

LIES ABOUT ALLIES

Creating Cooperative Solidarity



This zine intends to encourage and empower its readers to think about the way our actions uphold systems of oppression, though our intentions may be to dismantle them. We write it with the hopes of facilitating critical self-reflection as a first step to building solidarity in cooperative spaces. We will explore the concept of “allyship” and discuss its commodification or misuse within cooperative communities, aspiring to cultivate practices of accompliceship or solidarity that refrain from exploiting the struggle of marginalized people.

Acknowledgements

We are infinitely grateful for the anti-oppression work of marginalized and oppressed writers, thinkers, theorists, and activists whose contributions are the foundation of our following views on allyship. We would like to take a moment to credit those people whose [frequently undervalued] life’s work has given us guidance and called upon our humility, power, and resilience. With immeasurable respect and appreciation we thank the writers of Indigenous Action Media, *Accomplices Not Allies*, and *Revolutionary Solidarity: A Critical Reader for Accomplices*; Mia McKenzie, Jamie Utt, and Lilla Watson. May your words inspire the spirit of resistance in many more to come. *Ashe*.

*This zine is dedicated to all of those
whose resistance is in their existence*



Introduction

The writing of this zine is a collaborative effort by two student-activists and members of the Agrarian Effort Coop on Patwin land (Davis, California) for the North American Students of Cooperation conference of 2015. As academics and economically privileged we recognize we are afforded the advantage of financial and emotional support from our communities in taking on this project. In addition, we acknowledge that we live in an intimate, student-based, and highly educational cooperative setting which has shaped our understandings, uses, and demands of allyship.

What compelled us to organize this space?

In our cooperative experience, we have observed that a personal attachment to allyship as an identity hinders people's ability to engage in self-reflection on the effectiveness of their solidarity.

This zine was created as a resource to compliment a workshop of the same name, but with the ability to be read on its own. Many social-justice related workshops focus on defining fundamental concepts of allyship such as oppression, racism, or prejudice. While it is essential to validate the various stages of learning, we have felt a need for a more critical, in-depth analysis of allyship--an analysis that does not present allyship as an exciting aspiration but as a complicated place of existence. Fellow participants in these workshops voice intentions to better themselves, rather than address oppressive behavior in their homes/workplaces. We want a workshop that provokes us to call-out our own mistakes and challenges us to be more effective in the action that we take for liberation as a collective.

What are some misconceptions about “allyship”?

Ally is a verb, not a status. “Ally” is not an identity. *To be allied* with a cause is to act in a way that furthers the efforts of those who are in the struggle of it. No one gets to be a self-proclaimed ally. One’s ‘allyship’ is only as strong as one’s current behavior. Past acts of solidarity or assumed future acts of solidarity cannot stand on their own to validate one’s ‘status’ as an ‘ally’.

“Allyship” is ongoing and constant because oppression is ongoing and constant. No one has the choice to take a break from the experience of oppression; therefore, one should refrain from retreating into the comfort of one’s privilege when tired, bored, or burnt out. Instead maintain a practice of self-care, accountability, and self-education.

“Allyship” is consensual. No one is an “ally” unless the people they are allied with trust them to act in solidarity and determine them to be accountable in doing so. No one should offer support in the expectation of receiving validation, sympathy, or encouragement. Actions of allyship are not a dog trick in exchange for a bone. Don’t ask for a gold star or brownie points.

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JOSHUA WIZMAN

Common misuses of allyship observed in coops:

Total disengagement

One may claim to support people's liberation if confronted directly about it, but fail to take part in any discussion or form of initiation, possibly out of fear of being called-out on mistakes or abusing their privilege.

Occasional allyship by convenience

Someone who maybe shows up to protests, or speaks out on others' behalves, but only when convenient or within their comfort to do so.



Surrendering agency

"the follower"; surrendering agency and deflecting culpability by following the lead of those with whom one aims to be in solidarity. This behavior does not take advantage of the potential and agency of every person to disrupt the status quo.

