

Glossary of Terms

Shared by Lesly Melendez of Groundwork Lawrence

Allyship

An ally is someone who is not a member of a particular marginalized group but expresses or offers support. Often, true allies have considered their own internalized discrimination or preconceived notions and worked to eliminate them.

Advocacy

An advocate is someone who, although not a member of a marginalized group, supports and works on behalf of others or a marginalized community. Advocates are different from allies in that they actively use their privilege to dismantle unjust systems and uplift the voices of marginalized people. Additionally, allies may exist anywhere, but advocates exist in more defined spaces and roles where advocacy is welcome and encouraged.

Anti-Racism

Anti-Racism is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach, and works to eliminate individual racist behaviors and impacts.

Asexual

A broad spectrum of sexual orientations generally characterized by feeling varying degrees of sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, which is the deliberate abstention from sexual activity, despite sexual desire. Some asexual people do have sex and do experience varying levels of sexual attraction. There are many diverse ways of being asexual.

Bisexual

A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or towards people regardless of their gender. Some people may use bisexual and pansexual interchangeably.

Coming Out

Coming out is the process of voluntarily sharing one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity with others. This process is unique for each individual and there is no right or wrong way to come out. The term "coming out" has also been broadened to include other pieces of potentially stigmatized personal information. Terms also used that correlate with this action are: "Being out" which means not concealing one's sexual orientation or gender identity, and "Outing," a term used for making public the sexual orientation or gender identity of another who would prefer to keep this information secret.

Cisgender

A gender identity, or performance in a gender role, that society deems to match the person's assigned sex at birth.

Cissexism/Genderism

The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion founded on the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders and that one's gender or most aspects of it, are inevitably tied to assigned sex. This

system oppresses people whose gender and/or gender expression falls outside of cis-normative constructs. Within cissexism, cisgender people are the dominant group and trans/ gender non-conforming people are the oppressed group.

Classism

Prejudice against or in favor of people belonging to a particular social class.

Conscious Bias

Biased attitudes about a group we are aware of; can be (in)visible; can be accessed. Unconscious Bias: Biased attitude operating outside your awareness and control, are difficult to access or be aware of, & influence your action more than conscious biases.

Critical Race Theory

The theory argues that historical patterns of racism are ingrained in law and other modern institutions, and that the legacies of slavery, segregation and Jim Crow still create an uneven playing field for Black people and other people of color. The idea is that racism is not a matter of individual bigotry but is systemic in America.

Decolonization

Decolonization may be defined as the active resistance against colonial powers, and a shifting of power towards political, economic, educational, cultural, psychic independence and power that originate from a colonized nation's own indigenous culture. This process occurs politically and also applies to personal and societal psychic, cultural, political, agricultural, and educational deconstruction of colonial oppression.

Per Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang: "Decolonization doesn't have a synonym"; it is not a substitute for 'human rights' or 'social justice', though undoubtedly, they are connected in various ways.

Decolonization demands an Indigenous framework and a centering of Indigenous land, Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous ways of thinking.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

(DEI) is a term used to describe policies and programs that promote the representation and participation of different groups of individuals, including people of different ages, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, genders, religions, cultures and sexual orientations.

- **Diversity:** The presence of differences within a given setting. In the workplace, that can mean differences in race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and socioeconomic class.
- **Equity:** The act of ensuring that processes and programs are impartial, fair and provide equal possible outcomes for every individual, even if the services required differ.
- **Inclusion:** The practice of ensuring that people feel a sense of belonging in the workplace. This means that every employee feels comfortable and supported by the organization when it comes to being their authentic selves.
 - Diversity is where everyone is invited to the party
 - Inclusion means that everyone gets to contribute to the playlist
 - Equity means that everyone has the opportunity to dance

- **Belonging:** Is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to work.

Gay

A sexual and affectional orientation toward people of the same gender.

Gender

A social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity. Fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth.

Gender Identity

A sense of one's self as trans, genderqueer, woman, man, or some other identity, which may or may not correspond with the sex and gender one is assigned at birth.

Heterosexism

The assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of others including lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a subtle form of oppression, which reinforces realities of silence and erasure.

Indigeneity

Indigenous populations are composed of descendants or family members of people who inhabited an area prior to colonial contact. As a result some of those peoples may have their own social, economic, or cultural customs that work separately to the dominant cultures that surround them in the present day. Examples: Maori in territory now defined as New Zealand; Mexicans in territory now defined as Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, and Oklahoma; Native American tribes in territory now defined as the United States.

