

# ALLYSHIP TIP SHEET

Allyship is a powerful tool through which we not only support diversity and inclusion but also amplify the numerous contributions diverse people continue to make to our professional spaces and to society more generally, contributions often made in the face of bias, discrimination, and bigotry.

The below contains excerpts from “10 Actions You Can Take to Promote Racial Justice in the Workplace,” *Forbes*, June 2020.

## 1 GET TO KNOW MORE PEOPLE OF COLOR

Fear is often the root of bias and discrimination, and the best antidotes to fear are knowledge and familiarity. Simply getting to know people better can lead to more trusting relationships. Trust is an integral part of an organization’s diversity and inclusion efforts and is critically important when developing talent. Trust enhances the efficacy of talent management efforts like mentorship, sponsorship, and feedback. It’s also far easier to fall victim to biases and stereotypes when you don’t know a person and/or are completely unfamiliar with their culture or community, so get to know more people of color and others outside of your particular in-group.

What are some concrete ways you can intentionally get to know more people of color?

- a. Start by reaching out to the colleagues of color on your projects individually to discuss their contributions, area of expertise, or areas of interest.
- b. Reach out to colleagues of color and invite them to “join you” in attending virtual events, including professional association programs or happy hours. Then schedule time to debrief on the event.

- c. Attend virtual D+I events and programs, and note panelists and presenters of color. Reach out to them after the event to introduce yourself and comment on any portion of their presentation that you found interesting.

## 2 CALL A COLLEAGUE OF COLOR THIS WEEK TO CHECK IN AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT STATE OF PROTEST AND UPEHAVAL

Many would argue that societal issues won’t be resolved through laws and policies alone, but that human-to-human connection is also required. For people of color incidents of brutality and injustice are a tiring day-to-day reality, and it is important that we demonstrate empathy and start a critical dialogue. Just as you’d call a friend if they had a death in the family or lost a job, you should reach out now as well. These incidents wear on the psyche of so many people of color as we worry not just for ourselves but also for our children and broader community, and it’s important for friends and colleagues to demonstrate not just compassion, but sincere interest in doing what they can to help.

### 3 ATTEND A LOCAL DIVERSITY EVENT

If you're looking for ways to step outside your comfort zone, here is an easy way to take action. It doesn't take much effort to attend diversity events – including your organization's affinity network/group events – but it does send a signal to those around you that you have some level of empathy and interest. It can also create meaningful opportunities not only to meet, but also to develop deeper relationships with new people, to learn a lot, to begin to see issues from different perspectives, and, hopefully, to contribute, in some small way, to the solutions.

### 4 TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT RACE

In a message of reflection circulated internally by MoFo's Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Natalie Kernisant, she shared the anxiety she experiences as the new parent of her 10-month-old black son, Sebastian. She stated, "My stomach is tied in knots as I think about the numerous conversations I must soon have with this innocent child about the threat of physical violence that comes with every day mundane activities simply because of the color of his skin." Yet, these conversations are inevitable.

It is critically important that kids begin to learn about issues of race and equity early (in an age appropriate manner) so they can begin to develop their own awareness of injustice. While we may think of these issues as purely adult ones, equity issues often show up for kids quite early on the playground, or in the classroom or cafeteria. I am most proud of my kids when they tell me about seeing something at school that wasn't right and deciding to do something to make it better. When their brains begin to think that way when they're young, they will tend to make similar value-based life decisions as they mature. If you don't feel prepared for these sensitive discussions, seek out [other resources](#).

### 5 MENTOR A PERSON OF COLOR

If your organization has a formal mentoring program, you can volunteer, but you don't have to wait for an official mentoring program opportunity. Find a colleague of color in your office or business area who is doing great things and tell them that; offer to help

them find new and interesting work, or offer to review and provide feedback on a project they are working on. Even better, encourage your peers to do the same. We all know the critical importance of [access to power](#). Be intentional in your efforts to ensure that you are providing that valuable access to some who may never otherwise have it.

### 6 ENCOURAGE OBJECTIVITY IN THE SELECTION PROCESSES

Subjectivity is often the death knell for people of color. Too often when selection processes or other decisions are made without clear-cut objective criteria, people of color (or of difference) end up getting the short end of the stick. Indeed, [unconscious bias](#) often encourages decision-makers to prefer one candidate over another: "*I just feel like I connected better with Becky. She just seems like she would be a better fit with our team.*" Or perhaps the subjectivity leads to a preference for one vendor over another. "*Jack's proposal just felt more professional. I can't put my finger on it, but he just seems to have a better product.*" Utilize [behavioral interviewing techniques](#) to reduce bias in the interview process.

