act. You are responsible for rising in solidarity with the victim and holding bullies accountable.

If you are in a group of friends, coworkers, family members, and especially

other church members, it behooves you to act in the moment. You must act in real-time and talk down the bully or the person causing harm. This is vital in churches, where people consider themselves “like-minded” and fear rocking the boat.

Groupthink is harmful and an obstacle to allyship. I’ve attended many church meetings where someone acted rudely, but no one challenged the person’s behavior. Such lack of response signals that rudeness is acceptable in church. It is not okay, nor should you consider it the norm.

You must stand up to groupthink and speak the truth to align yourself with BIPOCs. But, equally important, speak from your values. All churches have values. Put them into action when people misbehave toward BIPOCs in church.

This work has a steep learning curve and you risk being frowned upon by your group if you speak out. But once you take a just stance, others in the group are likely to stand alongside you. Someone is waiting for an ally in that process.

Check in with the bully’s target and others who may be affected

There is a balance to be found between jumping in and sitting back to make sure your support is needed in the moment. When you jump in to interrupt bullying or abuse, speak directly about church values, or say how the words or behavior struck YOU. Use I and we statements and be careful not to speak in place of the person most affected. Check in with the person afterwards to make sure they are okay, apologize in the event you acted too hastily (because it’s possible that they feel you did), and ask them how you can best support them moving forward. As you act, seek constructive feedback and reflect on what you learned. You will gain more confidence in knowing when and how to step forward. But you can’t learn without trying. And this learning never stops.

Acting “as if”/Creating a new self-image

The biggest obstacle to allyship is fear. Being scared to step out on faith prevents you from being an ally. To get past the fear, you must act “as if.” That expression comes from Alcoholics Anonymous. Act as if you have courage. Don’t worry about what will happen. Becoming an ally means stepping out on faith and showing your ability to stand by others. That ability is already inside

STEP 1 - STOP BEING A BYSTANDER

of you. You need to activate it.

Be an ally, a person who cares for and acts on behalf of others. Adopt this self-image and then make it real. Stop being a bystander.

Step 2 - Interrogate Your Own Feelings and Status

No matter where you are on your anti-racist journey, there is still work to be done if you are going to be able to truly show up as an ally. Perhaps you oppose racism, but still get uneasy when you hear the way some other people talk about anti-racism or multiculturalism. When you feel yourself becoming defensive when such subjects arise, stay with that sensation. The feelings in your body tell you that you have work to do. Once you realize the feeling, which may resemble anxiety, anger, or defensiveness, you are positioned to change. Why are you feeling that way? Does it map on to your new self-image?

It is important to acknowledge and accept uncomfortable feelings, knowing that they represent something tangible in your experience. But, first, you need to determine what those feelings represent, so lean into them until you have answers. Once you nail down what caused your feelings, you can confront your history and move into your new self-image. (This work may involve you beginning a relationship with a culturally competent mental health provider. Either way, you will need to confront your feelings and find a resolution to be an effective, reliable ally.)

Make a promise to yourself to stop judging BIPOCs and others who are different from you

Your new identity requires that you stop judging BIPOCs and people who are different from you just because of their skin color or other aspects of their identity. For instance, you may think you've rid yourself of all negative associations with people of color, but I am here to tell you that unconscious bias runs deep. This work requires a non-judgmental attitude. That means recognizing negative thoughts as soon as they show up in your mind, interrupting them, and replacing them with new thoughts that support allyship.

This is simpler than you imagine. First, recognize when these old thoughts show up. Then, tell yourself to shut down those thoughts by replacing the negative thoughts with positive images.

For example, I've known myself to be (and hate to admit this) a body snob. Such a person overemphasizes wellness and being in shape. However, I've learned that this is a terrible mental fixation that I need to change. So, when the thoughts come into my head, I turn them away by saying to myself words that show my regard for the other person's dignity. My thoughts shift to the respect they deserve as a human being.

Decide once and for all to look at people differently

When you choose to view people as good, normal, different from how you are conditioned to view them, you reinforce your new self-image, which sets you on the right path to being a good ally. Then you can focus your time on doing things differently.

