

# Checklist for Allies Against Racism

Developed by Dr. John Raible

BACKGROUND: I devised this checklist in the early 1990s. The idea for the checklist arose out of the need to articulate specific behaviors that led me to view certain individuals as “allies” in the struggle against racism. I came up with the checklist after thinking about what behaviors allowed me to develop a degree of trust with certain individuals, whether they identified as white people or as people of color.

Read through the checklist to get a feel for what constitutes ally behavior on the part of anti-racists. Think about *how often* and *how consistently* you do any or all of them.

## Part 1

- \_\_\_\_\_ I demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the issues of racism.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I continually educate myself about racism and multicultural issues.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I recognize my own limitations in doing anti-racist work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I raise issues about racism over and over, both in public and in private.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I realize "it's not about me" personally. I can be objective and avoid personalizing racial issues as they are raised in conversation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I can identify racism as it is happening.
- \_\_\_\_\_ At meetings, I make sure anti-racism is part of the discussion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I can strategize and work in coalition with diverse others to advance anti-racist work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I attend to group dynamics to ensure the participation of people of different races.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I support and validate the comments and actions of people of color and other allies (but not in a paternalistic manner).
- \_\_\_\_\_ I strive to share power, especially with people from marginalized groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I take a personal interest in the lives and welfare of individuals of different races.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I use my privilege to communicate information from the dominant group to marginalized groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I hold high expectations for people of color and for white people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I reach out to initiate personal contact with people of different races.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I listen carefully so that I am more likely to understand the needs of people from marginalized groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I can adopt and articulate a person of color's point of view when it is useful to do so.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I can accept leadership from people of color as well as from white people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I work side-by-side with people of different races on tasks, projects, and actions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I debrief with people of different races to give and receive "reality checks" and affirmations after meetings, events, and actions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I readily understand—with no explanations necessary—a person of color's position or perception.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have joking relationships with individual people of color and with white people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I can vent with and be present emotionally when individuals need to express feelings about racism.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I debate issues with both people of color and white people and take their ideas seriously.

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- \_\_\_\_\_ I take risks in relating to people across lines of difference.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I demonstrate shared values with people from various communities, for example, impatience with the pace of change, anger at injustice, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I know the private lives of families and friends who are people from different backgrounds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I can relax, socialize, and feel at ease with people of color and with whites.

**Part 2 - The following are some problem areas where individuals sometimes get stuck. These were developed specifically for white individuals. Do any of these apply to you?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I am not clear on the labels people of color prefer to use to identify themselves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When people of color point out racism as it is happening, I feel personally attacked.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I rely on people of color for education about my own (and institutional) racism.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I use meeting time to establish my anti-racist credentials. (e.g., recounting stories about how I “marched in the Sixties” or about my activist years in college).
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is important to me to point out examples of "reverse racism" when I see them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have been told I act in a racist manner without knowing it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I speak for people of color and attempt to explain their positions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I view myself as a mediator between people of color and other whites.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I see my role as interpreting the behavior of people of color for other whites.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I prefer to spend time and energy dealing with my personal feelings and issues rather than moving the anti-racist agenda forward.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I intellectualize about the struggle rather than live it daily.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I wait for people of color to raise white people's awareness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I know fewer than five individual *peers* of color intimately (i.e., *adults*, not younger students or children).

Once again, Part 1 of the checklist is intended to identify general anti-racist behaviors that individuals can take to act as allies against racism. Part 2 details some problem areas to avoid.

While originally developed to answer questions from white teachers and parents about anti-racist steps they could take, I see this checklist as applicable to individuals of all racial or cultural backgrounds.

The main goal is to develop relationships of solidarity, mutuality, and trust, rooted in a praxis of intentional anti-racist thought, action, and reflection. When I observe people consistently taking the above steps (in Part 1), I recognize that that they “get it” when it comes to race and racism.

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