



Being a Better Ally: Building Cultural Intelligence Worksheet

2021

Reframing Allyship

In partnership with the Rare Community, a group of 1,000 truly diverse individuals from around the globe, we researched and reflected on Allyship – its meaning, how Allyship is implemented, and its potential to drive meaningful change in the world. Through this collaboration we uncovered a sad truth – the term Allyship has lost its meaning.

The Rare Community shared that a limited understanding of the practice of Allyship often reduces the practice to performative gestures such as rainbow flags over pride; or a hosting half day inclusion workshops without any resulting policy or process change from leadership teams. That performative Allyship undermines Allyships transformative potential.

Allyship in action should not be about performance. Rather Allyship should be framed as the utilisation of an individual's privilege and power to drive systemic change. For example, changing how we recruit, reward, remunerate, promote, communicate and behave.

Allyship also demands that we are accomplices and co-conspirators – working together hand in hand with minority and/or marginalised communities to drive the needed change. In *Be A Better Ally* by Tsedale M. Melaku, Angie Beeman, David G. Smith, and W. Brad Johnson they summed this up perfectly:

“We view allyship as a strategic mechanism used by individuals to become collaborators, accomplices, and co-conspirators who fight injustice and promote equity in the workplace through supportive personal relationships and public acts of sponsorship and advocacy. Allies endeavor to drive systemic improvements to workplace policies, practices, and culture.”

Source: <https://hbr.org/2020/11/be-a-better-ally>

A Way Forward: Building Cultural Intelligence

The Rare Community shared a first step to being a better ally and driving change: to build Cultural Intelligence. Cultural Intelligence is the ability to work with cultures in a way that acknowledges and respects the culture of the person or communities being collaborated with. It is one of the key attributes of inclusive leaders, to be able to connect with a range of voices within a team and wider audience.

Cultural Intelligence has been described as the essential intelligence of the 21st century as it enables you to work with a wide range of people, a critical skill in any business, but particularly in a global marketplace where you are more likely to encounter people whose life experience differs from your own.

It is important to remember that cultural differences aren't just about nationality, ethnicity, ability or belief. Many of us work in multigenerational organizations, alongside younger or older colleagues who have cultural references, assumptions and attitudes that are very different from our own.

Reflect On Your Cultural Intelligence

To get a quick snapshot of your Cultural Intelligence take 5 minutes to reflect on and complete the below. It is unlikely you will be able to answer yes to all the questions and if you answer no, it helps identify a gap in your Cultural Intelligence to fill. And of course, the below is not exhaustive of all the elements of cultural intelligence you can build. It is a simple exercise to provoke reflection.

	Yes	No	Maybe
I would know how to respond to someone who says 'all lives matter'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would know how to support a transgender colleague who was transitioning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know where the gender-neutral bathrooms are	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know where I would find the prayer room at my workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would know how to support a colleague going through menopause	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I regularly self assess to recognise personal barriers in working cross-culturally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organization uses expertise from marginalised communities to help us work more effectively within differing cultural contexts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organization provides regular cross-cultural workshops/training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3 Ways To Build Your Cultural Intelligence

1. Expand Your Knowledge Base

Simply having a good understanding of different cultures is not enough to be a culturally intelligent leader. It is also important to commit to continuous development – constantly adding to your and your organization's collective knowledge of good cultural practices.

Commit to reading, watching or listening to works from voices different to your own and absorbing experiences that you have no insight into. Organisations have, for example, introduced Cultural Intelligence Learning Circles – monthly learning groups to reflect and discuss a topic and develop collective knowledge.

Below we have included some resources, all in English, which will support your own and your organisation's cultural intelligence learning journey.

2. Incentivise Cultural Intelligence

Culturally intelligent leaders create incentive systems that encourage and reward their teams' cultural development. Ensuring that the fostering of cultural intelligence is embedded into the organisations day-to-day practices both individually and collectively.

In practical terms this could mean including development of Cultural Intelligence in Personal Development Plans, embedding it in how you bonus or highlighting good Cultural Intelligence as a factor in promotion.

It could also mean celebrating those people who have demonstrated Cultural Intelligence, for example raising the profile of someone who questioned a policy that is not inclusive to all and working to change it.

3. Collaborate and Co-Create

The best teacher is firsthand experience with a culture, if not immersion in it. Although the lessons can be painful, you must touch it, try it, make mistakes, apologize, internalize what you have learned, and try again. Unmediated experience is the best way to develop your Cultural Intelligence.

