

# Allison and Accountability

## Scene 1.

Allison attends the sixth in a series of quarterly fund-raising events she has co-produced with a group of white colleagues. The proceeds of each event have supported the efforts of a local organization of people of color, led by Janet. After the event, Janet asks Allison to continue planning quarterly fund-raisers for the upcoming year to support their group. Janet tells Allison that their group is now budgeting for their upcoming year with this expectation in mind. Allison feels conflicted because she and her white colleagues have been asked to support another organization, also led by people of color, who is working on different political issues. Allison says she'll talk with her group to see if they can meet Janet's fund-raising expectations. She really wants to tell Janet that as they create their budget, they probably shouldn't count on the same level of fund-raising they've had during the last year and a half. But, she's too nervous to say this because she anticipates being questioned about the economic power the white people hold in the situation.

## Scene 2.

Allison meets for lunch with a close friend of color, Kimberly, who is critical of the strategies used by the organization Janet leads. Allison tells Kimberly about her concerns: her fear of failing to meet Janet's expectations and the constraints she feels about how to prioritize the fund-raising efforts; that Allison, too, isn't sure she agrees with all of the plans for this upcoming year's actions, but that she recognizes that these aren't her choices to make and that she's supposed to be operating in solidarity, and as a white person, critiquing the approach isn't acceptable. Allison also tells Kimberly that she thinks it should be okay to spread out her efforts so that other groups working toward racial justice can also benefit. Kimberly responds that since Allison and her group's fund-raising efforts occur quarterly, there's no reason why she shouldn't be able to either allocate 50% of proceeds to each group after each event, or create two events that benefit Janet's group and another two that benefit the second group.

## Scene 3.

Allison meets with Jennifer, one of her white colleagues. Jennifer is in complete alignment with the organization Janet leads. Jennifer has been really vocal about how white privilege and supremacy are at the heart of any critical questioning the white group is having regarding how to move forward with their fund-raising efforts. Jennifer feels strongly that white people need to take direction from people of color, and they've already heard from Janet about what's expected, and so this is what they must do. Allison tells Jennifer she's concerned about the long-term prospects for continued success, and that some people are falling away because they see the group's efforts as too narrowly-focused and they're unable to expand their reach and entice other white people with different concerns to contribute.

## Scene 4.

Allison meets with Sarah, one of her white colleagues. Sarah is a strong advocate for expanding their group's support beyond Janet's organization. Sarah has a long-standing relationship with

the leader of the other people of color-led organization who is requesting support, and she thinks they should be able to use this situation as an opportunity to clarify and diversify their solidarity partnership agreements. She says they are still being accountable to people of color because both organizations being supported are people of color-led. Allison agrees with Sarah, and they brainstorm how they can navigate the conversation, first, with their group of white folks, including Jennifer. They also talk about what issues they imagine would arise during a conversation with Janet, and what they would need to do or say in order to avoid undermining that relationship.

Silent reflection:

1. How is Allison being accountable to the white people in her organization (or not)?
2. How is Allison being accountable to people of color (or not)?

Small group discussion:

1. What are your impressions of Allison and her attempts to navigate this question about fund-raising?
2. To what degree is Allison accountable to the various relationships described?
3. What resonates for you while reading these scenes?
4. How might you act similarly or differently than Allison? Why?
5. How would a “both/and” perspective support Allison?