Indigenous Action
Accomplices Not Allies
Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex; An Indigenous perspective & provocation
May 4, 2014

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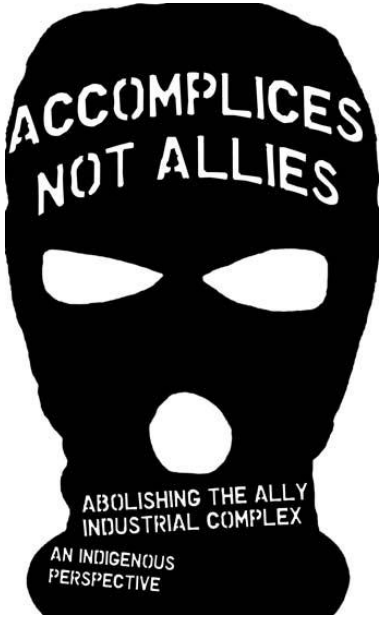

May 4, 2014

Don't wait around for anyone to proclaim you to be an accomplice, you certainly cannot proclaim it yourself. You just are or you are not. The lines of oppression are already drawn. **Direct action is really the best and may be the only way to learn what it is to be an accomplice. We're in a fight, so be ready for confrontation and consequence.**

If you are wondering whether to get involved with or to support an organization

Be suspect of anyone and any organization who professes allyship, decolonization work, and/or wears their relationships with Indigenous Peoples as at badge.

Use some of the points above to determine primary motives.

Look at the organizations funding. Who is getting paid? How are they transparent? Who's defining the terms? Who sets the agenda? Do campaigns align with what the needs are on the ground?

Are there local grassroots Indigenous People directly involved with the decision making?

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The starting point is to articulate your relationship to Indigenous Peoples whose lands you are occupying. This is beyond acknowledgment or recognition. This can be particularly challenging for "non-federally recognized" Indigenous Peoples as they are invisiblized by the state and by the invaders occupying their homelands.

It may take time to establish lines of communication especially as some folks may have already been burnt by outsiders. If you do not know where or how to contact folks, do some ground work, research (but don't rely on anthropological sources, they are eurocentric), and pay attention. Try to more listening than speaking and planning.

In long-term struggles communication may be ruptured between various factions, there are no easy ways to address this. Don't try to work the situation out, but communicate openly with consideration of the points below.

Sometimes other Indigenous Peoples are "guests" on other's homelands yet are tokenized as the Indigenous representatives for the "local struggles". This dynamic also perpetuates settler colonialism. A lot of people also assume Indigenous folks are all on the same page "politically," we're definitely not.

While there may be times folks have the capacity and patience to do so, be aware of the dynamics perpetuated by hand-holding.

Understand that it is not our responsibility to hold your hand through a process to be an accomplice.

Accomplices listen with respect for the range of cultural practices and dynamics that exists within various Indigenous communities.

Accomplices aren't motivated by personal guilt or shame, they may have their own agenda but they are explicit.

Accomplices are realized through mutual consent and build trust. They don't just have our backs, they are at our side, or in their own spaces confronting and unsettling colonialism. *As accomplices we are compelled to become accountable and responsible to each other, that is the nature of trust.*

"Acts of Resignation"

Resignation of agency is a by-product of the allyship establishment. At first the dynamic may not seem problematic, after all, why would it be an issue with those who benefit from systems of oppression to reject or distance themselves from those benefits and behaviors (like entitlement, etc) that accompany them? In the worst cases, "allies" themselves act paralyzed believing it's their duty as a "good ally." There is a difference between acting for others, with others, and for one's own interests, be explicit.

You wouldn't find an accomplice resigning their agency, or capabilities as an act of "support." They would find creative ways to weaponize their privilege (or more clearly, their rewards of being part of an oppressor class) as an expression of social war. Otherwise we end up with a bunch of anti-civ/primitivist appropriators or anarcho-hipsters, when saboteurs would be preferred.

Suggestions for some ways forward for anti-colonial accomplices

Allyship is the corruption of radical spirit and imagination, it's the dead end of decolonization.

The ally establishment co-opts decolonization as a banner to fly at its unending anti-oppression gala. What is not understood is that decolonization is a threat to the very existence of settler "allies." No matter how liberated you are, if you are still occupying Indigenous lands you are still a colonizer.

Decolonization (the process of restoring Indigenous identity) can be very personal and should be differentiated, though not disconnected, from anti-colonial struggle.

The work of an accomplice in anti-colonial struggle is to attack colonial structures & ideas.