I view this as a positive self-fulfilling prophecy. But it takes time and practice. Do this several times a day for several weeks. Fill your screen, fill your mind, with positive images of amazing people who defy every stereotype while just being normal, everyday people. They could be public figures, or friends and colleagues, or even strangers. Remember that they are not exceptions; they just are. Remember that they, and all like them, are deserving of love and respect. Praise them out loud or in your head. Eventually, you will gain a new habit. When you find yourself slipping into past thoughts or behaviors, give yourself a break. Don't turn against yourself. Instead, get back up and start

your practice afresh. Self-criticism only leads to more failure, remorse, and internalized oppression. Just recognize and reset.

Give up some of your privilege

An essential part of your new self-image is curbing your reliance on unearned privilege. As a white person, you have benefits, privileges, and invisible advantages that BIPOCs do not have. This lies at the heart of allyship. Acknowledging the privilege that comes with white skin (or as Resmaa Menakem says, with living in a white body) improves your ability to be an ally.

You can learn more about Resmaa Menakem's work by reading his book *My Grandmother's Hands*. His work is vitally important for people dealing with anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism. I support all work in that field.

Recognize your privilege and invite others to do the same

You carry privilege, and power, in our society if you have any of the following characteristics:

- tall
- attractive
- professional status
- male
- heterosexual
- Christian
- white body
- thin
- able-bodied
- young (but not “too” young—ageism works both ways)
- employed
- financially secure

The list goes on. I encourage you to make a list of the various characteristics listed above, or other traits you think of, that fit you. Afterward, add them up to get a true sense of how much power you wield. Taking an inventory alerts

you to how people perceive you and grant you favor.

I believe such an inventory will prove to you how these various sources of power confer privilege in your life. Then, think about what it would be like to share that power, give it up, or use it to benefit others who have less.

Practice sharing your power and taking direction

Allies share power, inviting BIPOCs to do the work whites believe only they can do. Start off sharing small amounts of power and build up your capacity for sharing power. BIPOCs are equally suited for work in positions normally filled with white people.

Allies allow BIPOCs the opportunity to dictate what they need to generate success in the world. Ask before you give. Be prepared to listen and hear things you hadn't expected.

I have frequently offered help to someone only to discover they didn't need or want what I offered. They needed something else. Or they may have needed nothing at all, except my allyship. That is, my willingness to listen and be a dependable companion to them according to their needs.

Don't assume you know what's best for people. Only they are experts on their lives.

Step 3 - Step Up Your Involvement with BIPOC Causes

G *et involved in a cause that supports BIPOCs*

There are endless numbers of causes that support BIPOCs. You need not stick to the NAACP. You might support historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). You can volunteer your time at a Black church. You can volunteer your time at a YMCA that sponsors Black kids. Search online for agencies or nonprofits that target BIPOCs and get involved.

Donate money to BIPOC causes

For many people, donating money is a primary means of showing support. This is excellent. Give as much money as you can to BIPOC causes. You can name BIPOC causes in your Will and Final Testament. You can also give stock or other financial instruments to BIPOC causes.

For example, my wife and I created an endowment at the Chautauqua Institute, a haven for well-to-do white people who cherish the arts, culture, religion, culture, community, education, recreation, and other forms of a good life. Unfortunately, we've met few BIPOCs at Chautauqua. So we started a small endowment that funds a BIPOC youth to study at the Chautauqua Institute every summer. This is our way of giving back to BIPOC youth and supporting the Chautauqua Institute concurrently.

Our example shows you don't need extensive wealth to take on BIPOC causes. Simply commit yourself to a cause and respond accordingly.

That all said, don't limit your efforts to money.

Vote to support BIPOC issues

A critical means of allyship is casting your ballot to support BIPOCs and policies that improve the lives and well-being of BIPOC communities. Most elections have issues on the ballot that affect BIPOCs. But these are often couched in language that supports white people more. The fact of the matter is that when BIPOCs' boats rise, all boats rise.

Policy and legislation don't need to be limited to BIPOCs. Leaders should craft policies for the safety and welfare of all Americans. Too often, folks view voting as a zero-sum game, a situation where one group's victories handicap another group. For allyship, one must remember to stand firmly with BIPOCs because everyone benefits from fair, just, and equitable policies.

If you can create policy or affect hiring in your company, keep BIPOCs in mind first and foremost

American businesses should hire more BIPOCs. Allyship requires people in power to make room and intentionally hire BIPOCs at all levels of employment, church, government, education, etc. That is the essence of forming a diverse and creative culture where allyship thrives. When you encourage different perspectives, backgrounds, education, and lived experiences, you reap enormous rewards.