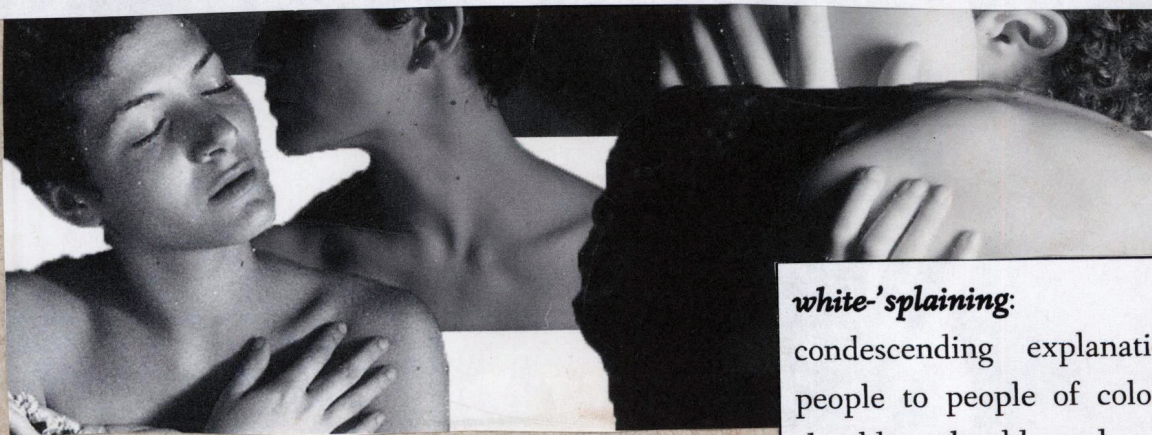
The 'ally' in denial

Burdening other people with the responsibility of keeping one's oppressive behaviors in check rather than striving for self-awareness. Excusing one's mistakes with explanations about "being in a learning process, blah, blah, blah," to dodge accountability. Profusely apologizing for mistakes that are made (sometimes repeatedly), thus drawing attention or using emotional manipulation as a way of coping with guilt.



Intellectual entitlement

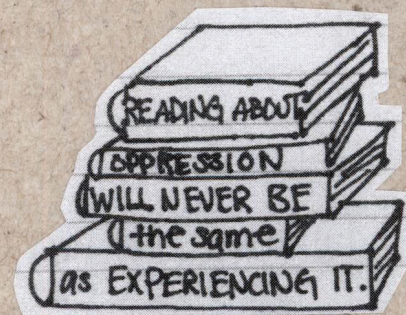
Being comfortable with using academic terminology to discuss oppression. Justifying a perceived superiority of one's opinions or entitlement to spaces intended for anti-oppression work with one's knowledge being rooted in academic institutions. Also a major catalyst for cultural-distancing in families with generational differences in responding to oppression.



white'-splaining:

condescending explanations by white people to people of color defining what should or should not be considered racist and describing how racial oppression feels.

Impulsively sharing revelations, announcing self-discoveries or assuming others will reflect the same eagerness to open discussion in a way that overlooks the possibility that something is common experience for other people.



Reflect. Deconstruct. Discuss.

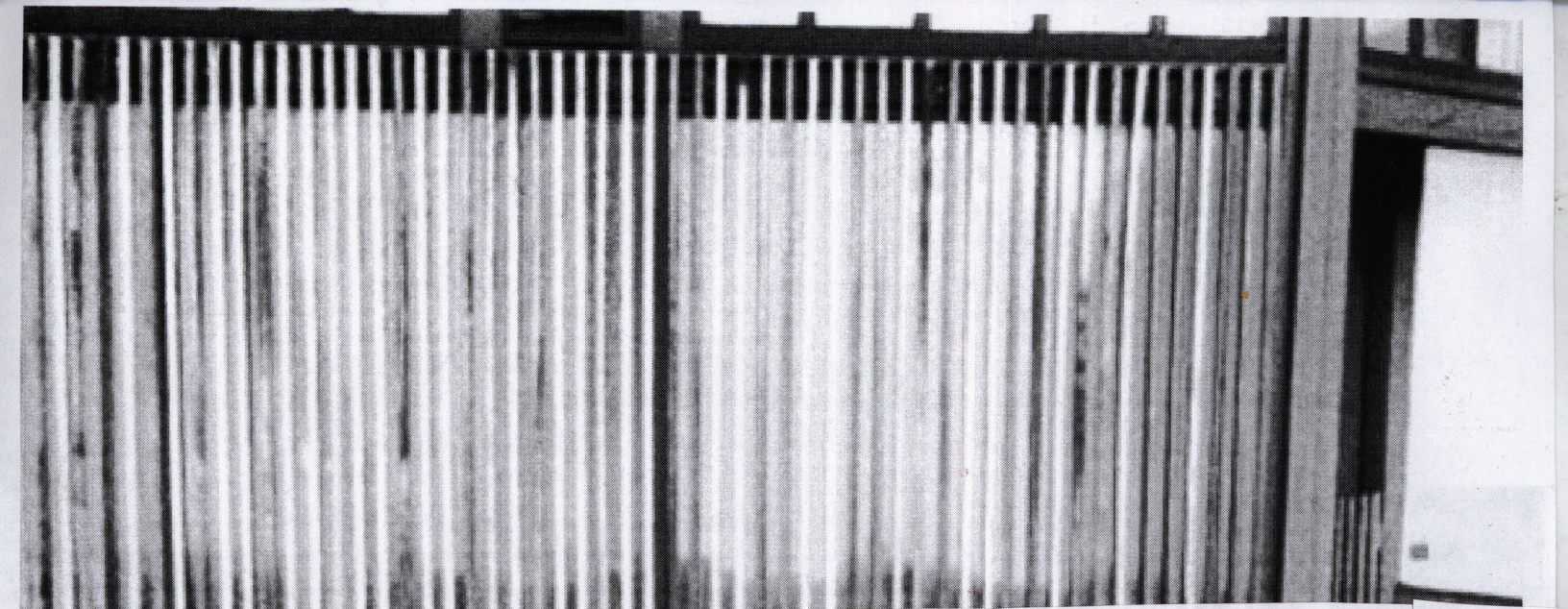
In order to grow, we gotta cultivate a culture of confronting our mistakes. The way we talk about 'systems of oppression' often externalizes the blame for the ways that we perpetuate those systems through our actions. We all embody 'the system' and manifest oppression through our unchecked behaviors. Becoming self-aware is one way to interrupt this cycle:

1. What are some of your fears surrounding allyship? What is uncomfortable about allyship?
2. What aspects of yourself do you feel will be challenged/are being challenged by the process of allyship? (what is hiding behind the fear that you feel? ex: a tendency to want to please people--translates to a fear of making mistakes or overstepping boundaries)
3. What was a time when you felt you did not know how to be an ally, failed to be an ally entirely, or felt you were a poor ally?

