Chapter Three

Academic Allies and Millennial Voices for Democratic Practice

Vincent Russell and Spoma Jovanovic

The Millennial generation, 18- to 34-year-olds in 2015, now comprises the bulk of the workforce and is more ethnically and racially diverse than any other generational group (Fry, 2015). These Millennials have come of age during a fraught time in the nation's history. Just when many were graduating high school and college, the country's economy collapsed into the Great Recession. The timing of this economic downturn caused some to deem Millennials the "lost generation" due to their bleak economic prospects (Froymovitch, 2013). Nevertheless, this generation of young people possesses a desire to learn from and with others. In fact, Millennials desire mentors more so than any other generation in the workforce (Hastings, 2012). Additionally, Millennials continue to represent a large portion of college student populations, with almost 60% of Millennials having attended some college (National Conference on Citizenship, 2013).

Many Millennials want to make a social impact through civic engagement. Higher education functions as a cultural and social resource which promotes democratic values and can develop students into civic actors (Dewey, 1916, 1938; National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). The bond between faculty and students establishes a foundation from which robust learning and participation flourish and affects networks of communities and institutions. What if student and faculty success were viewed as the inspired ways faculty interact with students to cultivate their joy of learning, and champion obvious and latent talents? What if faculty and student interactions targeted promoting the democratic arts necessary for students to emerge as our next generation of civic and community leaders?

Such a vision lies in the recasting of traditional mentor relationships into a practice of allyship. Allyship can exceed the goodness of mentoring relationships, for allies speak to foster greater understanding of social issues and the effects of power imbalances that permeate our social worlds. Allies recognize that individual advancement is inextricably bound up with others and thus seek multiple points of view in decision-making while endorsing democratic principles of participation and fairness (Stoecker, 2016). Allies, like mentors, help advance careers, but also and importantly, allies promote social justice.

Millennials clearly exhibit a passion for civic and community engagement. For example, an estimated 50% of 18–29 year olds voted in the 2016 presidential election to support democratic candidates, more than any other age group. In that election, Millennials influenced electoral college votes in several key states, even though for the majority, their preferred presidential candidate lost (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2016). Additionally, Millennials volunteer and perform community service at rates higher than their parents did in the 1970s and 1980s (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2011). Millennials also lead the country in the civic use of social media to express political views (National Conference on Citizenship, 2013). Faculty members, Millennial students, and larger community networks therefore stand to benefit from connecting higher education's mission to promote the public good with Millennial students' desire to effect social change.

While mentors typically advance careers through formalized practices and prescribed duties, allies develop relationships with co-equal standing (albeit recognizing power and experience differentials) to better prepare students for leading their own initiatives. Significant features of this bond include an emphasis on collaboration, horizontal rather than hierarchical relationships, and a benevolent level of responsibility for others (Jovanovic, 2001). Various types of ally relationships exist, but they share a common commitment to democratic principles of equality, inclusion, and fairness.

Reimagining traditional student/professor mentorships into allyship centers activism and engagement in the relationship. Allyship calls attention to the precepts of communication ethics and activist scholarship since allies advocate for research and teaching that is rooted in a commitment to "use our communication knowledge and capabilities to promote social justice" (Frey & Palmer, 2014, p. 2). A social justice sensibility among allies "foregrounds ethical concerns in what scholars do, demands structural analyses of ethical problems, demonstrates a commitment to identification with others, and necessitates social actors adopting an activist orientation" (Frey & Carragee, 2007, p. 9). This form of relationship, like the work it spawns, is challenging, rewarding, and risky. It is "a commitment that reaches into the soul" (Stoecker, 2016, p. 132) and is not for the faint of heart, yet it does fill one's heart.