BIPOCs need white allies to be strong in this area. For one thing, most communities have fewer BIPOCs than white people applying for jobs. Therefore, white people have more leverage and an improved chance to get hired. Without an intentional consideration of BIPOCs, it is more unlikely that organizations will hire them.

In most cases, hiring managers hire people who look like them. This opens the door for their prejudices and biases to impede fair hiring practices. This is not conjecture. It is documented in academic journals, professional newsletters, and other sources that report on these topics.

It will be important to select a BIPOC even though they may have lesser qualifications than the white person. This is what allyship sometimes

demands. It is taking a risk. It will be a calculated risk, knowing the organization can invest time and resources to further develop the BIPOC's skills. When the BIPOC gets professional development opportunities similar to their white peers, they can perform just as well if not better than the white person.

Allyship means considering the above in all aspects of life. That includes your family, workplace, learning spaces, recreation spots, churches, etc. Most people will discover this process feels unnatural. That is a correct assessment. This work requires intention, persistence, and coping with the fallout.

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Step 4 - Turn Your Fear into Courage

The number one question people ask me is: “How do you get into deep and challenging conversations with people who are different from you?”

What they are really asking is how can *they* jumpstart a difficult conversation as an ally.

You will survive a difficult conversation even if it is painful going through it

I’ve been in many difficult talks about race and racism with white people. I’ve also had chats with white people who I knew had different opinions than me. Those people ranged from conservative Texans to people who cherish the Confederate battle flag. I purposely put myself in those spaces to talk about subjects I didn’t understand.

In every instance, I can say I felt some emotional pain before they began. Why? Because I didn’t know how the conversations would turn out.

Here’s a true story to illustrate.

I was once in a fishing boat with two white men and my wife. It was the day after the protests in Washington, D.C., during the summer of 2020 when the D.C. National Guard used tear gas on the protesters. We were in North Texas near the Oklahoma border fishing with these two gentlemen. I knew we’d be on that boat for four to five hours. The protest situation was salient to me. I wanted to hear their viewpoints on the protests to educate myself on how

those viewpoints differed from mine.

It took me about 30 minutes to strategize my approach to the subject. I took my time because my wife and I were guests on the captain's boat. We were fishing with him and his helper. I wanted to pursue the matter without sounding like I was in attack mode. I needed a perfect question to invite him into a conversation.

Truth be told, we were on a small boat together. We had no escape route, except swimming back to the dock. (Not!) You can imagine my trepidation about how this talk might turn out. I didn't want the conversation to ruin the day. But I wanted to keep it 100 by talking about an important topic.

After contemplating what to say carefully, I asked, "What are people saying regarding the protests yesterday?" It was a simple question.

At first, the gentleman deflected. But with gentle prying, not indicting or accusing him, he began talking about his feelings. And we had a stimulating conversation that didn't spoil the day. In fact, we caught plenty of stripers and had a good time.

There is only one way to release your fear. Seize the moment and speak up. Once you put your fear aside and grab hold of your courage, you'll find you are immensely qualified and prepared to deal with a complex subject.

When you keep at it, the conversations become less challenging to jumpstart. This is a form of do-it-yourself training that helps you become an ally.

Take a listening stance. Don't tell and don't accuse. The best mindset for allies is being curious. Always begin with curiosity and listen without judging.

Don't worry about what people will think of you

Don't let other people's impressions discourage you from being an ally. This is the biggest hindrance next to fear: negative self-perception. People think of you what they will. Don't let your projections stop you.

Don't worry about hurting people's feelings

Don't worry about hurting people's feelings. No one ever died from hurt feelings. It is natural for allyship to interfere with comfort. As you move from your comfort zone, others around you will move into a discomfort zone.

It is not for you to manage other people's feelings. Your job is to show up as an ally. That means doing something differently than you or your friends and

STEP 4 - TURN YOUR FEAR INTO COURAGE

family are accustomed to you doing. They'll soon realize you have changed and done something positive.

Often, the heightened concern about other people's feelings signals that you are actually worried about your own feelings and discomfort. Note that discomfort, but don't let it stop you. Keep moving forward with the allyship.

Step 5 - Build Relationships with BIPOCs

This step could and should be Step 1 as easily as Step 5. It should be easy and obvious that being a white ally means doing so with—not just for—BIPOCs. For many, developing relationships across race is too hard. Well-intentioned white people, especially, can face fear around difference and worry that they will say the wrong thing or mess up. You may, and it's okay. You need to get over it and get on with it. Being an “ally” in a white vacuum does no one any good.

