

## 4th Question: How Can We Fight Racism In Our Own Communities?

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Source: Jews United for Justice



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For people of color, this is a question about fighting for our own survival. For white people, this is a question about how we can be there for people who are targeted by racism – what some of us call being an ally.

An ally is a person who wants to fight for the equality of a marginalized group that they're not a part of. Acting as an ally means that we have a responsibility and an obligation to stand with people who are oppressed when they call for their own liberation. That we are ready to listen and learn rather than talk and lead. That we lift up the voices and actions of people of color.

For some people here tonight, this is the first time we're talking about racism this way. Remember the words of Ricardo Levins Morales: "Whites invest too much energy worrying about getting it right; about not slipping up and revealing their racial socialization; about saying the right things and knowing when to say nothing. It's not about that. It's about putting your shoulder to the wheel of history." The most important thing is not to be afraid.

For others who are here, this is one of many times we've set ourselves to learn from our Black brothers and sisters. Some steps to continue our work as allies, as taught by Omolara Williams McCallister and Franchesca Ramsey:

- 1) **Understand your privilege.** Think critically and creatively about how your identities and experiences affect the way that you view and interact with others, particularly those who do not share your privilege.
- 2) **Listen, and do your homework.** Educate yourself, don't make people of color prove their point of view is real. Listen first and always. Ask informed questions of someone who has invited you into dialogue, someone who has accepted your invitation to dialogue.
- 3) **Speak up, but not over.** Use your voice and privilege to educate others, but not to speak over the community you're trying to support or take credit for things they are already saying.
- 4) **Be open to making mistakes.** It takes time to learn. Be willing to hear criticism and to apologize. It's not just about your intent, but about your impact. Act differently in the future.
- 5) **Respect and protect boundaries** that Black people and other people of color create. Seek emotional support and energy from other allies, not from the people you're seeking to ally to. Black folks often do not have the opportunity to gather and talk through our issues and differences amongst ourselves – and shouldn't have to support and reassure you.
- 6) **Wake up every day and choose to keep doing this work.** One of the functions of your privilege is that you could walk away from this struggle. Stay in it. Stick with it.
- 7) **Seek real, whole, human relationships with people of color.** Racism keeps us separate - the foundation and the goal of solidarity is to have each other's backs so fully that we are inseparable and can do anything we set our minds to, together.