We outline how allies can avoid some of the pitfalls of traditional mentoring to be more responsive to the social condition and position of the Millennial generation. After discussing the ethical foundations that shape the communicative aspects of allies, we turn to the priority of social justice as activist action for allies in the academy. Drawing on our experiences as a Millennial graduate student and tenured full professor, we detail some of the ways that allies function in practice. We conclude that academic allies and Millennial voices, when directed at democratic practices, offer the means by which higher education can deliver on its promise to cultivate important life-long learning that is collaborative, focused on the care of others, and steeped in disciplinary knowledge to advance justice for all.

HIERARCHY AND OTHER MENTORING CHALLENGES

Traditional mentorships have the potential for myriad benefits to mentees, including higher professional performance, increased likelihood of professional advancement, and higher job satisfaction (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989). However, traditional mentoring relationships are also fraught with potential pitfalls not suited for Millennials who possess a desire for social change. The challenge lies in adapting mentorships to align with both Millennial and academic values.

The most common mentoring relationships are characterized as developmental relationships in which a more advanced or experienced individual—a mentor—provides professional and/or personal support to a more junior member—a mentee or protégé (Kram, 1985). This model assumes that hierarchy is necessary to ensure wisdom is passed down. In the case of mentoring relationships between faculty and students, the power and knowledge gap can be quite large, with faculty members often possessing years of expertise and institutional knowledge from which students hope to benefit. When this power differential is the foundation of a relationship and its reason for existing, the faculty member and Millennial student create for themselves an ethical tightrope that they must navigate, and some do not walk the tightrope well.

In one study, 54% of mentees indicated being in at least one negative mentoring relationship (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). The mentees reported that the corrosive influence of power contributed to these negative relationships, citing neglect, self-absorption, exclusion, and tyranny on the part of mentors.

Rooting a relationship in power differences can also create an unhealthy dynamic by inhibiting responsibility. Mentors, with their presumed dominance, expertise, and knowledge, frequently perceive a responsibility to do *for*—rather than *with*—their mentees. This approach can dissuade potential

faculty members from mentoring because they are expected to invest considerable time and energy into a relationship with many of the benefits going to the mentee and few accruing for the mentor. Millennial mentees may also be deterred from establishing these mentoring relationships that feature paternalistic relationship models.

In the case of faculty/student mentorships, it means faculty members bear an oversized responsibility in the relationship, while students, at worst, are passive receptors of the faculty member's charity. This form of one-way knowledge transfer mirrors a banking pedagogy where knowledge is merely deposited into students' brains (Freire, 1970). Traditional mentorships thus risk seeing the protégé as dependent upon the mentor, with the mentee possessing too little experience or knowledge to support his or her own growth and development. The result is an almost unavoidable restriction in critical thinking and sense of agency. For example, in academia these fixed directions can sometimes take the form of a faculty member insisting that Millennials conform to the system, structures, and practices familiar to older generations. Certainly, some guidance is needed, but when the advice is presented as static, unchanging knowledge, both relationship partners are robbed of the inventive possibilities that Millennials desire. Millennials expect to receive frequent feedback in order to make adjustments toward improvement, they believe their efforts can make a meaningful contribution to the faculty-student partnership, and they want more informal, less status-driven communication (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

Within traditional mentorships, Millennials may lack opportunities to meaningfully contribute to the relationship that could expand and develop their own skill sets. If mentors are perceived as the repository of all valid knowledge and experience, then the interests and talents of mentees will be underutilized. For example, Millennials have been called the *Net generation* and the *digital generation* because of their relative aptitude and enthusiasm for navigating digital technologies when compared to other generational groups (Dungy, 2011). The capacity of Millennial mentees to traverse and manipulate digital technology in social media use, online survey design, and digital data storage solutions, is vital for twenty-first-century research and pedagogy, as well as for use outside academia.