BIPOCs like me learn to navigate between cultures early, but there can still be obstacles to trust. I think I was unusually fortunate to grow up in a multicultural environment because my father was a soldier in the U.S. Army. My family moved almost every other year to a different state, but always in the South. We lived in Georgia, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. As a result, we grew accustomed to living with people of different races and social locations.

I went to schools that had mostly white kids. But on alternating years, I attended schools that were primarily African American. That meant adapting to the different communities. I code-switched before it was “a thing.”

My sister and I learned to get to know people of different races and ethnicities. It helped us realize that we have more in common with people of other backgrounds than differences. The neighborhoods weren't homogenous, but we were all Army people. My whole life has been blessed with people with

different skin colors and ethnicities.

Your life can be blessed in this way, too.

Get to know your BIPOC acquaintances

Turn BIPOC acquaintances into friends. It is not okay to have only one BIPOC friend. No BIPOC deserves the designation as your so-called Black friend, Asian friend, or Indigenous (disparagingly called “Indian”) friend. They don’t want that pressure, nor do they deserve it. No one deserves to be a token friend.

It’s not okay to have your one BIPOC friend at work only. If you have only one BIPOC friend with whom you talk only at work, I’m inclined to assert you are hardly a friend to that person. At least, not in the true sense of the word. You are a friend by convenience.

It’s not even okay to have your one BIPOC friend at church only. This is certainly not allyship. If you go to church with BIPOCs and only see them when you’re in that community—within those walls—it’s hard to say that you’re even friends, let alone an ally.

Instead, create time with your BIPOC acquaintances from church and turn them into friends. That means spending time together, doing things you mutually agree upon, and going deep with each other.

Get to know each person as a human being

Often people who consider themselves allies have serious limits on interpersonal interactions. Once the BIPOC shows up as a whole person, the white person discovers projections they put on the BIPOC. For example, you may expect that you will agree on political candidates, see eye-to-eye on work projects, or support the same social policies. But once the white person sees the BIPOC has different perspectives than expected/projected, the white person may bail from the relationship or become hostile towards the BIPOC.

Please learn to accept the BIPOC as a whole person who shouldn’t have to try to be white, or more of whatever you expected them to be, for you to accept them. Get to know BIPOCs without letting your projections create issues. This creates space for a genuine relationship to blossom, which sets you up for true allyship.

Build a relationship before asking difficult questions

Once you get accustomed to BIPOCs showing up in their full humanity, you’re

able to get to know them and understand there are fundamental differences between white perspectives and BIPOC perspectives. It won't be the end of the world, nor does it mean you cannot be an ally. It means that you are becoming an ally to a real human being with honest human differences. You are also figuring out how to thoughtfully engage BIPOCs with whom you have shared understandings and common ground.

This common ground, shared understanding, and showing up as whole human beings are the marks of true allyship.

Maybe you have a question about their relationship history, how they grew up, their career path, their loves, hobbies, etc. These are fair questions to ask and to reveal about yourself. It may feel awkward to ask questions of a BIPOC that you might only feel comfortable asking of another white person, but put yourself out there. You'll discover that you can get through it and that you have a genuine connection with that person once you both know the real individuals inside of the bodies you inhabit. Everything won't always be calm and copacetic between you, but you'll have a real relationship.

One word of caution: Sometimes, white people will ask questions of BIPOCs to resolve some sense of ambiguity that they may not even recognize they are grappling with. The "what are YOU doing HERE?" kind of question, the "you upend my expectations and I don't get it" kind of question. Be careful of that. Sometimes, white people can also get sort of hopefully, overly, and prematurely familiar with BIPOCs. So go ahead and ask your question—or sometimes ask if you may ask—but tread a little carefully, with respect for boundaries, and you'll do fine.

Be sure to let them ask you difficult questions. Don't stay in the polite zone. If they don't ask difficult questions, come up with a strategy to reveal important self-data. Don't keep it all to yourself.

Learning to manage conflict is vital to allyship

Perhaps the most challenging part of any relationship is dealing with conflict. Being an ally demands conflict-management skills. Effective conflict handlers understand conflict is a natural by-product of two or more people working together. Allies work through problems and strive for solutions when differences surface. They do not make excuses, such as "I don't understand

him” or “We didn’t see eye-to-eye.”

