

Glossary of Terms for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion

Ableism - discrimination against persons with mental and/or physical disabilities; social structures that favor able-bodied individuals (The National Multicultural Institute).

Acculturation - the process of learning and incorporating the language, values, beliefs, and behaviors that makes up a distinct culture. This concept is not to be confused with assimilation, where an individual or group may give up certain aspects of its culture in order to adapt to that of the prevailing culture (The National Multicultural Institute).

Affirmative Action - proactive measures for remedying the effect of past discrimination and ensuring the implementation of equal employment and educational opportunities (The National Multicultural Institute).

Ageism - discrimination against individuals because of their age, often based on stereotypes (The National Multicultural Institute).

Ally - a person who takes action against oppression out of a belief that eliminating oppression will benefit members of targeted groups and advantage groups. Allies acknowledge disadvantage and oppression of other groups than their own, take supportive action on their behalf, commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of these groups, and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression (Center for Assessment and Policy Development).

Anti-Oppression - recognizing and deconstructing the systemic, institutional and personal forms of disempowerment used by certain groups over others; actively challenging the different forms of oppression (Center for Anti-Oppressive Education).

Bias - a positive or negative inclination towards a person, group, or community; can lead to stereotyping (Thiederman).

Bigotry - intolerant prejudice which glorifies one's own group and denigrates members of other groups (Dismantling Racism Institute).

Bisexuality - romantic and/or sexual attraction to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree (Ochs).

Chicano/a - a term adopted by some Mexican Americans to demonstrate pride in their heritage, born out of the national Chicano Movement that was politically aligned with the Civil Rights movement to end racial oppression and social inequalities of Mexican Americans. Chicano pertains to the particular experience of Mexican-descended individuals living in the US, but not all Mexican Americans identify as Chicano (The National Multicultural Institute).

Cisgender - a gender identity where an individual's self-perception of their gender aligns with their perceived sex (The National Multicultural Institute).

Classism - biased attitudes and beliefs that result in, and help to justify, unfair treatment of individuals or groups because of their socioeconomic grouping. Classism can also be expressed as public policies and institutional practices that prevent people from breaking out of poverty rather than ensuring equal economic, social, and educational opportunity (The National Multicultural Institute).



Collusion - people acting to perpetuate oppression or prevent others from working to eliminate oppression. Example: able-bodied people who object to strategies for making buildings accessible because of the expense (Adams, Bell and Griffin).

Colonialism - control by individuals or groups over the territory/behavior of other individuals or groups (Horvath). Imperialism refers to the political or economic control, either formally or informally, and creating an empire.

Colorblind - term used to describe personal, group, and institutional policies or practices that do not consider race or ethnicity as a determining factor. The term "colorblind" de-emphasizes or ignores race and ethnicity as a large part of one's identity (The National Multicultural Institute).

Cultural Assimilation - an individual, family, or group giving up certain aspects of its culture in order to adapt to the dominant culture (The National Multicultural Institute).

Cultural Competence - 1. Knowledge, awareness and interpersonal skills that allow individuals to increase their understanding, sensitivity, appreciation, and responsiveness to cultural differences and the interactions resulting from them. The particulars of acquiring cultural competency vary among different groups, and they involve ongoing relational process tending to inclusion and trust-building. (UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity) 2. A process of learning that leads to the ability to effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities posed by the presence of social cultural diversity in a defined social system (The National Multicultural Institute).

Cultural Pluralism - recognition of the contribution of each group to a common civilization. It encourages the maintenance and development of different lifestyles, languages and convictions. It strives to create the conditions of harmony and respect within a culturally diverse society (Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change).

Culture - a social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors and styles of communication (Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change).

Cultural Racism - those aspects of society that overtly and covertly attribute value and normality to White people and Whiteness and devalue, stereotype and label People of Color as "other," different, less than, &/or render them invisible. An example of these norms includes defining white skin tones as nude or flesh color (Adams, Bell and Griffin). Cultural racism may also exist among People of Color.

Denial - the refusal to acknowledge the societal privileges that are granted or denied based on an individual's identity components. Those who are in a stage of denial tend to believe, "People are people. We are all alike regardless of the color of our skin." In this way, the existence of a hierarchical system of privileges based on ethnicity or race are ignored (Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change).