Within your own organisation you can establish co-mentoring networks where people different from each other can learn from each other. Create ERGs and play an active role in the ERG which represents a demographic different to your own.

Often leaders rely on multicultural individuals within their team for their cultural expertise - adding extra labour to their roles. Bringing in subject matter experts or community representatives to run workshops, co-create with you, and be your accomplice and co-conspirator enables authentic cultural insights without unfairly tapping into your diverse staff.

Allyship is not a one-off event, it is a lifelong process of self inquiry, cultural intelligence and action. Now is the time to be an ally and drive systemic change.

“We all have an opportunity — and a responsibility — to support change on our own teams, which will ultimately benefit our organizations and society.”

Source: <https://hbr.org/2020/11/be-a-better-ally>

Thank you to the Rare Community and the consultancy Utopia for their thoughts and expertise in compiling this worksheet.

Further Resources

Films

<i>I Am Not Your Negro</i>	Writer James Baldwin tells the story of race in modern America with his unfinished novel, <i>Remember This House</i> .
<i>The Farewell</i>	A Chinese family discovers their grandmother has only a short while left to live and decides to keep her in the dark, scheduling a wedding to gather before she dies.
<i>Disclosure</i>	"An in-depth look at hollywood's depiction of transgender people and the impact of those stories on transgender lives and american culture."
<i>Land Of Silence And Darkness</i>	A documentary about 56 year-old Fini Straubinger, blind and deaf since her teens, who has dedicated her life to helping the similarly afflicted.
<i>Crip Camp</i>	Down the road from Woodstock, a revolution blossomed at a ramshackle summer camp for teenagers with disabilities, transforming their lives and igniting a landmark movement.
<i>India's Daughter</i>	The life and death of Jyoti Singh, an Indian medical student whose violation and murder by gang rapists exposed the violent misogyny of Indian society.

Books

Ta-Nehisi Coates, <i>Between The World and Me</i> , 2015	Intensely intimate and unflinching eloquent, Coates' dissection of America's tumultuous relationship with race is an invigorating collection of personal flashpoints that broadened the author's understanding of racial injustice in modern America. Framed as a wrenching letter to his teenage son, <i>Between the world and me</i> is a classic in the making.
Reni Eddo Lodge, <i>Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race</i> , 2017	Exploring issues from eradicated black history to the political purpose of white dominance, whitewashing to the inextricable link between class and race, this book offers a framework for how to see, acknowledge and counter racism.
Sarah Schulman, <i>The Gentrification of the Mind</i> , 2013	In this gripping memoir of the aids years (1981-1996), Sarah Schulman recalls how much of the rebellious queer culture, cheap rents, and a vibrant downtown arts movement vanished almost overnight to be replaced by gay conservative spokespeople and mainstream consumerism. Schulman takes us back to her Lower East Side and brings it to life, filling these pages with vivid memories of her avant-garde queer friends and dramatically recreating the early years of the Aids crisis as experienced by a political insider.
Tea Uglow, <i>Loud and Proud</i> , 2020	<i>Loud and Proud</i> is an inspirational collection of speeches from the LGBTQ+ community and its allies that have changed our world and the conversation.

