

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL: A CONVO WITH ALI THE ALLY



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Ally. We've heard the term for a few years now as it relates to our fight for social justice and equity. White folks who support the cause publicly and privately have been imbued with this title, and even some have been endorsed by the "Black Judge and Jury", also known as Black Twitter.

Most recently, we've added another dimension to allyship - ally fatigue. That's right. Allies are becoming burnout and exhausted with the constant fight for social justice. Now, don't be surprised if you hear, "They're tired!? Let me tell them something about being tired! Black folks are tired of being tired! They don't get to be tired!...." However, we can not do this work alone so it is dire that we acknowledge and discuss all of the layers of being an ally in its full complexity. And to be clear, the role of ally is not reserved for White people only. It is going to take several generations of White people and People of Color to call out racism and dismantle all of the -isms that plague our system.

And to that end, we would like you to meet **Ali Titus**, a true ally based in Charleston, SC. Ali is the **Policy and Communications Director for the ACLU South Carolina**, and she has graciously agreed to share her thoughts on ally fatigue.

What does being an ally mean to you?

Ali: It means accepting that you will always have a role in the system. Allies have to be willing to put their bodies on the line and take the hit. We can't be quiet about what we're doing because we're planting seeds for the future. You have to be willing to use your platform and be willing to suffer on a personal level. White people also shouldn't expect a "good person" award for being an ally, as it detracts from the actual good you are trying to do.

What are the challenges that allies face?

Ali: We are never going to fully understand. We can have points of empathy, but no true understanding of what it means to be Black in America. There will always be more things to learn. For me, COVID-19 was the first time that I felt that someone in my family could die because of the government. I asked how could democracy betray me like this? But this is what Black people face every day.

What have you learned as a white woman who has been called an ally?

Ali: I've learned that being an ally is a test of endurance. It's like developing a new muscle that you build over time. It hurts. You don't want to face it (racism), but you get up and do it anyway because it's the right thing. Also, it's hard for white women to get past their own oppression to acknowledge their oppression of others.

How can an ally use their platform?

Ali: One example is when you get invited to speak on a panel, ask who else is on the panel. If there isn't diverse representation, then you recommend that they invite X,Y,or Z. If they tell you that there's no room, then you concede your seat to make room.

As an ally, how do you refuel and recharge?

Ali: Once you identify racism and social injustice, you can no longer unsee it. So I'm spending more time reading fiction by women of color. And I'm reading feminist comedy, more memoirs by women, and trying to find yoga classes that are inclusive.

Finally, what advice would you give to a newbie ally?

Ali: Commit to being uncomfortable for the rest of your life, then figure out how to use this discomfort as fuel. But also, analyze your discomfort. Identify your pressure points. These are your blind spots and your best teachers. Most importantly, educate yourself. Don't put the burden of your education onto your Black friends.

Many thanks to Ali for agreeing to let me share her thoughts with you all. Allies get tired too, but the real ones keep showing up.