True allies keep it 100. They refuse to part ways when the “real” person shows up. So here’s a simple test for those in power. If you believe you’re an ally, have you recently fired or dismissed a BIPOC because of so-called “personality differences” between yourselves, or are you contemplating such an action? If so, you are not an ally. You have serious work to do. You aren’t there yet.

Being a good ally resembles being a good marriage partner. Things will go great for a period. At other times, things will appear miserable. So learn to lean into your values and promises not to separate when you don’t feel the love. Maybe the love has gone underground, but it will resurface.

It’s not a matter of feeling lovey-dovey 24-7. That is an evolutionary impossibility. Puppy love fades, and genuine love shows up, which is often different from what you expected. So hang in there and continue showing your BIPOC friends the love.

Follow-up with BIPOCs

As with other relationships which stand the test of time, allyship requires maintenance and follow-up. Don’t allow your allyship to fall by the wayside. Be prepared to go the extra step to remain in a relationship with your BIPOC allies.

Make it a habit to check in on your BIPOC friends from time to time

If you are like me, you have many friends you love and cherish. Your friends may live across this great land, on the East and West coasts and in between. It takes a great deal of effort to maintain these relationships. You can’t tackle them all at once.

But it is possible to keep your eyes, head, and heart focused on your relationships with BIPOCs. At least once or twice a month, check in. That is the key to maintaining and sustaining solid allyship and to letting your BIPOC folks know that you don’t take them for granted.

By the same token, make it clear that you expect them to stand by you, too. Schedule a talk about managing your expectations. Discuss what you need for your relationship. The more honest conversations you have, the stronger your allyship.

Pick up the phone and check-in

These days, people run their relationships via text messages. Resist the tendency to communicate solely by texts. Allies need ear-to-ear conversations, which go below the surface. So pick up the phone and talk to your people.

Rinse and repeat

Building relationships takes time and effort.

Identify and engage BIPOC accountability partners

As you build relationships with BIPOC folks in your circles, you may get a sense of who you can turn to with questions to help you in your allyship. You want to know better to do better, so as mutual trust is developed, see who among your growing circle might be willing to aid you and serve as a kind of personal “accountability partner,” to help you keep it 100, and tweak your anti-racist efforts to align with your goal of being a true ally.

III

Bonus Section

Inside A Conversation That Jumpstarts Allyship

The following came from a real conversation between a White person (WP) and me, xk. I edited the conversation to focus attention on the relevant parts. I put comments in brackets so you can visualize my efforts at deep listening, being curious, showing empathy, and sharing my perspectives.

My intent in this conversation was simple: to learn how a person from a different social location than me viewed a current event. In this case, we discussed the protests following George Floyd's death. The ultimate purpose was to build a bridge between us.

Scene opens on a small boat with two men making conversation...

[xk: Xolani Kacela; WP: White Person]

xk: Tell me, what are your impressions about the protests these days [after George Floyd's death]?

WP: I don't really understand what they're all about.

xk: What do you think they are protesting about? [Leading the conversation with curiosity.]

WP: I see tons of rioting and looting taking place in their own neighborhoods.

xk: Yeah, I don't believe violence is the answer. But, what about the peaceful protests that you see on TV? [I'm showing genuine agreement. I keep the

conversation focused on relatable events.]

WP: I'm not racist, so I don't understand what all the confusion is about?

xk: Do you understand that George Floyd was the victim of police brutality? [Slight test to determine what perspective the person holds with relation to news sources.]

WP: They say he was passing a fake bill. That ain't right.

xk: No, it's not. But what about the police officer putting his knee on the man's neck? What are your thoughts about that? [More curiosity.]

WP: The police are there for safety and law and order.

xk: I agree.

WP: He probably didn't have to kill the guy.

xk: I definitely agree with that. Could that be why people are protesting? [I'm illuminating our shared perspective and keeping the conversation focused.]

WP: It looks like riots to me. Burning buildings in their own neighborhoods.

xk: You feel pretty strongly about the bad stuff in Black neighborhoods, huh? [Simple mirroring to show my active listening.]

WP: Yeah, man. Like I said, I'm not racist. But, if a person comes at me sideways, I'm going to respond as I see fit.

xk: What do you mean by that? [More curiosity.]

WP: If someone gets stupid with me, I'm going to get stupid, too.

xk: I hope you don't think I'm saying you are a racist. I'm just trying to understand your views on the protests. [I'm trying to keep the conversation on the core issue of white views of protests. So I avoid getting sidetracked about who is racist or not.] What about the Black Lives Matter movement?

