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Racial Healing Allies® Co-Leader

I have been engaged in racial healing work since 2006. Over the years, my focus has changed from inner to outer and back again. Today, I consciously practice inner and outer healing at the same time. On the inside, I am committed to uncovering layer upon layer of my own racial conditioning as a white person with both courage and self-compassion. On the outside, I am humbly walking the path of practicing allyship in all areas of my life. In addition to serving as an RHA Co-Leader, I work as an adjunct instructor at the University of Michigan where I teach courses on social justice and social work. I also facilitate faculty learning communities on equity-centered pedagogy. As the founder of Power to Be, LLC, I lead trainings on developing the inner skills necessary for effective and sustainable social change work.

One teaching I remind myself of daily is to “get comfortable with discomfort.” As a white person with other dominant identities, I am regularly observing how my privilege protects me from being uncomfortable. Getting comfortable with discomfort means walking right up to my learning edge (or precipice!) and staying there for a while. These are moments of “I don’t know” or “I said/did the wrong thing.” They are often painful, and they sometimes bring up shame and other trauma responses. But they are always rich moments of learning and unlearning! They are an inevitable and invaluable part of the racial healing path. White supremacy, as a centuries-old system of harm, has been successful at manipulating, distorting, separating, injuring, and killing. It continues to do so. The pain of this harmful system moves through us as we engage in the healing process. Healing only occurs when we’re willing to consciously engage our body-mind-spirits in the antidotes to white supremacy: honoring truth, repairing harm, connecting with care for one another, and loving ourselves enough to demand justice for all. It is my life’s work to live these antidotes into being through me, however imperfectly.

There are a few key things that keep me going strong despite the challenges of this work. They are mindful awareness, radical self-care, and community. I have had a committed daily mindfulness meditation practice since 2009 which keeps me connected to myself, my values, and a fundamental sense of “okayness.” This practice keeps me grounded in moments of overwhelm, fatigue, anger, or despair so that I don’t lose the path. To stay balanced and well, I am committed to radical self-care – stopping myself from over-doing (challenging oppressive conditioning around “productivity equals worth”), and offering myself deep nourishment on a daily basis through taking breaks, yoga, walking, dancing, reading, playing, etc. Finally, there is community. My racial healing friends are the stable force that remind me this work is bigger than any one of us alone and that we can count on each other for accountability and support. As Tovi says, it’s the “work of humanity.”