Internalized Racism

Internalized racism is the situation that 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. It involves four essential and interconnected elements:

Decision-making - Due to racism, people of color do not have the ultimate decision-making power over the decisions that control our lives and resources. As a result, on a personal level, they may think white people know more about what needs to be done for them than they do. On an interpersonal level, they may not support each other's authority and power – especially if it is in opposition to the dominating racial group. Structurally, there is a system in place that rewards people of color who support white supremacy and power and coerces or punishes those who do not.

Resources - Resources, broadly defined (e.g. money, time, etc), are unequally in the hands and under the control of white people. Internalized racism is the system in place that makes it difficult for people of color to get access to resources for our own communities and to control the resources of our

community. They learn to believe that serving and using resources for themselves and their particular community is not serving “everybody.”

Standards - With internalized racism, the standards for what is appropriate or “normal” that people of color accept are white people’s or Eurocentric standards. People of color have difficulty naming, communicating and living up to their deepest standards and values, and holding themselves and each other accountable to them.

Naming the problem - There is a system in place that misnames the problem of racism as a problem of or caused by people of color and blames the disease – emotional, economic, political, etc. – on people of color.

Intersectionality

Exposing [one’s] multiple identities can help clarify the ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

Per Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw: Intersectionality is simply a prism to see the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism, many times, interacts with patriarchy, heterosexism, classism, xenophobia — seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities created by these systems actually create specific kinds of challenges.

Lesbian

Usually, a woman whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender. However, some nonbinary people also identify as lesbians, often because they have some connection to womanhood and are primarily attracted to women.

LGBT

Abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. An umbrella term that is often used to refer to the community as a whole. Many people use LGBTQIA to intentionally include and raise awareness of Queer, Intersex and Asexual communities as well as myriad other communities under the umbrella.

Non binary/Nonbinary/Non-binary

A gender identity and experience that embraces a full universe of expressions and ways of being that resonate for an individual, moving beyond the male/female gender binary. It may be an active resistance to binary gender expectations and/or an intentional creation of new unbounded ideas of self within the world. For some people who identify as non-binary there may be overlap with other concepts and identities like gender expansive and gender non-conforming.

Microaggressions

a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority.

Different forms of microaggression

Microaggressions can take several different forms. They can be:

- **Verbal:** A verbal microaggression is a comment or question that is hurtful or stigmatizing to a certain marginalized group of people. For example, saying, “You’re so smart for a woman” would be a verbal microaggression.
- **Behavioral:** A behavioral microaggression occurs when someone behaves in a way that is hurtful or discriminatory to a certain group of people. An example of a behavioral microaggression would be a bartender ignoring a transgender person and instead serving a cisgender person (someone whose biological sex matches their gender identity) first.
- **Environmental:** An environmental microaggression is when a subtle discrimination occurs within society. One example of an environmental microaggression would be a college campus that only has buildings named after white people.

Types

Psychologist Derald Wing Sue and colleagues defined three types of microaggression:

- **Microassaults:** A microassault is when a person intentionally behaves in a discriminatory way while not intending to be offensive. An example of a microassault is a person telling a racist joke then saying, “I was just joking.”
- **Microinsults:** A microinsult is a comment or action that is unintentionally discriminatory. For example, this could be a person saying to an Indian doctor, “Your people must be so proud.”
- **Microinvalidations:** A microinvalidation is when a person’s comment invalidates or undermines the experiences of a certain group of people. An example of a microinvalidation would be a white person telling a black person that “racism does not exist in today’s society.”

Patriarchy

A system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.

Polyamory

Denotes consensually being in/open to multiple loving relationships at the same time. Some polyamorists (polyamorous people) consider “polyam” to be a relationship orientation. Sometimes used as an umbrella term for all forms of ethical, consensual, and loving non-monogamy.

Queer

One definition of queer is abnormal or strange. Historically, queer has been used as an epithet/slur against people whose gender, gender expression and/or sexuality do not conform to dominant expectations. Some people have reclaimed the word and self-identify in opposition to assimilation. For some, this reclamation is a celebration of not fitting into social norms. Not all people who identify as LGBTQIA use “queer” to describe themselves. The term is often considered hateful when used by those who do not identify as LGBTQIA to directly describe others.

Racial Equity

Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or that fail to eliminate them.

“A mindset and method for solving problems that have endured for generations, seem intractable, harm people and communities of color most acutely, and ultimately affect people of all races. This will require seeing differently, thinking differently, and doing the work differently. Racial equity is about results that make a difference and last.” (This definition was developed by OpenSource Leadership Strategies, Inc. All work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial. No Derivatives 4.0 International License.)