### 7 ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

[Diversity in firm leadership](#) is of critical importance to effecting lasting change. Having those who have the lived experience of navigating professional spaces as diverse professionals in positions of authority, power, and influence is crucial when designing systems to support and advance diversity and inclusion within an organization. It is also an important signal to talent, both current and prospective, that advancement at this organization is possible. We can begin to create an environment where diversity is valued by taking small steps; for example, start by simply pointing out the lack of diversity on teams. "I'm noticing that our team isn't too diverse. Is anyone else concerned about that?" Then listen and see how people respond. This might just provide an opening for someone else to speak up who didn't have the courage to say something previously. Once there is increased diversity, we must begin the work of making sure there is real [inclusion](#) as well.

## 8 CHALLENGE YOUR OWN STEREOTYPICAL BELIEFS AND BIASES

Changing your behaviors and actions starts with changing your thoughts. Challenge yourself to identify your own deeply embedded stereotypes or biased thoughts. Start by taking Harvard's [Implicit Association Test](#). Although there are some who question the assessment's validity, it is a good way to begin thinking of how bias may be affecting you/your perspectives. Continue to ask yourself hard questions about bias, power, and privilege. Did your parents make disparaging remarks about people of color while you were growing up, which may have caused you to think of certain groups as lazy or not as smart? If you haven't had very many direct experiences with people outside of your in-group (in college or law school, for example) to challenge that thinking, you may subtly/subconsciously maintain those stereotypes.

## 9 USE YOUR PRIVILEGE TO ADVOCATE FOR MARGINALIZED GROUPS, NOT TO SPEAK FOR THEM

In a recent article on [allyship](#), MoFo partner Dario de Martino said, "I, as an ally, try to empower (people) and make space for (diverse) voices to be heard. I take the time to talk with all the associates in my group and get to know them personally. Giving practical and actionable feedback on a regular basis is extremely important to me. I try to create safe spaces for dialogue

on differences and proactively solicit diverse viewpoints. I make sure everyone knows diverse or dissenting perspectives, and ideas are always welcome and, in fact, valued. I step back and listen. I appreciate the honesty and validity of the stories and experiences of others even if they are different from my own." Allies have an important and critical role in effecting change. Do not shy away from the responsibility.

## 10 SPEAK UP PUBLICLY

[Microaggressions](#) and inequities are pervasive in the workplace, and it's so important for allies to [speak up when they happen](#). The simple truth is that when those in positions of power stay silent, little changes.

Real change happens when we are willing to stick our necks out and say something publicly. So when you see something, say something. For example, the next time you're in a meeting and you can tell that the one or two people of color can't get a word in edgewise or their comments seem to be easily minimized, offer to amplify their voices. It might sound like this: "*Jeff, if you don't mind before we move on, I'd like to revisit Leon's idea. I think that's an innovative approach that we hadn't thought about and it would be smart if we spent a bit more time unpacking that.*"

As Martin Luther King famously said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."



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### SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS THAT WORK TO ADVANCE RACIAL JUSTICE

In addition to the tips above, supporting organizations dedicated to challenging racial injustice, ending police violence, and ensuring basic human rights for underrepresented minorities is another form of allyship. Throughout its 34-year history, [the Morrison & Foerster Foundation](#) has focused its giving on nonprofit programs and Equal Justice Works fellows serving people in our communities who face disadvantage, discrimination, and injustice. In response to the recent police killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Rayshard Brooks, and others whose names we have not learned, the Foundation has donated a total of \$175,000 and counting. That includes \$90,000 in charitable donations by individuals, \$50,000 by the MoFo Foundation, and \$35,000 by the Firm.

“We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. An absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community, a state, a nation. Fear and anger can make us vindictive and abusive, unjust and unfair, until we all suffer from the absence of mercy and we condemn ourselves as much as we victimize others.”

◆ Bryan Stevenson ◆

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Allyship Explained

[8 Everyday Ways to Fight Racism](#), nnevd.org

[Allyship – The Key to Unlocking The Power of Diversity](#), *Forbes*, November 2018

[Allyship \(& Accomplice\): The What, Why, and How](#), Medium, November 2018

### How to Be an Ally

[Guide to Being an Ally](#), womenofcolorpress.org

[Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies](#), racialequalitytools.org

[How to Be an Ally if You Are a Person with Privilege](#), Francis E. Kendall, 2003

[Please Don't Ask Your Black Friends to Teach You About Racism](#), theeverymom.com

### Allyship in the Workplace

[Your Black Colleagues May Look Like They're Okay – Chances Are They're Not](#), Refinery 29, May 2020

[10 Actions You Can Take to Promote Racial Justice in the Workplace](#), *Forbes*, June 2020

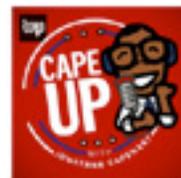
[Working While Black: Stories from Black Corporate America](#), *Fortune*, June 2020

### Raising Allies

[How to Prevent Raising the Next Amy Cooper](#), CNN, June 2020



**[I Realized I Was Black](#)** – A CNN collection of short videos of black Americans recounting the moment they realized being Black impacted how people treated them.



**[Cape Up](#)** – The author of *White Rage* on the persistent pattern of punishing Blacks for their resilience.