Grace Lee Boggs, <i>Living For Change</i> , 2016	<i>Living For Change</i> is a sweeping account of a legendary human rights activist whose network included Malcolm X and C. L. R. James. From the end of the 1930s, through the Cold War, the civil rights era, and the rise of the Black Panthers to later efforts to rebuild crumbling urban communities, living for change is an exhilarating look at a remarkable woman who dedicated her life to social justice.
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, <i>We Should All Be Feminists</i> , 2014	Taken from her globally influential TED talk, this is Ngozi Adichie's feminist manifesto. A powerful personal essay of hope and ambition for a better, fairer world. Required reading.
Cathy Park Hong, <i>Minor Feelings: A Reckoning On Race and the Asian Condition</i> , 2021	Poet and essayist Cathy Park Hong fearlessly and provocatively blends memoir, cultural criticism, and history to expose fresh truths about racialized consciousness in America. Part memoir and part cultural criticism, this collection is vulnerable, humorous, and provocative. Its relentless and riveting pursuit of vital questions around family and friendship, art and politics, identity and individuality, will change the way you think about our world.
Charlie Craggs, <i>To My Trans Sisters</i> , 2017	Dedicated to trans women everywhere, this inspirational collection of letters written by successful trans women shares the lessons they learnt on their journeys to womanhood, celebrating their achievements and empowering the next generation to become who they truly are. Written by politicians, scientists, models, athletes, authors, actors, and activists from around the world, these letters capture the diversity of the trans experience and offer advice from make-up and dating through to fighting dysphoria and transphobia.
Alison Kafer, <i>Feminist, Queer, Crip</i> , 2013	In <i>Feminist, Queer, Crip</i> , Alison Kafer imagines a different future for disability and disabled bodies. Challenging the ways in which ideas about the future and time have been deployed in the service of compulsory able-bodiedness and able-mindedness, Kafer rejects the idea of disability as a predetermined limit.
Gabby Rivera, <i>Juliet Takes A Breath</i> , 2016	Juliet takes a breath is a coming of age story about a Latina lesbian from the Bronx who travels to Portland for the summer to intern with a feminist writer who she admires and idolizes.
Hilda Vilaria, <i>Born Both: An Intersex Life</i> , 2017	From one of the world's foremost intersex activists, a candid, provocative, and eye-opening memoir of gender identity, self-acceptance, and love.
Grayson Perry, <i>The Descent of Man</i> , 2017	Grayson Perry's timely, entertaining book explores how rigid masculine roles can destroy men's lives.
Jamie Windust, <i>In Their Shoes</i> , 2020	This book is a call to arms for non-binary self-acceptance, self-appreciation and self-celebration. Combining light-hearted anecdotes with their own hard-won wisdom, Jamie Windust explores everything from fashion, dating, relationships and family, through to mental health, work and future key debates.
Bell Hooks, <i>The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity And Love</i> , 2005	The will to change challenges men to reclaim the sensitivity and love that today's embattled masculinity has forsaken. Hooks answers the most common concerns of men - from fears of intimacy to the loss of their patriarchal place in society. The result is a book that can help men to feel, to need and to desire openly - qualities that will allow them to thrive as they never have before.

Podcasts

<i>The Search For Equity</i>	The search for racial equity series is a global forum offering an in depth study and dialog of racial equity and justice, through forthright discussion and a syllabus that intends to amplify the most authentic and powerful voices of our time and of this movement. We aim to create safe spaces for the most important and authentic discussions.
<i>Speaking Out</i>	London-based broadcaster Edward Adoo and US DJ T Storm team up to discuss the experiences of black people who are stopped and searched in their countries. Together they hear the personal stories of others from all over the world who've suffered the humiliation of what many who have been stopped say is apparent racial stereotyping. They also talk to researchers and policy makers about the psychological trauma suffered by those subjected to stop and search; and also look at arguments for the practice and ask whether it's ever fair to stop and search.
<i>About Race</i>	<p>From the author behind the bestselling <i>Why I'm No Longer Talking To White People About Race</i>, comes a podcast that takes the conversation a step further.</p> <p>Featuring key voices from the last few decades of anti-racist activism, about race with Reni Eddo-Lodge looks at the recent history that lead to the politics of today.</p>
<i>What it Means to be Black in Brazil</i>	Racism rooted in slavery has not gone away in brazil — and it took time until its existence was even acknowledged.
<i>Queer Talk</i>	This episode with Jordan Beneditti discusses transition, activism and the power of body positivity online.
<i>Call Me Mother</i>	Author and journalist Shon Faye talks with LGBTQ+ trailblazers who have something important, interesting or enlightening to say about what it means to be queer in the world today. Featuring conversations with queer elders, <i>Call Me Mother</i> gives you the language you need to grapple with “new” experiences by showing that you belong to a much broader history.
<i>The Heumann Perspective</i>	Join Judy Heumann, an internationally recognized bad-ass disability activist, in conversation with disabled changemakers and their allies. For all fighting for social justice, these conversations across the worlds of art, entertainment, policy and advocacy are sure to light a rebellious fire under you to fight harder for all people.
<i>Disability Visibility Podcast</i>	This is life from a disabled lens. Disability visibility is a podcast hosted by San Francisco night owl Alice Wong featuring conversations on politics, culture, and media with disabled people. If you're interested in disability rights, social justice, and intersectionality, this show is for you.

Glossary

Accomplace:	being willing to act with and for oppressed peoples and accepting the potential fallout from doing so.
Allyship:	a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people.
Bias:	inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group.
Performative:	actions that primarily function to boost social capital rather than affect actual change.
Privilege:	a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group.
Systemic barriers:	policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded.

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Thank you