

Are We Confirming Our Fears, Or Realizing Our Hopes?

[India Sylvester](#)



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When I look back to the spring/summer of 2020, I am reminded of a time when people came together to express their outrage over the experience of Black people in America. Companies, recognizing the lack of diversity in their organizations, made bold promises to increase diversity and pledged large dollar amounts toward the fight for equity and equality. Individuals, seeing for the first time the imbalance at their places of employment, vowed to be allies to the Black community. We saw trainings on unconscious bias implemented across companies. Recruitment for Diversity & Inclusion leadership roles was at an all-time high.

As a Black woman, it was exhilarating – and frightening. I was thrilled by the outpouring of support, yet afraid it would be a fleeting moment.

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We are now facing the fact that tomorrow we are confronting a fierce urgency

This is a time for action and positive change

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



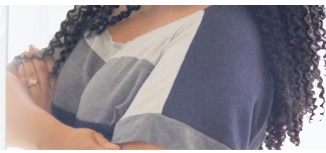
If you identified as an ally in 2020, what actions are you taking to continue your allyship a year later?



year, any time a year,
and a half later?

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As I write this post in January 2022, I am curious to know if my fears – or hopes -- have been realized. Companies are made up of individuals working (hopefully) toward common goals. So, my question is for the individual reading this post: If you identified as an ally in 2020, what actions are you taking to continue your allyship more than a year and a half later? Are you as energized about making a difference as you were then? If your interest has waned, why?

The Martin Luther King holiday is an opportune time to reflect on the many words of wisdom he spoke. One quote in particular resonates as I seek to encourage all of us to keep going. “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there ‘is’ such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.”

To be an effective ally requires action. If you’re looking for ideas, here are some to consider:

- **Be a mentor.** A good mentor listens and communicates well, practices empathy, and is knowledgeable.
- **Be a sponsor.** Advocate for the person or people you’re sponsoring when positions become available for which you believe they’re ready.
- **Recognize when Black people are subject-matter experts and amplify their voices.** If they’re being overlooked or talked over in meetings, make it a point to ask for their input.
- **Educate yourself perpetually.** (Read books, watch films, have conversations.) Don’t rely solely on Black people you know to educate you. Talking about their experience can be taxing and emotionally draining. Do the work of seeking out other educational opportunities and forums.
- **Commit to allyship for the long term.** Genuine allyship isn’t for a season or only when it’s comfortable or popular.

Improving the experience of Black people in America will take a concerted, continuous effort by individuals with the power and ability to change it. So, allies, I leave you with these words from Dr. King: “We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back.”

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