WP: I believe all lives matter. White lives matter, too, you know.

xk: They do. But historically, Black lives have mattered less. I believe the protestors are saying society needs to treat Black people fairly. I wonder if you believe white police officers treat Black people the same as White people. [I'm showing more curiosity without imposing my perspective.]

WP: I don't know. They should. People shouldn't be treated differently because of their skin color.

xk: You believe in equal treatment for all people by police? [This is an open

and honest question. I'm genuinely curious.]

WP: Of course. I'm not racist. I told you that.

xk: I wonder if people in this town [rural Texas county] have seen Black people, except on TV. [More of the previous query.]

WP: Some folks probably don't know any Black people. We only have about three Black families in town. [Mason, Tx; pop. 1215]

xk: Only three Black families. [Mirroring.]

WP: Yeah. There was the Turner family, and everyone knew them. There are a couple more.

xk: Do you think people in this town consider Black people as equals. [Genuine curiosity.]

WP: A lot of them probably don't.

xk: Interesting. I grew up in mixed-race communities because my father was military. We never talked about White people negatively in my family. I just thought people were people. Well, I knew people had different skin color and were of different races. But, my parents didn't tell us we were less than or White people were bad. [Sharing my personal experience.]

WP: I grew up hearing racist talk. I moved away before I realized people want the same things for their families. I treat people the same. Business is business for me.

xk: Well, all money is green. It's not black or white. That's for sure. [I'm empathizing with the person.]

End scene

At this point, I feel that we've met human-to-human in meaningful ways. So, I thank my person for being honest with me and sharing their feelings.

You, too, can engage in similar conversations that jumpstart allyship with BIPOCs. You are only limited by your imagination and curiosity. A whole universe of subjects is out there to discuss. Most topics have breadth and depth that enable you to identify common ground and shared values. Think broadly and stay open to the surprising ways conversations can unfold.

My best advice is to maintain a posture of curiosity and non-defensiveness. Be open-minded to unexpected twists and turns. As long as you refrain from

JUMPSTART YOUR ALLYSHIP

trying to persuade, you will succeed in your attempts to create allyship.

Most of all, have fun and jumpstart your allyship!

Conclusion

Wrapping Up

The truth is that each of these “steps” supports each of the others and they needn’t be in this particular order. I could have called them pillars or principles. But I strongly believe that to get moving, you need to put one foot in front of the other. Take a solid step, and then take another. So, “steps” they will be.

Here’s another truth: I am no expert or genius in allyship. You will have your own ideas and ways of generating solid allyship with BIPOCs. Feel free to expand upon the ideas that I’ve presented here. Make your own rules and incorporate your own values into them—but remember to create that all-important feedback loop with more and more BIPOC friends. The critical thing is consistency and commitment to the process.

Allyship is not a one-and-done type of thing. It takes time, patience, and commitment. You can do it.

Why not start now?



About the Author

Xolani “xk” Kacela, Ph.D. is the author of *The Black UU Survival Guide*. He has authored several books, including *It’s Your World*, *Finding Your Way Home*, and *Get A Hold of Yourself*. His two upcoming books are *The Dead Man’s Jacket*; *Hard Things*; and *Fishing, Hunting, and Pick-Up Trucks*,

He serves as the Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Las Cruces, NM. Before that, he served UU congregations in Dallas, TX and Durham, NC. He served as a hospice chaplain for several years prior to parish ministry. He has published numerous articles on faith, theology, and other contemporary subjects.

He is a chaplain in the New Mexico Air National Guard, Albuquerque, NM. Prior to that, he served with the District of Columbia National Guard at Joint Base Andrews and at U.S. Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, FL. He began his military career with the Texas Air National Guard in Ft. Worth, TX. He has deployed four times, including service during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Kacela has four earned degrees, including a doctorate in pastoral theology and pastoral counseling from Texas Christian University and undergraduate degree from Morehouse College. He lives with his wife, Tamara, in Las Cruces,

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Xolani Kacela, Ph.D.
Foreword by Dr. Janice Marie Johnson
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**The Black UU Survival Guide: Ten Steps for Surviving as
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It 100**

The Black UU Survival Guide is a map with visible markers and signposts. It has insights about African Americans seeking right relationship with majority white UU congregations. It accomplishes this by giving you a Ten-Step roadmap that helps Black UUs and Blacks seekers establish and maintain a lasting membership in UU communities and form a desired UU identity.