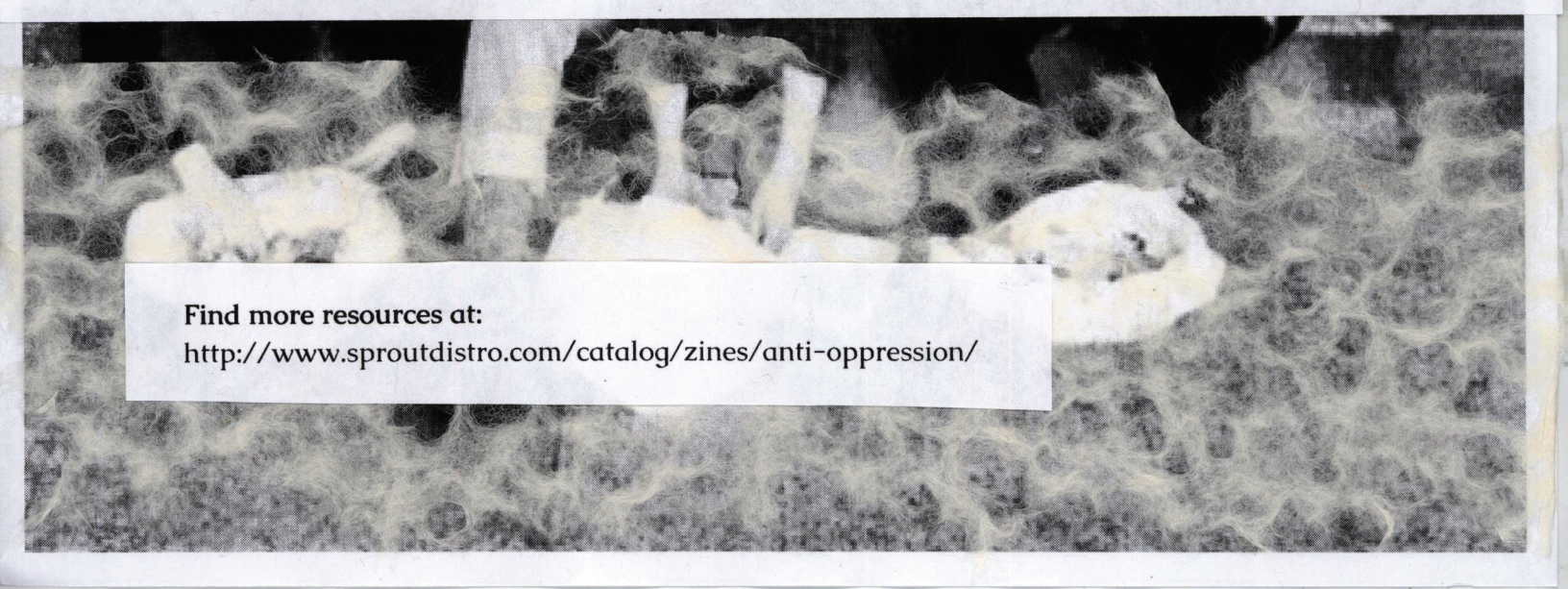


Practical applications in coops:

4. Take a moment to recall all of the chores that go into the daily housekeeping of your coop. Now, reflect on who in your house dominates certain roles. Who takes care of small manual jobs like the trash, notetaking, putting the new toilet paper on the role, and basic tidiness? Who leads large discussions, plans events, or completes physical labor? Who brings up topics related to anti-oppression work or communication improvement? Who takes on the responsibility of doing the least popular chores? Are certain chores undervalued compared to others?
 - a. Are there any trends or patterns (keep in mind relationships to people's intersectional identities)? Have they been discussed?
 - b. What would it look like for those roles to be reversed... Could there be any benefit to you exchanging roles with someone else in your house/workplace (hypothetically)?
5. How much is anti-oppression and social justice work a part of the conversation at home/work? Do you ever find yourself waiting for or expecting someone else to bring up instances of oppressive behavior? (ex: do only people of color bring up the topic of racism or point out racial bias or oppression?)
 - a. What could you do to change this?
 - b. Are there reasons that you might be holding yourself back from starting the conversation?



THIS ZINE WAS COLLABORATIVELY WRITTEN BY MAISIE KISE & CHARLIE ANDERLE ON PATWIN LAND.
ARTWORK AND COMPILATION BY CHARLIE ANDERLE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.
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Find more resources at:
<http://www.sproutdistro.com/catalog/zines/anti-oppression/>