Disability - physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (The Department of Justice).

Discrimination - unfavorable or unfair treatment towards an individual or group based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, socioeconomic status, education, sex, marital status, language, age, gender, physical/mental abilities, sexual orientation, etc. (The National Multicultural Institute).

Diversity - psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among any and all individuals; including but not limited to: race; ethnicity; nationality; religion; socioeconomic status; education; marital status; language; age; gender; sexual orientation; mental/physical ability; and learning styles. A



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diverse group, community, or organization is one in which a variety of social and cultural characteristics exist (The National Multicultural Institute). Diversity is all the ways in which we differ, are similar, and are unique.

Empowerment - when target group members refuse to accept the dominant ideology and take actions to redistribute social power more equitably (Adams, Bell and Griffin).

Environmental Equity - measures the amelioration of the myriad inequities and disproportionate impacts that groups in society have faced, especially in the realm of environmental protection and access to nature and the environmental goods that aren't equally shared.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) - Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on an individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (The National Multicultural Institute).

Equality - evenly distributed access to resources and opportunity necessary for a safe and healthy life; uniform distribution of access to ensure fairness (Kranich).

Equity - the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups (UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity).

ESL (English as a Second Language) - a term used to describe language learning programs in the United States for individuals for whom English is not their first or native language (The National Multicultural Institute).

Essentialism - the practice of categorizing an entire group based on assumptions about what constitutes the "essence" of that group. Essentialism prevents individuals from remaining open to individual differences within groups (The National Multicultural Institute).

Ethnicity - a social construct which divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base (Adams, Bell and Griffin).

Ethnocentrism - the practice of using a particular ethnic group as a frame of reference, basis of judgment, or standard criteria from which to view the world. Ethnocentrism favors one ethnic group's cultural norms and excludes the realities and experiences of other ethnic groups (The National Multicultural Institute).

Eurocentrism - the practice of using Europe and European culture as a frame of reference or standard criteria from which to view the world. Eurocentrism favors European cultural norms and excludes the realities and experiences of other cultural groups (The National Multicultural Institute).

Feminism - theory and practice that advocates for educational and occupational equity between men and women; undermines traditional cultural practices that support the subjugation of women by men and the devaluation of women's contributions to society (The National Multicultural Institute).

Gay - people of the same sex who are attracted sexually and emotionally to each other. More commonly utilized to describe male attraction to other males (The National Multicultural Institute).

Gender - socially constructed ideas about behavior, actions, and roles a particular sex performs (The National Multicultural Institute).

Gender Identity - a personal conception of one's own gender; often in relation to a gender opposition between masculinity and femininity. Gender expression is how people externally communicate or perform their gender identity to others (The National Multicultural Institute).

Global Environmental Racism - race is a potent factor in sorting people into their physical environment and explaining social inequality, political exploitation, social isolation, and quality of life. Racism influences land use, industrial facility siting, housing patterns, infrastructure development, and "who gets what, when, where, and how much." Environmental racism refers to any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color (Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit).

Handicap - (see Disability).

Harassment - unwelcome, intimidating, or hostile behavior (The National Multicultural Institute).

Hazing - verbal and physical testing, often of newcomers into a society or group, that may range from practical joking to tests of physical and mental endurance (The National Multicultural Institute).

Heterosexism – social structures and practices which serve to elevate and enforce heterosexuality while subordinating or suppressing other forms of sexuality (University of Maryland).

Hispanic - the U.S. Census Bureau defines Hispanic as people who classified themselves as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories, which also included the subgroups Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican or Cuban (The National Multicultural Institute).

Homophobia - a fear of individuals who are not heterosexual. Often results in hostile, offensive, or discriminatory action against a person because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer identified, or because they are perceived to be. These actions may be verbal or physical and can include insulting or degrading comments; taunts or 'jokes'; and excluding or refusing to cooperate with others because of their sexuality (The National Multicultural Institute).

Human Rights - a set of inalienable rights, as declared by the thirty articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, that all human beings possess and are protected by law (The National Multicultural Institute).

Identity Group - a particular group, culture, or community with which an individual identifies or shares a sense of belonging. Individual agency is crucial for identity development; no person should be pressured to identify with any existing group, but instead the freedom to self-identify on their own terms (The National Multicultural Institute).

