



Diversity and Social Justice

A glossary of working definitions

Words often have different meanings to different people, based on their experiences. The purpose of this glossary, which is a work in progress, is to help avoid such misunderstandings. Not everyone will agree on the definition of every word, and many of these words and terms will continue to evolve. We hope this reference can provide a common language that can aid in discussions. This is in no way an exhaustive list of social justice terms.

Ableism: Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental, and/or emotional ability; usually that of able-bodied / minded persons against people with illness, disabilities, or less developed skills / talents.

Accessibility: The extent to which a facility is readily approachable and usable by individuals with disabilities, particularly such areas as the personnel office, worksite and public areas.

Facilities, goods and services have to be accessible to everyone without discrimination. It has 4 overlapping dimensions:

- nondiscrimination: accessible to all, especially the most vulnerable or marginalized sections of the population
- physical accessibility: within safe physical reach for all sections of the population. It also implies that medical services and underlying determinants of health are within safe physical reach, and adequate access to buildings.
- Economic accessibility (affordability): must be affordable for all. Payment for services has to be based on the principle of equity, ensuring that these services are affordable for all, including socially disadvantaged groups.
- Information accessibility: accessibility includes the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas.

Adulthood: Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions against young people, in favor of older person(s).

Ageism: Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in age; usually that of younger persons against older.

Ally: Describes someone who supports a group other than one's own (in terms of racial identity, gender, faith identity, sexual orientation, etc.) Allies acknowledge disadvantage and oppression of other groups than their own; take risks and supportive action on their

behalf, commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

Anti-Semitism: The fear or hatred of Jews, Judaism, and related symbols.

Asexual: A sexual orientation generally characterized by not feeling sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, which is the deliberate abstention from sexual activity. Some asexual people do have sex. There are many diverse ways of being asexual.

Bias: Prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Biracial: A person who identifies coming from two races.

Cisgender: Individuals whose gender identity and expression line up with their birth-assigned sex.

Cissexism: The system of oppression that values cisgender people, upholds the gender binary, and marginalizes, oppresses, and makes invisible the lives and experiences of transgender people.

Classism: Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in socio-economic status, income, class; usually by upper classes against lower.

Colonization: can be defined as some form of invasion, dispossession and subjugation of a people, includes but is not limited to the systematic dispossession of land, cultural practices, and native language. The invasion need not be military; it can begin—or continue—as geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban or industrial encroachments. The result of such incursion is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands from the original inhabitants. This is often legalized after the fact. The long-term result of such massive dispossession is institutionalized inequality. The colonizer/colonized relationship is by nature an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized. (*Colonization and Racism*. Film Emma LaRocque, PhD Aboriginal Perspective)

Colonialism: the exploitative historical, political, social, and economic system established when one group or force takes control over a colonized territory or group; the unequal relationship between colonizer and the colonized

Colorism: A practice of discrimination by which those with lighter skin are treated more favorably than those with darker skin.

Crip: Crip is considered to be an inclusive term, representing all disabilities: people with vastly divergent physical and psychological differences. Crip represents the

contemporary disability rights wave and is an “insider” term for disability culture. The term Crip within the disability community reflects the political reclaiming of the historically derogatory term “cripple,” which not only diminished the person to an image of ugliness but also excluded those with non-physical disabilities from the disability community.

Cultural appropriation: The act of members of dominant/powerful/privileged groups claiming ownership of, or the rights to, less powerful/privileged groups' cultural and/or religious symbols, dress, and ceremonies.

Cultural Humility: A lifelong process of self-reflection, self-critique and commitment to understanding and respecting different points of view, and engaging with others humbly, authentically and from a place of learning. *Gallardo, M. E. (2013). Developing cultural humility: embracing race, privilege and power. Los Angeles : SAGE Publications.*

Deaf: We use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase Deaf when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language – American Sign Language (ASL) – and a culture. The members of this group have inherited their sign language, use it as a primary means of communication among themselves, and hold a set of beliefs about themselves and their connection to the larger society. We distinguish them from, for example, those who find themselves losing their hearing because of illness, trauma or age; although these people share the condition of not hearing, they do not have access to the knowledge, beliefs, and practices that make up the culture of Deaf people.

“**Hard-of-hearing**” can denote a person with a mild-to-moderate hearing loss, or it can denote a deaf person who doesn't have/want any cultural affiliation with the Deaf community, or both.

Decolonizing: Undoing the harm that colonialism has done

Diet culture: A system of thought in which food is an issue of public morality, where eating whatever you want is a grave sin and abstaining from “bad” food – which could be fatty food, sweet food, or carb-rich food, depending on the month – is seen as virtuous.