Finally, many universities, colleges, and departments have begun to institutionalize mentoring programs in the hopes of reaping the rewards of such relationships. Despite good intentions, personal mismatches (Eby & Lockwood, 2005) too often lead to negative experiences (Eby et al., 2000). Additionally, these mentoring programs frequently are approached half-heartedly, resulting in relatively meaningless outcomes for both partners. These circumstance mirror what Ahmed (2012) has documented in the institutionalization of diversity work in higher education. There, she says, diversity is nearly always simply "happy talk" that leads nowhere, for it skirts the difficult

conversations and actions people need before foundational change can follow. Similarly, Stoecker (2016) has argued that the institutionalization of service-learning has served to reify neoliberal hegemony by bounding conversation, thus keeping "the angers and resentments of the have-nots from boiling over while those with the most power and wealth continue to accrue more than their share of both" (p. 58). Formally institutionalizing faculty/student mentorships focuses the benefits of the relationship squarely upon the mentor and protégé, tamping down questions of systemic inequity and preventing Millennials and others in the surrounding communities from sharing in the rewards of the relationship.

In sum, traditional mentorships in academia can be inadequate because professors bear an increased burden in promoting the development of their mentee(s), thereby undermining Millennials' satisfaction and self-sufficiency (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Thus, these traditional mentor relationships, with their hierarchical structure, banking model of knowledge transference, and focus on individual change rather than systemic and collective change, are particularly insufficient for Millennials.

THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION'S VIEW OF THE WORLD

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 left an indelible mark on the country and represented a turning point in the history of the United States. Many Millennials were teenagers when 9/11 occurred and have grown up during the fallout of the country's War on Terror. They developed in a nation at war, volunteering for combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2014, approximately 80% of active-duty soldiers were under 36 years old (United States Department of Defense, 2014). Millennials have come of age during the nation's longest conflict in history, having few memories of what America was like before being embroiled in a perpetual state of war making. That shared experience of vulnerability defines for Millennials what it means to be an American (Deane, Duggan, & Morin, 2016).

As if fighting and dying in what many consider unjustified military conflicts were not enough, Millennials began their careers during and in the aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008. Economic inequality since then has reached historic levels in the United States (Piketty, 2014). Lower earnings and escalating student loan debt have caused Millennials to delay marriage and home ownership. In 2007, just before the Great Recession, 42% of people younger than 35 owned a home; in 2016, merely a third of people under 35 owned a house (Noguchi, 2016).

Despite the grim outlook, this generation of young adults has not given up hope for the possibility of transformative social change. Millennials enthusiastically supported Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election, provid-

ing volunteer hours and donations which contributed to the election of the nation's first Black president (Keeter, Horowitz, & Tyson, 2008). They also remain civically engaged in other ways. Millennials are more likely than any other generation to participate in social media activism, and they spend more time volunteering than their parents' generation did when they were the same age (National Conference on Citizenship, 2013). The Pew Research Center (2011) also found that people aged 18–29 favored socialism over capitalism, representing a desire to achieve a social system vastly different from the current state of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism is a free-market ideology which champions market deregulation, privatization, and competitive individualism (Palmer, 2014). It is a distortion of the economic and political system to provide profit and privilege to a relative few at the public's expense (Pickard, 2007). This ideology has infiltrated higher education, as institutions lose sight of their original mission of teaching the democratic arts and instead are teaching skills for employment. For example, programs that focus on student market readiness, job preparation, and teaching for the workforce operate within a neoliberal framework which emphasizes pecuniary value above all else. Neoliberalism promotes corporate-friendly values such as standardization, efficiency, accumulation of capital, and the destruction of the social state (Giroux, 2010; Palmer, 2014). A neoliberal philosophy is one that:

> ... places an emphasis on winning at all costs, a ruthless competitiveness, hedonism, the cult of individualism, and a subject largely constructed within the market-driven rationality that abstracts economics and markets from ethical considerations. (Giroux, 2010, p. 185)

Most Millennials reject the insatiable greed of neoliberal capitalism (Pew Research Center, 2011), for they have experienced its negative consequences firsthand.

In contrast, a society can be structured where community members produce goods for collective benefit, not corporate profit. In such a culture, people feel a sense of ownership for what they produce; people are in touch with the entire production process; they are in genuine, caring relationships with neighbors; and they understand their role within the interconnected web of the world (Stoecker, 2016). The only way to realize this type of community is to push back against "the culture of competition, hierarchy, and domination that separates us" (Stoecker, 2016, p. 117). Millennials have demonstrated such a commitment through their increased levels of community service and passionate political participation in national and local programs such as Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter.