This provocation is intended to intervene in some of the current tensions around solidarity/support work as the current trajectories are counter-liberatory from my perspective. Special thanks to DS in Phoenix for convos that lead to this 'zine and all those who provided comments/questions/disagreements. Don't construe this as being for "white young middle class allies", just for paid activists, non-profits, or as a friend said, "downwardly-mobile anarchists or students." There are many so-called "allies" in the migrant rights struggle who support "comprehensive immigration reform" which furthers militarization of Indigenous lands.

The ally industrial complex has been established by activists whose careers depend on the "issues" they work to address. These nonprofit capitalists advance their careers off the struggles they ostensibly support. They often work in the guise of "grassroots" or "community-based" and are not necessarily tied to any organization.

They build organizational or individual capacity and power, establishing themselves comfortably among the top ranks in their hierarchy of oppression as they strive to become the ally "champions" of the most oppressed. While the exploitation of solidarity and support is nothing new, the commodification and exploitation of allyship is a growing trend in the activism industry.

Anyone who concerns themselves with anti-oppression struggles and collective liberation has at some point either participated in workshops, read 'zines, or been parts of deep discussions on how to be a "good" ally. You can now pay hundreds of dollars to go to esoteric institutes for an allyship certificate in anti-oppression. You can go through workshops and receive an allyship badge. In order to commodify struggle it must first be objectified. This is exhibited in how "issues" are "framed" & "branded." Where struggle is commodity, allyship is currency.

Ally has also become an identity, disembodied from any real mutual understanding of support.

The term ally has been rendered ineffective and meaningless.

Accomplices not allies.

> ac·com·plice
> noun: **accomplice**; plural noun: **accomplices**
> a person who helps another commit a crime.

There exists a fiercely unrelenting desire to achieve total liberation, with the land and, together.

At some point there is a "we", and we most likely will have to work together. This means, at the least, formulating mutual understandings that are not entirely antagonistic, otherwise we may find ourselves, our desires, and our struggles, to be incompatible.

There are certain understandings that may not be negotiable. There are contradictions that we must come to terms with and certainly we will do this on our own terms.

But we need to know who has our backs, or more appropriately: who is with us, at our sides?

The risks of an ally who provides support or solidarity (usually on a temporary basis) in a fight are much different than that of an accomplice. When we fight back or forward, together, becoming complicit in a struggle towards liberation, we are accomplices. Abolishing allyship can occur through the criminalization of support and solidarity.

While the strategies and tactics of asserting (or abolishing depending on your view) social power and political power may be diverse, there are some hard lessons that could bear not replicating.

exists with entire organizations too). They uphold their power and, by extension, the dominant power structures by not directly attacking them.

"Ally" here is more clearly defined as the act of making personal projects out of other folk's oppression. These are lifestyle allies who act like passively participating or simply using the right terminology is support. When shit goes down they are the first to bail. They don't stick around to take responsibility for their behavior. When confronted they often blame others and attempt to dismiss or delegitimize concerns.

Accomplices aren't afraid to engage in uncomfortable/unsettling/challenging debates or discussions.

Floaters are "allies" that hop from group to group and issue to issue, never being committed enough but always wanting their presence felt and their voices heard. They tend to disappear when it comes down to being held accountable or taking responsibility for fucked up behavior.

Floaters are folks you can trust to tell the cops to "fuck off" but never engage in mutual risk, constantly put others at risk, are quick to be authoritarian about other peoples over stepping privileges, but never check their own. They basically are action junkie tourists who never want to be part of paying the price, the planning, or the responsibility but always want to be held up as worthy of being respected for "having been there" when a rock needed throwing, bloc needs forming, etc.

This dynamic is also important to be aware of for threats of infiltration. Provocateurs are notorious floaters going from place to place never being accountable to their words or actions. Infiltration doesn't necessarily have to come from the state, the same impacts can occur by "well meaning" allies. It's important to note that calling out infiltrators bears serious implications and shouldn't be attempted without concrete evidence.

"Academics, & Intellectuals"

Although sometimes directly from communities in struggle, intellectuals and academics also fit neatly in all of these categories. Their role in struggle can be extremely patronizing. In many cases the academic maintains institutional power above the knowledge and skill base of the community/ies in struggle. Intellectuals are most often fixated on un-learning oppression. These lot generally don't have their feet on the ground, but are quick to be critical of those who do.

Should we desire to merely "unlearn" oppression, or to smash it to fucking pieces, and have it's very existence gone?

An accomplice as academic would seek ways to leverage resources and material support and/or betray their institution to further liberation struggles. An intellectual accomplice would strategize with, not for and not be afraid to pick up a hammer.

"Gatekeepers"

Gatekeepers seek power over, not with, others. They are known for the tactics of controlling and/or withholding information, resources, connections, support, etc. Gatekeepers come from the outside and from within. When exposed they are usually rendered ineffective (so long as there are effective accountability/responsibility mechanisms).

