Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Glossary

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.

Source: Center for Assessment and Policy Development

Bigotry

Intolerant prejudice which glorifies one's own group and denigrates members of other groups.

Source: National Conference for Community and Justice St. Louis Region — unpublished handout used in the Dismantling Racism Institute program.

Collusion

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.

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

Cultural Pluralism

Recognition of the contribution of each group to a 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.

Source: Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit.

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.

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.

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

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.

Source: Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit.

Denial

Refusal to acknowledge the societal privileges (see the term "privilege") that are granted or denied based on an individual's ethnicity or other 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.

Source: Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit.

Discrimination

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

Source: Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit.

Diversity

The wide range of national, ethnic, racial and other backgrounds of U.S. residents 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.

Source: Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit.

Empowerment

When target group members refuse to accept the dominant ideology and their subordinate status and take actions to redistribute social power more equitably.

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

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.

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).

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

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.

Individual Racism

The beliefs, attitudes and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can occur at both a conscious and 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.

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

Institutional Racism

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 non-white.

Examples:

- Government policies that explicitly restricted the ability of people to get loans to buy or improve their homes in neighborhoods with high concentrations of African Americans (also known as "red-lining").
- City sanitation department policies that concentrate trash transfer stations and other environmental hazards disproportionately in communities of color.

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, 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.

"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 (xenophobism), etc.

Source: Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit. Claremont, Calif.: Claremont Graduate University.

Oppression

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.

- Oppression denotes structural and material constraints that significantly shape a person's life chances and sense of possibility.
- Oppression also signifies a hierarchical relationship in which dominant or privileged groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups.
- Oppression resides not only in external social institutions and norms but also within the human psyche as well.
- 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.

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

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

Prejudice

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.

Source: Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit. Claremont, Calif.: Claremont Graduate University.

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.

Sources: 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, Calif.: Claremont Graduate University. (Source for 2nd Part)

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.

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

Racial and Ethnic Identity

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.

Source: Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge. 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 fail to eliminate them.

Source: Center for Assessment and Policy Development.

Racism

Racism is 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.

Right

A resource or position that everyone has equal access or availability to regardless of their social group memberships.

Source: National Conference for Community and Justice — St. Louis Region. Unpublished handout used in the Dismantling Racism Institute program.

Social Justice

Social justice includes 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.

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

Social Power

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.

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

Structural Racism

"The structural racism lens allows us to see that, as a society, we more or less take for granted a context of white leadership, dominance and privilege. This dominant consensus on race is the frame that shapes our attitudes and judgments about social issues. It has come about as a result of the way that historically accumulated white privilege, national values and contemporary culture have interacted so as to preserve the gaps between white Americans and Americans of color."

For example, we can see structural racism in the many institutional, cultural and structural factors that contribute to lower life expectancy for African American and Native American men, compared to white men. These include higher exposure to environmental toxins, dangerous jobs and unhealthy housing stock, higher exposure to and more lethal consequences for reacting to violence, stress and racism, lower rates of healthcare coverage, access and quality of care and systematic refusal by the nation to fix these things

Source: Karen Fulbright-Anderson, Keith Lawrence, Stacey Sutton, Gretchen Susi and Anne Kubisch, Structural Racism and Community Building. New York: The Aspen Institute. (1st part)

Maggie Potapchuk, Sally Leiderman, Donna Bivens and Barbara Major. Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building.(2nd part)

White Privilege

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.

Examples of privilege might be: "I can walk around a department store without being followed." "I can come to a meeting late and not have my lateness attributed to your race;" "being able to drive a car in any neighborhood without being perceived as being in the wrong place or looking for trouble." "I can turn on the television or look to the front page and see people of my ethnic and racial background represented." "I can take a job without having co-workers suspect that I got it because of my racial background." "I can send my 16-year old out with his new driver's license and not have to give him a lesson how to respond if police stop him."

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

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 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. We have difficulty naming, communicating and living up to our deepest standards and values, and holding ourselves 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. 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.