These unique characteristics of civic engagement demonstrate a desire by Millennials to be accountable for changing the condition of the world. This

stance reflects what Mikhail Bakhtin (1993) famously termed "non-alibi in Being" (p. 40); that is, to communicate ethically we alone are responsible for the impact of our actions and our words. Further, "In a Bakhtinian ethical framework one is obliged to act in certain ways by no other fact than being in a position to do so" (de Miranda, 2002, p. 203). These actions communicatively stake out one's presence in society. Many Millennials, in responding to a world fraught with tension and conflict, demonstrate this desire to elevate the common good by recognizing that they are responsible to and for others as global citizens.

Not surprisingly, Millennials have different expectations of their mentoring relationships. Millennials desire effective, transparent, and sincere communication with their mentors. They want to meaningfully and authentically participate in the mentoring relationship while doing work which possesses social value, and they expect authentic, meaningful participation from their mentors, too (Seheult, 2016; Shadle, 2016).

ACADEMIC ALLIES, ETHICS, AND DEMOCRACY

For Millennials and faculty members to become allies in the academy, they need to engage in authentic dialogue to seek out and tap into ways each can contribute to a larger goal, often through activism for community change. This activity in effect allows allies to ground themselves in a commitment to benevolent responsibility and critical self-reflection. Allies are "people who initiate conversation, challenge the status quo, assist others who face obstacles, and provide support for individuals and/or groups who alone do not have a voice" (Jovanovic, 2001, p. 20). Millennial and faculty allies "are passionate about social justice, enjoy learning and educating others, and seek a stronger sense of self through connection with culturally different others" (DeTurk, 2011, p. 575). Allies thus seek to foster a critical awareness of how discourse, anchored in ethics and justice, can lead to transformational change.

The democratic principle of cooperation undergirds the myriad forms of allyship, for at its root, allies are "participants with aligned interests pursuing an outcome with value for each other" (Leavitt & McKeown, 2013, p. 7). When successful, these collaborations are characterized as empathetic, optimistic, principle-focused, transparent, and outcome-oriented (Leavitt & McKeown, 2013). Allies thus see their partners as co-equal contributors.

In practice, allies are focused on collective matters and wider community improvement. Rather than Millennials expecting to be the sole benefactors of their mentoring relationship, they turn the focus of their work outward, to consider what those beyond the relationship want and need. Similarly, faculty allies seek to build upon the interests and talents of Millennials, with

connections made to larger systems, organizations, and community members.

Critical self-reflection, another ethical communicative practice for democracy, leads allies to regularly ask themselves who is speaking for whom in order to avoid the appropriation of experience or the colonization of knowledge (Valdivia, 2002). In the academic world, Millennials and faculty would thus openly discuss, for instance, the numerous choice points in the research and publication process including how scholarly standards are established, what forms of knowledge are prioritized, who benefits most throughout, and how the community is included or not throughout the process.

FACULTY AND MILLENNIALS AS PARTNERS FOR JUSTICE

Millennials move the faculty-student relationship to a more profound level by fully appreciating that private and public discourses are intertwined rather than presumed separate (Bracci, 2002). Millennials seek to work with faculty members for systemic change, noting that "personal growth is undoubtedly necessary, but it is insufficient on its own to bring about needed changes in policy structures" (Jovanovic, 2008, p. 143).

Allyship thus requires courage of faculty members and Millennials in order that they make needed sacrifices for each other but also for those beyond the office door, beyond the department, even beyond the walls of the university. Millennials understand themselves as intimately connected to a larger community and in ally relationships focus their compassion for others impacted by injustice. This ethical expression is "distinguished by spontaneity, feeling, and unpredictability, rather than reason, choice, and judgment" (Jovanovic, 2008, p. 145).