Disability: Being differently abled (physically, mentally, emotionally) from that which society has structured to be the norm in such a way so that the person is unable to move, or has difficulty moving—physically, socially, economically—through life.

Discrimination: The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories.

Diversity: The wide variety of shared and different personal and group characteristics among human beings.

Dominant culture: The cultural values, beliefs, and practices that are assumed to be the most common and influential within a given society.

Emotional labor: having to exert energy for the purpose of addressing people's feelings, educating, making people comfortable, or living up to social expectations.

Environmental racism: The enactment of any policy or regulation that negatively affects the living conditions of low-income or minority communities at a rate disproportionate from affluent communities. The term is often used to describe specific events in which minority communities are targeted for the siting of polluting industries and factories. The term also describes the segregation of minority communities into regions where they are exposed to health hazards. It also includes the exclusion of minority groups from the decision-making process in their communities.

Equality: Access or provision of equal opportunities, where individuals are protected from being discriminated against. Equality implies elements of sameness in opportunity, but does not focus on fairness in outcomes. Equality assumes an equal "starting place" of all individuals.

Equity A state in which all people in a given society share equal rights and opportunities.

Note: Equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. *Equality* is treating everyone the same. Equality *aims* to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help.

Equity *appears* unfair, but it actively moves everyone closer to success by "leveling the playing field." But not everyone starts at the same place, and not everyone has the same needs.

Ethnicity: A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base.

Fat Phobia: Fear and dislike of fat people and/or fatness.

First Nations People: Individuals who identify as those who were the first people to live on the Western Hemisphere continent. People also identified as Native Americans

First person language: The origin and intention of [person first language, such as "person with obesity," rather than "obese person"] is superficially benevolent, suggesting that a person be considered holistically and not defined by a particular (negative) characteristic. However, a number of new, and likely unintended, consequences arise from this approach. Hudak distinguished between "benign" and "toxic" labeling, where the former is simply descriptive but the latter can lead to oppression and stigmatization. It would be considered absurd to describe a native of Germany, for example, as a "person with German-ness" because adjectives associated with nationality are descriptive. In contrast, the apparent need to separate a person from the characteristic

in question implies an inherent adverse judgment. Second, the idea that we are all people but some of us are “burdened” with this millstone around our neck both denotes that only by fixing or removing this blight can we become like “everyone else,” and precludes that we can ever be “normal” in our current form. Thus, far from returning our humanity to us or fostering our dignity, we are marked with a defect, the very definition of stigma.

Fundamental Attribution Error: the often unconscious bias to place more emphasis on perceived internal or innate characteristics to explain someone’s behavior in a given situation; doesn’t take into consideration the external factors that can, and often do, impact an individual’s behavior

Gender: Socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society deems masculine or feminine. This social construct is often linked to and confused with the biological construct of sex.

Gender binary: a social construction of gender in which there are two distinct and opposite genders: male/masculine/men and female/feminine/women.

Gender expression: a person’s presentation of their gender. These outward expressions of gender can be intentional or unintentional and involve one’s mannerisms, clothing, hair, speech, clothing, and activities (and more!).

Gender identity: a person’s innate sense of their own gender: being a man, a woman, a girl, a boy, in between, or outside of the gender binary.

Genderqueer: an identity term for a person who may not identify with and/or express themselves within the gender binary.

Gentrification: demographic shifts that usually occur in big cities in which upper-middle class and/or racially privileged individuals and businesses move into historically working class and poor and/or racially oppressed neighborhoods and communities.

Healthism: “the preoccupation with personal health as a primary – often the primary – focus for the definition and achievement of well-being; a goal which is to be attained primarily through the modification of life styles”. (Robert Crawford)

Heterosexism: The presumption that everyone is, and should be, heterosexual

Historical trauma: is defined by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, PhD as “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma.”

Homophobia: The fear or hatred of homosexuality (and other non-heterosexual identities), and persons perceived to be gay or lesbian.

Hate crime: Hate crime legislation often defines a hate crime as a crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person.

Imperialism: The policy or practice of the government of one nation dominating people of other nations by gaining control of their land, politics and economy

Immigrant: Someone who moves from one country or region and intends to reside permanently in that country or region. Immigration means "in- migration" into a country, and the reverse is emigration, or "out-migration." The long term and/or permanent movement of human population in general, whether into, out of, or within countries (or before the existence of recognized countries) is regarded as migration.