Implicit Bias – Implicit bias occurs when an individual consciously rejects stereotypes while simultaneously holding negative associations unconsciously. The theory of implicit bias rests on the idea that much of our social behavior is driven by learned stereotypes that operate automatically – and therefore unconsciously — when we interact with other people. Implicit bias means that racial prejudices (and other areas of diversity) affect individuals' decisions as well as their behavior toward people of other races, whether or not they are aware of it (American Values Institute, 2009, and Open Society Foundations, 2011).

Inclusive Language - words or phrases that include all potential audiences from any identity group. Inclusive language does not assume or connote the absence of any group. An example of gender inclusive language is using "police officers" instead of "policemen" (The National Multicultural Institute).

Inclusion - the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people (UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity).

Indigenous - originating from a culture with ancient ties to the land in which a group resides (University of Maryland).

Individual Racism - the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism; can occur at both a conscious and unconscious level, and can be active or passive. Examples include telling a racist joke, using a racial epithet, or believing in the inherent superiority of Whites (Adams, Bell and Griffin).

Institutional Racism - refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for Whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as People of Color. An example includes City sanitation department policies that concentrate trash transfer stations and other environmental hazards disproportionately in communities of color (Potapchuk, Leiderman, Bivens and Major).

Intent vs. Impact - this distinction is an integral part of inclusive environments; intent is what a person meant to do, and impact is the effect it had on someone else. Regardless of intent, it is imperative to recognize how behaviors, language, actions, etc. affect or influence other people. An examination of what was said or done and how it was received is the focus, not necessarily what was intended (Workforce Diversity Network).

Internalized Racism - occurs in a racist system when a racial group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group's power (Bivens).

Intersectionality - the ways in which oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.) are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another (African American Policy Forum).

"-isms" - a way of describing any attitude, action or institutional structure that subordinates (oppresses) a person or group because of their target group: race (racism), gender (sexism), economic status (classism), age (ageism), religion, sexual orientation, language, etc. (Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change).

Latino/a - individual living in the United States who originates from, or has a heritage relating to Latin America (University of Maryland).

Lesbian - a woman whose primary sexual attraction is to other women (UC Berkeley Gender Equity Resource Center).

LGBTQ (QIA) - acronym for "Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (Questioning Intersex Allies)." The description of the movement expanded from gay and lesbian to LGBTQ; some include questioning, intersex, allies, same-gender-loving, asexual, pansexual, and polyamorous (Queers United Activists).

Marginalization - the placement of minority groups and cultures outside mainstream society. Variation from the norm of the dominant culture is devalued and at times perceived as deviant and regressive (The National Multicultural Institute).

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. In many cases, these hidden messages may



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invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of target persons, demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment. -from Psychology Today

Micro-affirmations - apparently small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard-to-see, public and private, often unconscious but very effective, and occur wherever people wish to help others to succeed. Micro-affirmations are tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening. They lie in the practice of generosity, in consistently giving credit to others, in providing comfort and support when others are in distress. Micro-affirmations include the myriad details of fair, specific, timely, consistent and clear feedback that help a person build on strength and correct weakness. (Mary Rowe, Journal of the International Ombudsman Association, Vol. 1, Number 1, March 2008.)

Micro-inequities - apparently small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove, are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator, and occur when people are perceived to be 'different.' (Mary Rowe, Journal of the International Ombudsman Association, Vol. 1, Number 1, March 2008.)

Multicultural - of or pertaining to more than one culture (The National Multicultural Institute).

Multiculturalism - the practice of acknowledging and respecting the various cultures, religions, races, ethnicities, attitudes, and opinions within an environment. The theory and practice promotes peaceful coexistence of all identities and people (University of Maryland).

Neo-Colonization - term for contemporary policies adopted by international and western "1st world" nations and organizations that exert regulation, power and control over "3rd world" nations disguised as humanitarian help or aid. These policies are distinct but related to the "original" period of colonization of Africa, Asia, and the Americas by European nations (University of Maryland).

Norm - an ideal standard binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate power and acceptable behavior (Effective Philanthropy).

Oppression - the systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression signifies a hierarchical relationship in which dominant or privilege groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups (Adams, Bell and Griffin).