Allies acknowledge and act upon their responsibility to combat injustice and suffering by seeking social change. Their work, then, is not designed only to alleviate the challenges faced by Millennials and faculty, but also to effect positive outcomes for people historically underrepresented—the oppressed, the exploited, and the excluded (Stoecker, 2016). Allies commit themselves to their communities, especially those facing the effects wrought by rapacious capitalism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and unmitigated greed, to name a few. Though the commitment may engender disapproval for its political activity, Jovanovic (2008) reminds us that, "we need to run the risk that communication poses to challenge inequities, as we nourish programs and policies benefiting us all" (p. 145). It is with a dedication to social justice that Millennials as allies become activists both inside and outside academia.

Social justice, of course, is an amorphous, complex political and ideological concept (Cooks, 2000). Nevertheless, it is still an inspiring goal and fulfilling process. Social justice demonstrates "engagement with and advocacy for those in our society who are economically, socially, politically, and/or culturally under resourced" (Frey, Pollock, Artz, Murphy, & Pearce, 1996, p. 110). A social justice sensibility is one that foregrounds ethical concerns, commits to structural analyses of ethical problems, adopts an activist orientation, and seeks identification with others (Frey et al., 1996). Rodriguez (2006) explains social justice as "being vulnerable to the humanity of others" (p. 26). Millennials, as agents of social justice, strive to meet the needs of oppressed groups and individuals. They seek to create an egalitarian society that is fair and sustainable—one that honors and respects the humanity of all people.

Millennials and their faculty mentors as allies thus understand that education is never apolitical. Advocates of traditional mentorships may argue that their practices are neutral, but knowledge possesses deeply political roots in terms of who has access to it, who does not, and whose stories and examples are held up as instructive for others (Lorde, 2007; Zinn, 1980). Desmond Tutu (as cited in Brown, 1984) famously summarized this belief when he explained, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor" (p. 19). Millennials in the academy do not abdicate their role as public intellectuals but instead embrace that responsibility as an opportunity to advocate for the common good.

Millennials thus enter into the academy, desiring to work with faculty as allies to examine injustice both at individual and systemic levels with an understanding that oppression is ubiquitous. "Unjust practices are not peripheral, slotted into obscure corners of settings people inhabit, or viewed as rare and isolated occurrences, but, instead, are a central part of the social fabric of communities in which people live" (Simpson, 2014, p. 80). Though this awareness may be frightening and even depressing, it can generate a righteous indignation that inspires Millennials to action.

Millennials hence benefit from affirming practices by faculty to help develop and utilize the democratic arts both within and beyond their relationship. Cultivating values and abilities such as voice, critical judgment, empathy, reciprocity, commitment, and action are essential for engaging fully in a democracy (Guarasci, 2001). Further, Apple and Beane (2007) argue that democracy requires a concern for the dignity, rights, and welfare of others; and the organization of social institutions to promote and extend the democratic way of life. Millennials and faculty together, as allies, embrace that struggle and collectively strive for fairer treatment of all people.

The work of democracy, though focused on community concerns, can secure significant rewards as well to both Millennials and faculty members. For Millennials, this type of allyship allows for the growth and development

of the whole individual, rather than just the scholarly, compartmentalized part of their identity. Additionally, allyship promotes a flatter power structure, encouraging Millennials to pursue authentic communication with faculty while meaningfully contributing to collective work. Faculty gain increased satisfaction, too, by seeing their guidance and experience enrich multiple aspects of the student's life. The burden of the relationship is lifted from the mentor's shoulders because allyship spreads the responsibilities for the relationship more evenly between parties. By seeing Millennial students as colleagues, faculty also benefit from new perspectives and valued contributions that otherwise could be unrealized when students are not empowered to be full participants in the relationship. Just one example we point to from personal experience is that the digital aptitudes of Millennials can often enhance research, analysis, instruction, and outreach.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: MILLENNIAL ALLIES IN ACTION

What do academic allies involving Millennials look like in practice? What are practical ways that an ethical commitment to social justice can be manifest in a mentoring relationship? We take up these questions drawing from our experiences and perspectives.