Implicit bias: Having attitudes towards people or associating stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge.

Inclusion: Inclusion authentically brings traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities and decision/policy making. *Source: Crossroads Charlotte Individual Initiative Scorecard for Organizations Scorecard Overview, revised 3/12/07*

Intersectionality: The idea that various biological, social, and cultural categories-- including gender, race, class, and ethnicity-- interact and contribute towards systematic social inequality. (McCall, L. (2005). *The Complexity Of Intersectionality. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture*)

Islamophobia: The irrational fear or hatred of Islam, Muslims, Islamic traditions and practices, and, more broadly, those who appear to be Muslim.

"Isms": A way of describing any attitude, action or institutional structure that subordinates (oppresses) a person or group because of their target group, color (racism), gender (sexism), economic status (classism), older age (ageism), religion (e.g., anti-Semitism), sexual orientation (heterosexism), language/immigrant status (xenophobia), etc.

Indigenous people: People who were originally in a place, people who have a long history of being in a particular place and who retain their identity within a larger entity, state or empire. Other related terms for indigenous peoples include aborigines, native peoples, first peoples, and first nations. Indigenous peoples may often be used in preference to these or other terms, as a neutral replacement where these terms may have taken on negative or pejorative connotations by their prior association and use. It is the preferred term in use by the United Nations and its subsidiary organizations.

Intersex: 1. A person who is biologically intermediate between male and female. 2. A person with both ovarian and testicular tissue. 3. A person with two ovaries or two testes, but ambiguous genitals.

LGBTIQQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, and Questioning.

Marginalized: Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community.

Misogynoir: A portmanteau that combines “misogyny” and the French word for black, “noir” – is a term coined by the queer Black feminist Moya Bailey to describe the particular racialized sexism that Black women face.

Multiethnic: An individual that comes from more than one ethnicity. An individual whose parents are born from more than one ethnicity.

Nepotism: A form of discrimination in which family members or friends are hired for reasons that do not necessarily have anything to do with their experience, knowledge or skills.

Neurodiversity: The diversity of human brains and minds – the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species.

Neurodivergent: (sometimes abbreviated as **ND**): Having a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of “normal.”

Neurotypical: (often abbreviated as **NT**) Having a style of neurocognitive functioning that falls within the dominant societal standards of “normal.”

Neoliberalism: A free market economic philosophy that favors the deregulation of markets and industries, the diminution of taxes and tariffs, and the privatization of government functions, passing them over to private business.

Nonbinary gender: An umbrella term covering any gender identity that doesn't fit within the gender binary. The label may also be used by individuals wishing to identify as falling outside of the gender binary without being any more specific about the nature of their gender. This has some overlap with gender nonconforming, a label for individuals whose gender expression doesn't fit within the gender binary, without being any more specific about how their expression varies from it.

There are many kinds of nonbinary gender identities. A few of the most common identities are (http://nonbinary.org/wiki/Nonbinary_gender):

- **Agender** people find that they have no inner sense of their gender identity.
- **Androgyne** is a mix of male and female, or in between.
- **Bigender** people often change between genders, or are both at once.
- **Genderfluid** people feel they have different gender identities at different times.
- **Genderqueer** is a non-normative gender identity or expression.
- **Neutrois** is a gender neither female nor male, but gender neutral.
- **Nonbinary** is an umbrella term for all who don't identify as just female or male all the time.

Oppression: The results from the use of institutional power and privilege where one person or group benefits at the expense of another. Oppression is the use of power and the effects of domination.

Pansexual: (also referred to as omnisexuality or polisexuality): A term referring to the potential for sexual attractions or romantic love toward people of all gender identities and biological sexes. The concept of pansexuality deliberately rejects the gender binary, and derives its origin from the transgender movement.

People of Color: A collective term for men and women of Asian, African, Latin and Native American backgrounds; as opposed to the collective "White" for those of European ancestry.

Personal identity: Our identities as individuals, including our personal characteristics, history, personality, name, and other characteristics that make us unique and different from other individuals.

Polyamory: The practice of having multiple open, honest love relationships.

Prejudice: A preconceived judgment about a person or group of people; usually indicating negative bias.

Privilege: A right that only some people have access or availability to because of their social group memberships (dominants). Because hierarchies of privilege exist, even within the same group, people who are part of the group in power (white/Caucasian people with respect to people of color, men with respect to women, heterosexuals with respect to homosexuals, adults with respect to children, and rich people with respect to poor people) often deny they have privilege even when evidence of differential benefit is obvious. See the term "right" also in this glossary. (*Source: National Conference for Community and Justice—St. Louis Region.— Unpublished handout used in the Dismantling Racism Institute program*)

Queer: An umbrella term that can refer to anyone who transgresses society's view of gender or sexuality. The definitional indeterminacy of the word Queer, its elasticity, is one of its constituent characteristics: "A zone of possibilities".

