

# FROM ALLIES TO CO-CONSPIRATORS: Advocating For Justice With People Rather Than For People

## A Virtual Discussion and Conversation w/ No White Saviors

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### Quote to set the tone for the session:

*"To be an activist is to speak. To be an advocate is to listen" - Eva Lewis*

### Ground rules for a safer, more productive space.

- We will be making this session interactive, which will mean asking questions throughout. We will be asking for up to two people to respond to each question and will ask that participants keep their responses to a maximum of two minutes.
- We understand that this content is new for some people and that everyone is at a different point in the unlearning, decolonising process. We ask that you enter into this discussion with an open mind and a willingness to have your views challenged.

## Performative Allyship > Co-conspirator:

**Question: Can you name any other historical examples where white people, or those in a position of privilege have acted as co-conspirators and abolitionists?**

- Traditionally, “allyship” has had a lot in common with white saviorism. Often coming with a need for the title of “ally” and recognition.
- Allyship has generally meant little sacrifice at all (i.e. posting a Black square or making a one off donation).
- We like the terms accomplice or co-conspirator better, as there is a need for white people and others who experience privilege in the global system of white supremacy to roll up their sleeves and be willing to get messy.

**Question: In what ways have you engaged in performative allyship?**

## Defining a Co-Conspirator:

**Question: Can one be an activist & advocate at the same time?**

- What does it mean to be a co-conspirator?
  - Co-Conspirator, as it pertains to the abolition of white supremacy and the actualizing of liberation of Black and Brown people, requires those who have historically oppressed, colonized and enslaved to tell the truth about the violence of their ancestors and the ways in which global systems uphold that same violence today. A co-conspirator, once faced with the truth, must take on an active, consistent role in dismantling the very system of white supremacy that grants them unearned privilege, power and protection.
- In an interview, Sister Souljah said that she had “never met any good white people”:  
Play video clip

**Question: When Sister Souljah says that she has “never met any good white people”, what is your initial reaction?**

- Malcolm X Speaks on John Brown: “We need allies who are going to help us achieve a victory, not allies who are going to tell us to be nonviolent. If a white man wants to be your ally, what does he think of John Brown? You know what John Brown did? He went to war. He was a white man who went to war against white people to help free slaves.

He wasn't nonviolent. White people call John Brown a nut. Go read the history, go read what all of them say about John Brown. They're trying to make it look like he was a nut, a fanatic. They made a movie on it. I saw a movie on the screen one night. Why, I would be afraid to get near John Brown if I go by what other white folks say about him. But they depict him in this image because he was willing to shed blood to free the slaves. And any white man who is ready and willing to shed blood for your freedom—in the sight of other whites, he's nuts. As long as he wants to come up with some nonviolent action, they go for that, if he's liberal, a nonviolent liberal, a love-everybody liberal. But when it comes time for making the same kind of contribution for your and my freedom that was necessary for them to make for their own freedom, they back out of the situation. So, when you want to know good white folks in history where black people are concerned, go read the history of John Brown. That was what I call a white liberal. But those other kind, they are questionable. So if we need white allies in this country, we don't need those kind who compromise. We don't need those kind who encourage us to be polite, responsible, you know. We don't need those kind who give us that kind of advice. We don't need those kind who tell us how to be patient. No, if we want some white allies, we need the kind that John Brown was, or we don't need you. And the only way to get those kind is to turn in a new direction." — **Malcolm X**

**Question: Can you name any other historical examples where white people, or those in a position of privilege have acted as co-conspirators and abolitionists?**

- Tangible ways that you must show up as a co-conspirator:
  - Becoming a co-conspirator, much like becoming anti-racist, is a life-long process not a destination you arrive at. It requires accessing decolonised education about social justice issues.
  - Constant process of unlearning and decolonising your understanding of the world and how you have been conditioned to experience it
  - Avoid virtue signaling or looking for a trophy for doing the bare minimum, human response in confronting the violent system of white supremacy that you actively benefit from on a daily basis
  - You don't have to be an activist to be a co-conspirator. It is imperative that you adapt a radical approach in whatever spaces you occupy and whatever fields you work in. If you're a teacher, be a radical teacher for justice. If you're a physician, be a physician that actively confronts medical racism. If you're a development worker, work to change these systems from within.
  - Make use of the power of social media.



**Question: In your own understanding, what does advocating for justice with people entail?**

**Resources:**

- [Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex](#)
- [A lot at stake: indigenous and minorities sidelined on climate change fight](#)
- [It's not just Greta Thunberg: why are we ignoring the developing world's inspiring activists?](#)
- [4 ways humanitarian work abroad reinforces the oppression it should be fighting](#)
- [We Need Co-Conspirators, Not Allies](#)
- [Feminsta Jones Doesn't Think Your An Ally](#)
- [Exclusive: Aid groups face calls to open up on racism as survey finds data holes](#)
- [4 ways humanitarian work abroad reinforces the oppression it should be fighting](#)
- [Is your company fighting racism or just talking about it?](#)