As a Millennial graduate student, Vincent notes that collaboration, horizontal relationships, and responsibility for others have been present and important in our ally relationship. As a tenured full professor, Spoma points to the value of a strong partnership, synergy, and an orientation for social justice as defining features of the relationship. What follows are examples of our working relationship, offered not as idyllic exemplifications, but rather as representations of activism and allyship within a university.

Collaboration and Partnership

As allies, we have sought to cultivate meaningful relationships with various partners, including other graduate students, undergraduate students, community members, and faculty from neighboring colleges and universities. Within our immediate relationship dyad, Vincent points to the value of collaboration as most significantly marked through research design and scholarly writing. We were tasked with evaluating a local Participatory Budgeting process for municipal government (see Jovanovic & Russell, 2016). The data collection methods for this project included field observations, interviews, and surveys. As genuine allies in the project, we met regularly to discuss observation protocols, interview practices, and survey designs. We spent hours reviewing protocols and agonizing over the wording of questions, how many questions to ask, and which people to interview. In addition to our one-on-one meetings, we also met regularly with city government staff to solicit their

involvement in all phases of the research. We also formed a local research board,[1] composed of faculty members from six different higher education institutions who reviewed and commented on proposed data collection instruments and analyses.

Collaboration permeated our writing process, too. Whether writing for conferences or for publication, we were allies that expressed appreciation and critique for the other's contributions. As drafts were revised, it became unclear which parts were written by which co-author; the writing projects spoke with one voice, a homogenous mixture of contributions from both ally partners. This process contrasts with ones where the faculty mentor carries much of the weight in writing while the student mentee offers minor additions around the edges. Instead, collaboration within our allyship extends from discussing possible writing directions and topics to parsing specific sentences, sometimes over and over again.

The ally relationship is also regularly extended to others, which creates an expanded network. For example, as allies, we invited undergraduate students and community members to contribute to our research as an opportunity for them to participate, learn, and teach at conference presentations and in journal article preparation. This approach models a community organizing strategy designed to bring in others to our work as social justice scholars and activists in ways that traditional mentorship models fail to capture. We move beyond the one-to-one dynamic of traditional mentorship to instead create a web of relationships that weave together our collective knowledge and capabilities. This allows for enhanced creativity, flexibility, and responsiveness to the personal and professional goals of each member. It is a process that extends, as well, the democratic potential of scholars and community members as citizens.

Collaboration in allyship results in stronger partnerships where support emerges to deepen the impact for all involved. That is, allies value the need to share responsibilities with a collaborative spirit.

Horizontal Relationships and Synergy

As a faculty member, Spoma has found that allyship has generated a synergy that emerges from a horizontal relationship where each partner strives to treat each other as equals. This is not to say that we ignore differences of experience and authority, but rather we acknowledge those features and work to overcome their influence in order to increase opportunities for growth and transformation. This relationship is motivated by a dialogic ethic where all topics are contestable (Bracci, 2002). Allyship therefore allows for critical questioning, even of the relative positions of faculty and student, to create a deliberative, democratic space marked by diverse voices striving to achieve a greater good.

Values of universal mutual respect and egalitarian reciprocity make possible a more level relationship. Benhabib (1992) argues these principles mean:

> We ought to respect each other as beings whose standpoint is worthy of equal consideration (the principle of universal moral respect) and that furthermore...we ought to treat each other as concrete human beings whose capacity to express this standpoint we ought to enhance by creating, whenever possible, social practices embodying the discursive ideal (the principle of egalitarian reciprocity). (p. 31)

Practically speaking, this results in turn-taking and diverse contributions on the part of both Millennial and faculty allies.

Our relationship has also involved the rotation of responsibilities. Vincent might take the lead on one project while Spoma assumes so on another project. These decisions are not pre-determined, but instead arrived at mutually through deliberation. One of us might volunteer to move forward a task, after we consider whose talents could best benefit the project, in consideration of the difficulty involved, and with the awareness of each other's availability.

