BECOMING AN ALLY

What is an Ally?
An ally is a member of the agent social group who takes a stand against social injustice directed at target groups (Whites who speak out against racism, men who are anti-sexist). An ally works to be an agent of social change rather than an agent of oppression. When a form of oppression has multiple target groups, as do racism, ableism, and heterosexism, target group members can be allies to other targeted social groups they are not part of (African American people can be allies to Native Americans, blind people can be allies to people who use wheelchairs).

What does an Ally do?

✓ Take action. Before everything else, the mark of an ally is taking action against inequality or mistreatment.
✓ Listen/learn. A gift of alliance is finding out, from the target group experience, how the world is perceived and experienced by someone whose life is different from yours, providing information that has been withheld from you by the conditioning you received. A first act of alliance is to make space for target groups, with unconditioned support from you, to define issues with which they grapple, the structure of the “ism” from their own experience.
✓ Use your privilege. As an ally you identify the resources you have and use your resources on behalf of the target group, gaining them access and opportunity.
✓ Support the target person’s leadership. True alliance means getting out of the way of the target group members, supporting them in taking charge of their lives and making their own decisions about what must be done. To rescue, or attempt to rescue, or take over removes the power once again. Conversely, to step out of the way without offer of support or tactful guidance is to abandon.
✓ Go after nontarget members. Target group members, engaged in their own work, need you to intervene with and educate other members of your group. Moreover, your intervention must be from the standpoint of support, not differentiating yourself as better than the others of your group. To the extent you reject or push them away, you are pushing away part of yourself.
✓ Take a chance; make mistakes. Expect to make mistakes, and to agree to fix them when you do. Alliance work is built upon trying things, making mistakes, and going on.
✓ Take care of yourself. Alliance is a lifelong activity. It can’t be sustained unless you are rested, replenished, and hopeful. So, in light of that:
✓ Get support, accept support.

By Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team – www.youngwomensactionteam.org