Questioning: A term used to refer to an individual who is uncertain of her/his sexual orientation or identity.

Race: A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups.

Racism: A complex system of beliefs and behaviors, grounded in a presumed superiority of the white race. These beliefs and behaviors are conscious and unconscious; personal and institutional; and result in the oppression of people of color and benefit the dominant group, whites. A simpler definition is racial prejudice + power = racism. (Source: National Conference for Community and Justice — St. Louis Region. Unpublished handout used in the *Dismantling Racism Institute* program)

Sensory sensitivity: Being sensitive to smells/scents, lights and loud noises.

Sex: Biological classification of male or female (based on genetic or physiological features); as opposed to gender.

Sexism: Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in sex/gender; usually by men against women.

Sexual Orientation: One's natural preference in sexual partners; predilection for homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality.

Sizeism: A system of oppression that produces social and physical barriers based on the size of one's body, specifically weight, height, or both. Different cultures have internalized attitudes towards certain sizes, and depending on where one is in the world, someone may be considered especially tall, short, or fat. Specifically in Western culture, sizeism depends on the binary of thin and fat.

Social Identity: Involves the ways in which one characterizes oneself, the affinities one has with other people, the ways one has learned to behave in stereotyped social settings, the things one values in oneself and in the world, and the norms that one recognizes or accepts governing everyday behavior.

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. It both a process and a goal. A commitment to a socially just world and the committed actions to make that world a reality.

Stereotype: Blanket beliefs and expectations about members of certain groups that present an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment. They go beyond necessary and useful categorizations and generalizations in that they are typically negative, are based on little information, and are highly generalized.

Transphobia: The fear or hatred of persons perceived to be transgender and/or transexual.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people who do not identify with their birth-assigned sex and/or whose gender expression does not conform to the societal expectations. Trans* is used as an inclusive abbreviation.

Trigger Warning: A statement at the start of a piece of writing, video, etc., alerting the reader or viewer to the fact that it contains potentially distressing material.

Two Spirit: A contemporary, unifying term adopted by some Indigenous North Americans to signify their spiritual, sexual, gender, cultural, and community identities. Many make use of the two-spirit term by referencing embodied feminine and masculine duality; a gender identity or expression that does not fit well into Western notions of a binary gender division, but that is more aligned with their traditional indigenous understanding of a non-female, non-male gender; as a cultural reference of being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ); and/or as having an identity that centers the spiritual aspect of their identity. The term varies from indigenous group to indigenous group. Two Spirits can cross social gender roles, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

Weightism: (also known as weight-based discrimination), Discrimination against people based solely on their weight. This type of discrimination rests on societal attitudes towards weight, and what society believes an unhealthy weight says about a person's personality and even inherent worth.

White fragility: A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.

White guilt: The individual or collective guilt felt by some white people for the historical and current oppressions experienced by people of color; though white guilt has been described as being a detrimental consequence of racism, experiences associated with white guilt are not comparable to the experiences of systemic oppression faced by marginalized communities.

White privilege: The right or advantage provided to people who are considered white; an exemption of social, political, and/or economic burdens placed on non-white people; benefitting from societal structuring that prioritizes white people and whiteness.

White Thin Cis Hetero Industrial Complex: The collective industrial and social production of the belief that the ultimate standard of beauty & health is possessed by those that are heterosexual, cisgender, light skin, and thin.

White savior complex: When a white character or person rescues people of color from their oppression.

White supremacy: A historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent; for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

Xenophobia A culturally based fear of outsiders. Xenophobia has often been associated with the hostile reception given to those who immigrate into societies and communities. (*Source: Bordeau, J. (2010). Xenophobia: the violence of fear and hate. New York: Rosen Pub.*)

This glossary was compiled from the following sources:
Arizona State University – Intergroup Relations Center; Everyday Feminism; National Conference for Community and Justice, Oregon State University; Suffolk University—Boston; The McCune Foundation; The National Center for Transgender Equality; The Department of Inclusion & Multicultural Engagement, Lewis & Clark College; The Center for Assessment and Policy Development; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Social Justice League; Asexual Resource Center; Claremont Independent; National Association of the Deaf; The Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative; The Anti-Oppression Network and Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook; Indigenous Wellness Research Institute