

**Justice Talking**  
**Public Allies of Milwaukee**  
**Milwaukee, WI**  
**November 2006 – April 2007**

## **Introduction**

Public Allies' core program is a 10 month apprenticeship program funded by AmeriCorps. The three main components of the Public Allies' apprenticeship program are the nonprofit apprenticeship, leadership training and the team service project.

- **Nonprofit Apprenticeship:** Allies are placed in paid professional apprenticeships at local nonprofit organizations, where they are responsible for a project designed to positively impact the community. They work in fields such as youth development, community and economic development, public health and safety, civic participation and the environment.
- **Leadership Training:** Allies participate in weekly (or bi-weekly) workshops led by local community and civic leaders on topics such as public speaking, conflict resolution, diversity and oppression, community building and media relations.
- **Team Service Project:** Teams of Allies collaborate to design and implement projects that benefit the community. Examples of past projects include creating a video about alternatives to incarceration, helping residents create a community garden and facilitating teen leadership programs.

## **Participants**

Public Allies of Milwaukee staff, fellows and volunteers.

## **Sessions and Readings**

The themes revolved around the work each Public Ally was doing in her/his community, so we focused on numerous philosophical questions surrounding the nature of volunteerism, leadership, charity, justice, injustice, racism, and oppression.

The topics and readings were, in order:

- Why choose to serve: Martin Luther King, "Drum Major Instinct"
- What is injustice: "Second Samuel, 11-12:15"
- What is justice: Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
- What is compassion: John Jacques Rousseau, "Reveries of the Solitary Walker"
- What are the consequences of leadership: Toni Cade Bambara, "The Lesson."
- Where do we go from here: Leo Tolstoy, "Three Questions."

### **Special Feature(s) of this Conversation**

We had excellent participation and consistent attendance from Public Allies who were dedicated to their work and committed to engaged citizenship. By and large, the best readings were those that could be read at the moment, rather than beforehand. This creates a bond, opens the participants up to a collective experience, and also keeps the topics and information fresh.

### **Feedback from Participants, Planners, or Facilitators**

We were impressed with the level of participation. On average we had 15 participants and about two thirds had something to say at every session. Having the session over lunch on a Friday was a definite plus, especially when coupled with the Public Allies' own training session which took place in the morning. This made for a more comfortable easing into a philosophical discussion. A number of Public Allies told me that the kind of conversations we were having were very different from their typical training matters, which was just what we wanted to accomplish when we set goals for these sessions.

### **Facilitator**

John C. Savagian, Ph.D.  
Chair, History Department  
Alverno College