Gatekeeping individuals and organizations, like "savior allies," also have tendency to create dependency on them and their function as support. They have a tendency to dominate or control.

"Navigators & Floaters"

The "navigating" ally is someone who is familiar or skilled in jargon and maneuvers through spaces or struggles yet doesn't have meaningful dialogue (by avoiding debates or remaining silent) or take meaningful action beyond their personal comfort zones (this

Consider the following to be a guide for identifying points of intervention against the ally industrial complex.

"Salvation aka Missionary Work & Self Therapy"

Allies all too often carry romantic notions of oppressed folks they wish to "help." These are the ally "saviors" who see victims and tokens instead of people.

This victimization becomes a fetish for the worst of the allies in forms of exotification, manarchism, 'splaining, POC sexploitation, etc. This kind of relationship generally fosters exploitation between both the oppressed and oppressor. The ally and the allied-with become entangled in an abusive relationship. Generally neither can see it until it's too late. This relationship can also digress into co-dependency which means they have robbed each other of their own power. Ally "saviors" have a tendency to create dependency on them and their function as support. No one is here to be saved, we don't need "missionary allies" or pity.

Guilt is also a primary ally motivating factor. Even if never admitted, guilt & shame generally function as motivators in the consciousness of an oppressor who realizes that they are operating on the wrong side. While guilt and shame are very powerful emotions, think about what you're doing before you make another community's struggle into your therapy session. Of course, acts of resistance and liberation can be healing, but tackling guilt, shame, and other trauma require a much different focus, or at least an explicit and consensual focus. What kind of relationships are built on guilt and shame?

"Exploitation & Co-optation"

Those who co-opt are only there to advance self interests (usually it's either notoriety or financial). As these "allies" seek to impose

their agenda, they out themselves. The 'radical' more militant-than-thou "grassroots" organizers are keen on seeking out "sexy" issues to co-opt (for notoriety/ego/super ally/most radical ally) and they set the terms of engagement or dictate what struggles get amplified or marginalized irregardless of whose homelands they're operating on. The nonprofit establishment or non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) also seeks out "sexy" or "fundable" issues to co-opt and exploit as these are ripe for the grant funding that they covet. Too often, Indigenous liberation struggles for life and land, by nature, directly confront the entire framework to which this colonial & capitalist society is based on. This is threatening to potential capitalist funders so some groups are forced to compromise radical or liberatory work for funding, others become alienated and further invisibilized or subordinated to tokenism. Co-opters most often show up to the fight when the battle has already escalated and it's a little too late.

These entities almost always propose trainings, workshops, action camps, and offer other specialized expertise in acts of patronization. These folks are generally paid huge salaries for their "professional" activism, get over-inflated grants for logistics and "organizational capacity building", and struggles may become further exploited as "poster struggles" for their funders. Additionally, these skills most likely already exist within the communities or they are tendencies that need only be provoked into action.

These aren't just dynamics practiced by large so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs), individuals are adept at this self-serving tactic as well.

Co-optation also functions as a form of liberalism. Allyship can perpetuate a neutralizing dynamic by co-opting original liberatory intent into a reformist agenda.

Certain folks in the struggles (usually movement "personalities") who don't upset the ally establishment status quo can be rewarded with inclusion in the ally industry.

"Self proclaiming/confessional Allies"

All too often folks show up with an, "I am here to support you!" attitude that they wear like a badge. Ultimately making struggles out to feel like an extracurricular activity that they are getting "ally points" for. Self-asserted allies may even have anti-oppression principles and values as window dressing. Perhaps you've seen this quote by Lilla Watson on their materials: "If you come here to help me, you're wasting your time. If you come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." They are keen to posture, but their actions are inconsistent with their assertions.

Meaningful alliances aren't imposed, they are consented upon. The self-proclaimed allies have no intention to abolish the entitlement that compelled them to impose their relationship upon those they claim to ally with.

"Parachuters"

Parachuters rush to the front lines seemingly from out-of-nowhere. They literally move from one hot or sexy spot to the next. They also fall under the "savior" & "self-proclaimed" categories as they mostly come from specialized institutes, organizations, & think-tanks. They've been through the trainings, workshops, lectures, etc., they are the "experts" so they know "what is best." This paternalistic attitude is implicit in the structures (non-profits, institutes, etc) these "allies" derive their awareness of the "issues" from. Even if they reject their own non-profit programming, they are ultimately reactionary, entitled, and patronizing, or positioning with power-over, those they proclaim allyship with. It's structural patronization that is rooted in the same dominion of hetero-patriarchal white supremacy.

Parachuters are usually missionaries with more funding.