Pan-Africanism - describes the theory relating to the desire to educate all peoples of the African diaspora of their common plight and the connections between them. Some theorists promote linking all African countries across the continent through a common government, language, ideology, or belief (University of Maryland).

Pansexuality - a term reflective of those who feel they are sexually, emotionally, and spiritually capable of falling in love with all genders (Queers United Activists).

People/Person of Color - this term refers not to real biological or scientific distinction between people, but rather to the common experience of being targeted and oppressed by racism. While each oppressed group is affected by racism differently and each group maintains its own unique identity and culture, there is also the recognition that racism has the potential to unite oppressed people in a collective of resistance. For this reason, many individuals who identify as members of racially oppressed groups also claim the political identity of being People of Color. This in no way diminishes their specific cultural or racial identity; rather it is an affirmation of the multiple layers of identity of every individual. This term also refrains from the subordinate connotation of triggering labels like "non- White" and "minority" (Office of Racial and Ethnic Concerns of Unitarian Universalist Association).



Polyamory - the practice or acceptance of having more than one intimate relationship at a time with the consent of all involved (Queers United Activists).

Prejudice - a pre-judgment or unjustifiable (and usually negative) attitude of one type of individual or group toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics (Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change).

Privilege - power and advantages benefiting a group derived from the historical oppression and exploitation of other groups (University of Maryland).

Power: "A relational force, not a fixed entity, that operates in all interactions. While it can be oppressive, power can also be enabling" (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p.116).

Queer - term used to refer to people or culture of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community. A term once perceived as derogatory is now embraced by some members of the LGBTQ community (The National Multicultural Institute).

Race - a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the political needs of a society at a given period of time (Adams, Bell and Griffin).

Racial and Ethnic Identity - an individual's awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and the ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe him or herself based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience (Adams, Bell and Griffin).

Racial Equity - the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer influenced how one fares. Racial equity is one part of racial justice and must be addressed at the root causes and not just the manifestations. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them (Center for Assessment and Policy Development).

Racism - individual and institutional practices and policies based on the belief that a particular race is superior to others. This often results in depriving certain individuals and groups of civil liberties; rights, and other resources, hindering opportunities for social, educational, and political advancement (The National Multicultural Institute).

Racism (endorsed by Dismantling Racism Training) - A system of advantage based on race. A system of oppression based on race. A way of organizing society based on dominance and subordination based on race. Penetrates every aspect of personal, cultural, and institutional life. Includes prejudice against people of color, as well as exclusion, discrimination against, suspicion of, and fear and hatred of people of color. Racism = Prejudice + the POWER to implement that prejudice (Exchange Project of the Peace & Development Fund).

Reverse Discrimination - term used by opponents of affirmative action who believe that these policies are causing members of traditionally dominant groups to be discriminated against (The National Multicultural Institute).

Safe Space - a space in which an individual or group may remain free of blame, ridicule and persecution, and are in no danger of coming to mental or physical harm (The National Multicultural Institute).

Sex - system of classification based on biological and physical differences, such as primary and secondary sexual characteristics. Differentiated from gender, which is based on the social construction and



expectations of the categories "men" and "women" (University of Maryland).

Sexual Orientation - the direction of one's sexual attraction toward the same gender, opposite gender, or other genders. It is on a continuum and not necessarily a set of absolute categories (UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity).

Social Justice - a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole (Adams, Bell and Griffin).

Social Power - access to resources that enhance chances of getting what one needs or influencing others in order to lead a safe, productive, and fulfilling life (Adams, Bell and Griffin).

Stereotype - a positive or negative set of beliefs held by an individual about the characteristics of a certain group (The National Multicultural Institute).

Tolerance - acceptance and open-mindedness to different practices, attitudes, and cultures; does not necessarily mean agreement with the differences (University of Maryland).

Transgender - an individual whose gender identity differs from the societal expectations of their physical sex. Transgender or "trans" does not imply any form of sexual orientation. Cisgender is a gender identity where one's self-perception of one's gender matches one's sex. For example, a cisgendered female is a female with a female identity (The National Multicultural Institute).

White Privilege - refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed upon people solely because they are White. White people who experience such privilege may or may not be conscious of it (McIntosh).

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