

Bridging community & academia in the struggle to end violence against Latin@s

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us struggle together."

Lila Watson, Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, 1970s

1. The work must be the priority, not the “bridging.” Community organizations do not exist to provide educational experiences to students. Training and supervising students takes time. Make it time well-spent.
2. Be conscious; be self-reflective; journal.
3. Do your homework; make an effort to get to know the community through whatever means are available to you (these will vary, but *at a minimum* read the local news!); respect people’s time; pay attention. Don’t ever call or write an organization asking for information that you can find on your own, especially if the organization has a website.
4. Don’t look for short-term gratification or “victories.”
5. Don’t romanticize anyone or any struggle.
6. Everyone – community organization, student, faculty supervisor -- needs to make her or his expectations explicit and clear (to the extent possible). Organizations should have, at a minimum, a code of ethics or conduct.
7. Many organizations pledge confidentiality to the people with whom they work. Make sure you understand the particular contours of this confidentiality pledge and can commit to it.
8. Know your own limits: your work, family, school, and other commitments; transportation; health; current level of stress; and so forth. There is wisdom, not shame, in understanding what you can and cannot do at a given moment.
9. Also know your strengths and assets: your skills, particular modes of intelligence, support system, physical strength, social capital, and so on. Don’t be shy in sharing these!
10. Pay attention to your own reactions to the work, and, if it becomes too much, discuss with your colleagues and supervisor(s) how you can modify your work duties or leave gracefully.
11. In a group, know what issues can & should be decided collectively? What cannot be decided collectively?
12. Acknowledge and keep in mind hierarchies and power differences. Glossing over power differences always hurts the least powerful.
13. Find out what the structure of the organization is before you commit; if you cannot work within a particular system, don’t.

14. There are tensions as well as overlap between struggle and service (social/systemic and individual). At what points do they harmonize; at what points do they conflict? Know your goal and role.
15. Where there are conflicts, look to the expressed wishes of the least empowered.
16. Culture & respect: it's not about your comfort (clothing, eating/drinking/gum chewing/language).
17. No posturing, political or otherwise.
18. Do not get overly attached to particular modes of activism or organizations. Different situations call for different strategies; sometimes organizations need to radically change or die.
19. Pay attention to your intuition, which is often wisdom that we cannot articulate, and sometimes emergent wisdom for which there are no words yet or for which language is not yet adequate.
20. Everyone has a skill or set of skills; tie tasks to skill while also being willing to grow.
21. Be humble.
22. You're not the first one to do this work. Study history and think in historical terms.
23. Problems and contradictions are your friends. If you pay attention, they will lead you "underneath"; you will discover deeper truths.
24. Work, study, and reflect in pairs or small groups.
25. Pay attention to who is present and who is not present. Ask why.
26. Keep your eyes and ears open for barriers: financial, architectural, linguistic, class, education, time, schedules and architecture that conflict with family responsibilities.
27. It is good to become friendly and "tight" with your colleagues; that bonding also increases the possibility that you either become a closed system or become perceived as such.
28. Pay attention to the people around you; notice when they are hurting. How you will act might vary depending on your relationship to the person and the particular situation, but the first step is to notice.
29. Expect to make mistakes.
30. Take care of yourself!
31. If you take care of yourself, pay attention, keep asking questions, and don't expect quick or easy gratification, you can stay in the struggle for the very long haul. For many people, that journey will be satisfaction enough.

"Yours is not to complete the work, but neither may you desist from it."

R. Tarfon, Pirke Avot, 2:21