The horizontal nature of allyship has also allowed us to appreciate each other's wholeness and diverse skills. For example, as a Millennial and digital native, Vincent's technological skills surpass Spoma's abilities in that area; therefore, he has taken on the organizational responsibilities of research data management and storage, online survey design and distribution, and website maintenance. Meanwhile, Spoma gained increased experience with these digital tools (e.g., posting a photo from her cell phone to Facebook for the first time), which will benefit her future teaching and research endeavors. Appreciating our diverse talents in this way has been a transparent process.

Responsibility for Others and Social Justice

Most importantly, as allies, we have focused our efforts over a period of years in calling attention to the need to *be for* others, whether it be community partners, fellow students, or other faculty members. Within the relationship, this has resulted in a concern for improving our community, broadening experiences for undergraduate students, and paying attention to our career and personal goals. For example, in areas where we have shared interests, we have furthered a number of valuable scholarly projects. At the same time, we have pursued different projects alone or with others, supporting each other in doing so and acknowledging the value in those activities as well.

We have experienced a strong bond that has manifested in ways other than direct teaching and research. For instance, Vincent nominated Spoma for a prestigious university-wide faculty mentor award that required coordi-

nating and reaching out to former students and other faculty members. Likewise, Spoma sought out faculty colleagues to write letters of recommendation for Vincent in consideration of a national service award. We have directed one another to conferences, publications, lectures, and protests we thought the other would enjoy. We have also actively searched for ways to introduce social justice to our students through guest speakers, service-learning programs, and events.

This commitment to social justice activism infuses all our work. We strive for our research and teaching to be of benefit to the marginalized, the excluded, and the oppressed. We embark on community-based research projects where the entire process is designed in concert with community partners in order to democratize knowledge production (Stoecker, 2016; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). We invite local activists into our classrooms to talk with students about social campaigns, and through our use of service-learning, those students then practice civic skills necessary for advancing societal change (Britt, 2014). We speak at city council meetings, attend political rallies, and appear in media outlets to fulfill our duties both as public intellectuals and as citizens.

Through these actions and many others, our allyship serves the first purpose of higher education, which is to advance the democratic arts and promote civic literacy (Dewey, 1916). Allyship creates a symbiosis where our passion for civic engagement, research, and teaching are melded into a holistic, life-affirming practice. Allyship empowers us both, our students, and community members, for we use our communication knowledge and skills in service to others. Even when we fall short of our goals, we see benefits from engaging community members and students with one another, taking inspiration from the courage and vulnerability demonstrated by our comrades when they put everything on the line for the sake of their neighbors.

CONCLUSION

Re-imagining traditional faculty/student mentorships into allies can reap myriad benefits for those involved. Faculty members gain new, excited partners eager to engage in critical thinking about social justice matters. It is a synergy marked by a horizontal, not hierarchical relationship. Millennial students' unique talents for digital skills may be better appreciated, and the students gain valuable practice in engaging in more authentic communication with experienced faculty. The collaborative partnership that is the foundational feature of allies benefits both the faculty and Millennials as they establish networks of support and learn from others. Millennials are able to advance disciplinary knowledge while working for the common good and advancing the civic mission of higher education. The benefits of allyship are shared

with others as the faculty and student take responsibility to promote social justice and democratic principles for all. Academic allies and Millennial voices challenge the neoliberal dominance of self-interest and personal advancement by instead promoting an ethic steeped in love of and for one's neighbor.

Allyship is rarely easy, and for some, circumstances may make it impossible. However, if we are to address the social ills that harm us all, we need to promote lifelong-learning designed with the unique characteristics of the Millennial generation in mind. We see that extending our hand as an invitation to allyship is a powerful first step in creating a more just world.

NOTE

1. See http://greensboroparticipatorybudgetingresearch.weebly.com/board-members.html.

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