

A Journey on Allyship

Dr. Lester Papa
UC San Francisco

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Dr. Papa starts his presentation with a statement clarifying that he was presenting on his journey to allyship rather than to give a definitive trajectory for allyship. He also invited the audience to consider where they were in their journey toward allyship.**
 - After listening to this talk, in what ways are you already an ally?
 - In what ways are you not ready to be an ally?
- **Dr. Papa introduced himself and his “humanity.”**
 - Did you feel more connected to Dr. Papa after hearing about his personal preferences for gaming and Spam, among other things?
 - How can you search for this humanity in others? What connection are important to you to join with another person?
- **Dr. Papa shared a quote by Lilla Watson, an aboriginal elder and activist. Watson said, “If you have come to help you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”**
 - What are ways in which your liberation is bound with that of others that belong to cultural or social groups other than the ones you identify with? (e.g., putting women in leadership so men are not assumed to be leaders all the time)
- **Dr. Papa provides a nuanced and rich description of his identities as a child and how these evolved as a young adult and into the present.**
 - How has your own conceptualization of your identities (ethnic, racial, cultural, social, gendered, etc.) evolved over time, and how do these create the conditions by which you can have more (or less) empathy with others who hold similar or different identities?
- **Dr. Papa talks at different times about how he was challenged to grow.**
 - Can you think of ways in which you have been challenged to grow? Did you accept the opportunity for growth? Or did you miss it?
 - How do you understand those experiences today?
 - How can they inform how you move forward on your allyship journey?
- **Dr. Papa discussed the ways in which he has felt like he belonged and didn’t belong in certain spaces.**
 - Can you recall a time when you were in a space where you noticed someone was made to feel as if they did not belong?
 - What steps did you take to build bridges to make a person or a group of people welcome into the space?
 - Is there anything you would do differently today after listening to this talk?
- **Dr. Papa defined and explained microaggressions, providing specific examples from his own experiences.**
 - Have you seen microaggressions occur?
 - If so, what steps have you taken to address them in an ally way?
 - If you have not taken steps, what steps would you take?
 - If you have taken steps to address them, are there other steps you would take now after watching this talk?
- **Dr. Papa explained the importance of finding terms, such as “microaggressions,” to help him make sense of his experiences.**
 - What terms have you found that are powerful in explaining experiences you have had in multicultural exchanges?
- **Dr. Papa shared an experience where his perception of something he had seen (a movie called “Bad Hair”) drastically changes after an exchange with his research labmates. He said this exchange “opened my eyes ... to the intersection of race and gender.”**
 - Have you had a moment like this that quickly shifted your perception and/or deepened your insight regarding a situation or your own behavior?
 - Have you ever provided a moment like this for someone else?
- **Dr. Papa spoke of the importance of gaining exposure to different groups in order to understand the diversity within those groups.**
 - What are cultural groups that you have had extensive contact with?
 - What are groups that you have had limited contact with?
- **What were the dimensions of cultural competence that Dr. Papa shared?**
 - How might a cultural competence framework like Dr. Sue’s be helpful to you in your ally journey?
- **Dr. Papa talks about reactions to racism, he presents examples of different ways in which people respond that vary from very unhelpful to very helpful.**
 - Can you recall what were characteristics or helpful and unhelpful responses?
 - How ready do you feel to shed unhelpful responses?
 - How ready do you feel to engage helpful responses?
 - What might you need to feel more or optimally ready to engage helpful responses?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (continued)

- **Dr. Papa provided an example of three white colleagues that he considers examples of white allyship.**
 - What were the characteristics that made these colleagues such strong allies?
 - What did Dr. Papa call “the BEST PART”?
 - How can you do the heavy lifting of becoming and being an ally?
- **Dr. Papa leaves the audience with a number of questions:**
 - Do you want to be an ally?
 - Do I believe there is really a problem?
 - Are there injustices occurring that I want to participate in eradicating?
 - Do I really care about the person/people I want to be an ally for?
 - Is it OK if they don’t want my allyship or friendship?
 - Is what I am doing helping others, or just myself?
- **Dr. Papa says it is OK not to be ready to be an ally. He calls on all of us to “read, listen, learn” and “get ready,” and cautions that acting before being ready could cause harm.**
 - Are you ready to be an ally?
 - Do you worry about causing harm?
 - Can you identify your specific areas of worry or concern?

RESOURCES

- No Way but Through
- The Ally Within
- How to Be an Antiracist
- Biased
- The Danger of a Single Story
- Allies on Campus
- USU Inclusion Center

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