

## Power of Words & Glossary of Terms for Racial Equity

Words and their multiple uses reflect the tremendous diversity that characterizes our society. Indeed, a common language on issues relating to racism is nonexistent. The need for a vocabulary of commonly used terms quickly became evident when we began working, particularly with our four local Project Change sites. We discovered that the lack of a common understanding of even the most frequently used words in any discussion on race can easily evoke misunderstanding and confusion, and often lead to controversy and hostility. It is essential to achieve some degree of shared understanding in the use of the most common terms. In this way, the quality of dialogue and discourse on race in America and your community can be enhanced.

Language can be used deliberately to engage and support community anti-racism coalitions and initiatives, or to inflame and divide them. Discussing definitions can engage and support coalitions yet is important for groups to decide the extent to which they must have consensus and where it is okay for people to disagree. It is important to keep in mind - the words that people use to discuss power, privilege, racism and oppression hold different meanings for different people. People at different stages in developing an analysis tend to attach different meanings to words like discrimination, privilege and institutional racism. When people are talking about privilege or racism, the words they use often come with emotions and assumptions that are not spoken.

Many of these and other related terms have evolved over time. For example, given the changing demographic trends in the United States, the word “minority” no longer accurately reflects the four primary racial/ethnic groups. The terms “emerging majority” and “people of color” have become popular substitutes. Also, the terms used to refer to members of each community of color have changed over time. Whether to use the terms African American or black, Hispanic American or Latino, Native American or American Indian, and Pacific Islander or Asian American depends of a variety of conditions, including geographic location, age, generation, and sometimes political orientation.

### Glossary of Terms for Racial Equity

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE
<b>Ally</b>	A person from a different racial, gender, religious, sexual orientation etc. group that acknowledges the oppression and who will commit to working on his/her own part that may contribute to that oppression, continue to increase knowledge and awareness, and who will commit to supporting people who are oppressed through actions and taking stands.	National Conference for Community and Justice – St. Louis Region – unpublished handout used in the Dismantling Racism Institute Program
<b>Bigotry</b>	Intolerant prejudice which glorifies one’s own group, but, denigrates members of other groups.	National Conference for Community and Justice – St. Louis Region – unpublished handout used in the

		Dismantling Racism Institute program.
<b>Collusion</b>	When people act 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.	Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.
<b>Cultural competence</b>	The integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes.	Mark A. King, Anthony Sims, and David Osher, "How is Cultural Competence Integrated in Education?" << <a href="#">Source web site</a> >>
<b>Cultural Pluralism</b>	Recognition of the contribution of each group to the common civilization. It encourages the maintenance and development of different life styles, languages and convictions. It is a commitment to deal cooperatively with common concerns. It strives to create the conditions of harmony and respect within a culturally diverse society.	Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit.
<b>Culture</b>	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 Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit.
<b>Cultural Racism</b>	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. Examples of these norms include defining white skin tones as nude or flesh colored, having future time orientation, emphasizing individualism as opposed to a more collective ideology, defining one form of English as standard, and identifying only Whites as the great writers or composers.	Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.
<b>Denial</b>	Refusal to acknowledge the societal privileges (see the term "privilege") that are granted or denied based on an individual's ethnicity or other	Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A

	grouping. 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 or privileges based on ethnicity or race can be ignored.	Community Builder’s Tool Kit.
<b>Discrimination</b>	The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories.	Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder’s Tool Kit.
<b>Diversity</b>	The wide range of national, ethnic, racial and other backgrounds of U.S. citizens and immigrants as social groupings, co-existing in American culture. The term is often used to include aspects of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class and much more.	Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder’s Tool Kit.
<b>Empowerment</b>	When target group members refuse to accept the dominant ideology and their subordinate status and take actions to redistribute social power more equitably.	Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.
<b>Ethnicity</b>	A social construct which 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. Examples of different ethnic groups are: Cape Verdean, Haitian, African American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Irish, and Swedish (White).	Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.
<b>Individual Racism</b>	The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can occur at both an unconscious level, and can be both active and passive. Examples include telling a racist joke, using a racial epithet, or believing in the inherent superiority of Whites.	Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.
<b>Institutional Racism</b>	The network of institutional structures, policies and practices that create advantages and benefits for Whites, and discrimination, oppression, and	Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and