Racial Identity Development Theory

Racial Identity Development Theory discusses how people in various racial groups and with multiracial identities form their particular sense of self and identity. It also describes some typical phases in remaking that identity based on learning and awareness of systems of privilege and structural racism, cultural, and historical meanings attached to racial categories, and factors operating in the larger socio-historical level (e.g. globalization, technology, immigration, and increasing multiracial population).

Racial Justice

The systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice—or racial equity—goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures. Operationalizing racial justice means reimagining and co-creating a just and liberated world and includes:

- understanding the history of racism and the system of white supremacy and addressing past harms,
- working in right relationship and accountability in an ecosystem (an issue, sector, or community ecosystem) for collective change,
- implementing interventions that use an intersectional analysis and that impact multiple systems,
- centering Blackness and building community, cultural, economic, and political power of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and
- applying the practice of love along with disruption and resistance to the status quo.

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism refers to the process by which colonizing powers create permanent or long-term settlement on land owned and/or occupied by other peoples, often by force. This contrasts with colonialism where colonizer’s focus only on extracting resources back to their countries of origin, for example, as settler colonialism is ongoing and expansive. Settler Colonialism typically includes oppressive governance, dismantling of indigenous cultural forms, and enforcement of codes of superiority (such as white supremacy).

Per Dina Gillio-Whitaker, “Settler Colonialism may be said to be a structure, not an historic event, whose endgame is always the elimination of the Natives in order to acquire their land, which it does in countless seen and unseen ways. These techniques are woven throughout the US’s national discourse at all levels of society. Manifest Destiny—that is, the US’s divinely sanctioned inevitability—is like a computer program always operating unnoticeably in the background. In this program, genocide and land dispossession are continually both justified and denied.”

Transgender

An adjective used most often as an umbrella term and frequently abbreviated to “trans.” Identifying as transgender, or trans, means that one’s internal knowledge of gender is different from conventional or cultural expectations based on the sex that person was assigned at birth. While transgender may refer to a woman who was assigned male at birth or a man who was assigned female at birth, transgender is an umbrella term that can also describe someone who identifies as a gender other than woman or man, such as non binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, no gender or multiple genders, or some other gender identity.

Two Spirit

An umbrella term encompassing sexuality and gender in Indigenous Native American communities. Two Spirit people often serve integral and important roles in their communities, such as leaders and healers. It may refer to an embodiment of masculinity and femininity but this is not the only significance of the term. There are a variety of definitions and feelings about the term two spirit – and this term does not resonate for everyone. Two Spirit is a cultural term reserved for those who identify as Indigenous Native American. Although the term itself became more commonly used around 1990, two spirit people have existed for thousands of years.

Unconscious biases

Social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups (including their own), and these biases stem from one’s tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing.

White Privilege

1. Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. Generally white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.
2. Structural White Privilege: A system of white domination that creates and maintains belief systems that make current racial advantages and disadvantages seem normal. The system includes powerful incentives for maintaining white privilege and its consequences, and powerful negative consequences for trying to interrupt white privilege or reduce its consequences in meaningful ways. The system includes internal and external manifestations at the individual, interpersonal, cultural and institutional levels.

The accumulated and interrelated advantages and disadvantages of white privilege that are reflected in racial/ethnic inequities in life-expectancy and other health outcomes, income and wealth, and other outcomes, in part through different access to opportunities and resources. These differences are maintained in part by denying that these advantages and disadvantages exist at the structural, institutional, cultural, interpersonal, and individual levels and by refusing to redress them or eliminate the systems, policies, practices, cultural norms, and other behaviors and assumptions that maintain them.

- **Interpersonal White Privilege**: Behavior between people that consciously or unconsciously reflects white superiority or entitlement.
- **Cultural White Privilege**: A set of dominant cultural assumptions about what is good, normal or appropriate that reflects Western European white world views and dismisses or demonizes other world views.

- **Institutional White Privilege**: Policies, practices and behaviors of institutions—such as schools, banks, non-profits or the Supreme Court—that have the effect of maintaining or increasing accumulated advantages for those groups currently defined as white, and maintaining or increasing disadvantages for those racial or ethnic groups not defined as white. The ability of institutions to survive and thrive even when their policies, practices and behaviors maintain, expand or fail to redress accumulated disadvantages and/or inequitable outcomes for people of color.

Xenophobia

Fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign