

A portrait of Amber Cabral, a woman with short, dark, curly hair, smiling and wearing a bright yellow turtleneck sweater and large white earrings. Her hand is resting near her chin. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with greenery and a brick wall.

AMBER CABRAL

CREATING  
AN  
INCLUSIVE  
AND  
EQUITABLE  
CULTURE

Allies  
*and*  
**Advocates**

WILEY



“A timely and compelling book with essential guidance on racism and equity. This book contains today’s must-have insight on two vital, yet often misunderstood, roles on the road to racial equity: *allies and advocates*. Highlighting how the unprecedented events of 2020 have further underscored the urgency for equity, *Allies and Advocates* serves as a roadmap to guide the steps and responsibilities each of us hold toward making racial equity a reality. It is a crucial read for all who seek to embrace anti-racism.”

—Dr. Lauren R. Powell, National Health Equity Leader, President & CEO, The Equitist

“It has been my privilege to have known and worked with Ms. Cabral for several years. The work that it takes to drive inclusion and belonging is not only a mission to change minds but also to change hearts and behaviors. This book is essential not only for those who would like to become more inclusive leaders but also for those who have been enlightened by the events of these turbulent times. There are few people that I have seen as good as Ms. Cabral at understanding what it takes to drive leaders to action on topics that many would find uncomfortable. As leaders, it is our responsibility to do what’s best for our organizations but also its employees and their communities. This book provides a step-by-step guide for those who want to take action around D&I but do not know what to do next. That kind of clarity is beneficial regardless of where you are on your D&I journey.”

—Reginald J. Miller, VP, Global Chief Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Officer, McDonalds



# Allies *and* ***Advocates***



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**CREATING AN INCLUSIVE  
AND EQUITABLE CULTURE**

**AMBER CABRAL**

**WILEY**

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*To Rin—the most magical person I know.*



*You can have whatever you want.*



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# Introduction

**F**irst things first, relax. Put your shoulders down, quiet the anxiety in the pit of your stomach, and take a deep breath. This book is a learning tool. You will meet a lot of challenging and complex information, ideas, and perspectives aimed at helping you figure out how you can move justice and equity forward. The best way to position yourself in context to this material is as a learner in a virtual classroom where you can feel safe bringing your curiosity, showcase your eagerness to learn, and bravely reconsider your existing ideas. This is a “safe space,” as folks say. This book isn’t about shaming or lecturing you to do or be better. Likely if you picked up this book, you already have had some bout with these feelings. These feelings are normal, especially if you are new to this work.

This book is about presenting information to help you figure out your place in what is a very long movement toward equity for oppressed people. Throughout these pages I invite you to do the work to move justice and equity forward. We explore some history for context on why oppression is so deeply entrenched in our identities. We cover language because, as my best friend always likes say, “Words mean things.” You will understand why some words are triggering for you and put you on the defensive. You will discover that a lot of the behaviors you are doing are flat-out wrong and be armed with the right behaviors to move forward.

For those of you who think you’ve got it but are looking for ways to check your friends and family, I have a bit of mixed news. You don’t have it. No one does. This book will teach you how to get comfortable with that fact and still learn how to maneuver and push allyship and equity forward. So, if you think you’ve got it and know, settle in; there will be a lot of nods of agreement but likely still many eye-opening perspectives to lean on as you continue on your allyship journey.

In some ways I consider this book foundational; it gives the basic things you need to understand to communicate with others about allyship and advocacy responsibly. In many ways this book only scratches the surface because inclusion work is ever evolving and has such a rich history that capturing its many facets is virtually impossible. If you are new to this work, consider this a starting place; if you are farther along in allyship and advocacy, consider this a rich refresher.

Thinking of this as a refresher reminds me of the instructions for proper handwashing that flooded the internet when the United States began shutting down due to the coronavirus in March 2020. Likely you knew how to wash your hands, and likely you already washed your hands several times a day. Then the incessant reminders to wash and the “proper handwashing” signs took over, and you had to remind yourself of the bits you had gotten lazy about in your routine. Always, every time, rub the back of one hand with the palm of the other. Always get under the nails. Always use the whole 20 seconds. Don’t let routine lull you into lax habits. This work is the same. It can feel like a lot of routine, but relaxing into that routine makes room for the status quo, and that just ain’t enough. When leaning into this work, we need to apply the same diligence that we apply to handwashing during a pandemic.

In this book you will learn what to do and how to be, but you will be compelled to action by your own sense of self rather than being convinced or directed by the text. I am not here to convince you. My expectation is that if you are at the point of wanting to call yourself an ally and wanting to know how to be an advocate for others, you are convinced that there need to be changes. I give you the information you need to find your own reasons to act. I want you to discover in these pages the reasons why you cannot sideline this work and why you absolutely have to show up. I want you to discover why you are called to be an ally for others in your own words. That way when someone asks you why it matters, you can speak from a place of candor and vulnerability that gives depth and life to why this work is important. Certainly, you can memorize stats and know the data—I consume copious amounts of data and statistics so I can do my job well. It is for that reason that I can tell you that data doesn’t move things forward. Stories do. People who are motivated to action by cause, by purpose, by excitement, by infection—that is what makes change. When people feel it. This book is going to lean into the parts of this work that gets into your bones. There will be emotion. This work is, after all, about our humanity, our lives, and how to make room for the survival of us all.

That said, there is a lot of emotional and difficult history and background in this book. I want to establish some ground rules to help you move through it and get the most out of the material presented.

First, do not take anything in this book personally. Everything in this book is useful, but you have to put yourself in the state of mind

where you are able to receive it and be present to the message without being consumed by your personal response. This is not to say that I want you to be numb; rather, feel your feelings and take a break if you need to—but do not stop. Almost everything in this book is about identity, so at times it will be easy to see yourself in the material and get offended. Push those feelings aside. Take a walk if it helps. Keep in mind that these topics are things we typically dance around. It makes sense to feel some discomfort when exploring the racism, police brutality, and social injustices that are being covered openly in the news right now. Even though discussing these things may feel strange and awkward, we all know times are changing. Let's meet the moment with bravery.

Second, on bravery: It is essential for inclusion and antiracism work. Usually for us to be brave in a space, we need a sense of confidence about our identity and a sense of purpose. Right now, you might feel very brave in a number of ways but not necessarily as it relates to being an ally and an advocate for others. That's okay. Bravery is a muscle that can be built, and this book will help you to build it. By learning what being an ally means and how to identify behaviors and habits for yourself that communicate your bravery and confidence to others, you will develop the confidence you need to be brave. As you move through the chapters of this book and identify your own sense of purpose for leaning into this work, your bravery will strengthen.

Third, we are all on the same team. Racial equity, dismantling systemic oppression, physical and psychological safety, and creating an inclusive world require teamwork. If you want any of those things, then we are in this together. Right now you might not be sure you understand the obstacles that keep people from having racial equity, feeling safe or included or why people face systemic oppression, that's okay. We will cover those topics. If you want those things for yourself and everyone else, consider us teammates—even when I share something that doesn't feel so good to read.

Fourth, inclusion and diversity work (which includes antiracism work) consumes energy and makes you think. Throughout this book there are places for you to reflect on your own thoughts and ideas about the content. I ask questions for you to consider and ask that you think about how the information connects to your own experience. Remember, inclusion and diversity work is people work, so I want you, my fellow person, to take time to be thoughtful about how the work shows up in your own life. Additionally, I share tips and tactics to help

you navigate certain common encounters and even manage your emotions and energy.

Last, this work requires vulnerability and candor. Inclusion touches everything so we are going to cover: real-life circumstances, actual missteps, relevant examples, and tactics. We are keeping it real here. We won't need to make up scenarios or encounters because when it comes to inclusion work, there is plenty in the real world to draw from. I am going to be candid and cover some topics that may feel awkward. I use and define words we usually are nervous about, such as racism and white supremacy. There is no way to discuss the ways you can show up and do the work of allyship and advocacy without explicitly talking about the things our comfort zones sometimes ask us to avoid. I am going to share with vulnerability so you are able to understand how the work comes to life outside of these pages. In the spirit of keeping it real, as we work through these pages, I am going to challenge you to answer the questions posed to you with the level of vulnerability and candor necessary to help you move the work forward.

This book is a safe space and a learning space, but it also is a challenging one. We cover a lot of material in very simple ways. My goal is to give you a rich starting point from which to begin or accelerate your steps toward allyship. From new concepts and terms to bravely learning to lean into the bold behaviors necessary for being an ally and an advocate, you are in for an informative and emotional ride. I am so excited that you are joining me on this journey.

This book is divided into three parts. Part I focuses on allyship and advocacy and explains the behaviors necessary to being an ally and an advocate. Part II is about the language of inclusion. A lot of terms and topics fall under the umbrella of inclusion and equity, so this part provides a basic understanding of terms and topics you may encounter on your journey to allyship and advocacy. Part III is about the importance of starting with yourself when looking for ways to be an ally or an advocate. Allyship and advocacy require not only awareness but also a willingness to work on your own perspectives.

Let's get started.