	<p>disadvantages for people from targeted racial groups. The advantages created for whites are often invisible to them, or are considered “rights” available to everyone as opposed to “privileges” awarded to only some individuals and groups. Examples of institutional racism include policies and practices that: arbitrarily govern a person’s credit-worthiness; determine what information, positive or negative, is presented in the media about individuals involved in newsworthy events; or place undue value on selective educational experiences or qualifications in establishing promotion criteria in jobs and schools.</p>	<p>Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.</p> <p>Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder’s Tool Kit. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate University, 2001. (Source for Examples)</p>
<p><b>Internalized Racism</b></p>	<p>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:</p> <p>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, we may think white people know more about what needs to be done for us than we do. On an interpersonal level, we 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.</p> <p>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. We learn to believe that serving and using resources for ourselves and our particular community is not</p>	<p>Donna Bivens, “Internalized Racism: A Definition,” Women’s Theological Center.</p>

	<p>serving “everybody.”</p> <p>Standards - With internalized racism, the standards for what is appropriate or "normal" that people of color accept are white people's or Eurocentric standards. We have difficulty naming, communicating and living up to our deepest standards and values, and holding ourselves and each other accountable to them.</p> <p>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. With internalized racism, people of color might, for example, believe we are more violent than white people and not consider state-sanctioned political violence or the hidden or privatized violence of white people and the systems they put in place and support.</p>	
<p><b>“ISMS”</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder’s Tool Kit. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate University.</p>
<p><b>Oppression</b></p>	<p>The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oppression denotes structural and material constraints that significantly shape a person’s life chances and sense of possibility.</li> <li>• Oppression also signifies a hierarchical</li> </ul>	<p>Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.</p>

	<p>relationship in which dominant or privilege groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oppression resides not only in external social institutions and norms but also within the human psyche as well.</li> </ul> <p>Eradicating oppression ultimately requires struggle against all its forms, and that building coalitions among diverse people offers the most promising strategies for challenging oppression systematically.</p>	
<b>Prejudice</b>	<p>A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups 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.</p>	<p>Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate University.</p>
<b>Privilege</b>	<p>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, heterosexual 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 right</p>	<p>National Conference for Community and Justice – St. Louis Region – unpublished handout used in the Dismantling Racism Institute program.(Source for 1ST Part)Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate University. (Source for 2ND Part)</p>
<b>Race</b>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.</p>

<b>Racial and Ethnic Identity</b>	An individual's awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and 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.	Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.
<b>Right</b>	A resource or position that everyone has equal access or availability to regardless of their social group memberships.	National Conference for Community and Justice – St. Louis Region – unpublished handout used in the Dismantling Racism Institute program.
<b>Social Power</b>	Access to resources that enhance one's chances of getting what one needs or influencing others in order to lead a safe, productive, fulfilling life.	Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.
<b>Structural Racism</b>	A structural racism analytical framework identifies aspects of our history and culture that have allowed the privilege associated with 'whiteness' and the disadvantage of 'color' to endure and adapt over time. It points out the ways in which public policies and institutional practices contribute to inequitable racial outcomes. It lays out assumptions and stereotypes that are embedded in our culture that, in effect, legitimize racial disparities, and it illuminates the ways in which progress toward racial equity is undermined.	Karen Fulbright-Anderson, Keith Lawrence, Stacey Sutton, Gretchen Susi, and Anne Kubisch, Structural Racism and Youth Development Issues, Challenges, and Implications. New York: The Aspen Institute.
<b>White Privilege</b>	Is 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.	Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women Studies."

## References

Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Karen Fulbright-Anderson, Keith Lawrence, Stacey Sutton, Gretchen Susi, and Anne Kubisch, Structural Racism and Youth Development Issues, Challenges, and Implications. New York: The Aspen Institute, 2004. page 1.

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/Programt1.asp?i=83&bid=0>

Donna Bivens, "Internalized Racism: A Definition," Women's Theological Center, 1995

<http://www.thewtc.org/publications.html>

Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit: 15 Tools for Creating Healthy, Productive Interracial/Multicultural Communities. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate University, 2001. pages 32-33

<http://www.projectchange.org/pubs.html>

National Conference for Community and Justice – St. Louis Region – unpublished handout used in the Dismantling Racism Institute program. 1996.

<http://www.nccjstl.org/>

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women Studies."

<http://www.wcwonline.org/title108.html>

**Power of Words and Glossary for Racial Equity  
produced by Project Change and the Center for Assessment and Policy  
Development**