

Resource Glossary of DEI Terms

- **Ally:** Someone who supports a group other than one's own (in terms of multiple identities such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, etc.). An ally acknowledges oppression and actively commits to reducing their own complicity, investing in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.
- **Bias:** A form of prejudice that results from our need to quickly classify individuals into categories.
- **Bigot:** A person who is obstinately devoted to their own opinions and prejudices and is intolerant towards other diverse social groups.
- **BIPoC:** An acronym used to refer to black, Indigenous and people of color. It is based on the recognition of collective experiences of systemic racism. As with any other identity term, it is up to individuals to use this term as an identifier.
- **Cisgender:** A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior aligns with those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth.
- **Cultural Appropriation:** The non-consensual/misappropriate use of cultural elements for commodification or profit purposes – including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. – often without understanding, acknowledgment or respect for its value in the context of its original culture.
- **Disability:** Physical or mental impairment that affects a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- **Diversity:** Socially, it refers to the wide range of identities. It broadly includes race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, veteran status, physical appearance, etc. It also involves different ideas, perspectives and values.
- **Discrimination:** The unequal treatment of members of various groups, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, which favors one group over others on differences of race, gender, economic class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, language, age, national identity, religion and other categories.
- **Equity:** The fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent 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 necessary to provide equal opportunities to all groups.
- **Gender Identity:** Distinct from the term "sexual orientation," refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.
- **Gender Non-conforming:** An individual whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.
- **Harassment:** The use of comments or actions that can be perceived as offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning and unwelcome.
- **Implicit Bias:** Negative associations expressed automatically that people unknowingly hold and that affect our understanding, actions and decisions; also known as unconscious or hidden bias.

- **Inclusion:** The act of creating an environment in which any individual or group will be welcomed, respected, supported and valued as a fully participating member. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces and respects differences.
- **Institutional Racism:** Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes and opportunities for different groups based on racial discrimination.
- **Intersectionality:** A social construct that recognizes the fluid diversity of identities that a person can hold such as gender, race, class, religion, professional status, marital status, socioeconomic status, etc.
- **“Isms”:** A way of describing any attitude, action or institutional structure that oppresses a person or group because of their target group. For example, race (racism), gender (sexism), economic status (classism), older age (ageism), religion (e.g., anti-Semitism), sexual orientation (heterosexism), language/immigrant status (xenophobia), etc.
- **LGBTQIA:** An inclusive term for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual.
- **Microaggression:** The verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs, insults or actions, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based solely upon discriminatory belief systems.
- **Multicultural Competency:** A process of embracing diversity and learning about people from other cultural backgrounds. The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect for the ways that others live in and organize the world and an openness to learn from them.
- **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.
- **Patriarchy:** Actions and beliefs that prioritizes masculinity. Patriarchy is practiced systemically in the ways and methods through which power is distributed in society (jobs and positions of power given to men in government, policy, criminal justice, etc.) while also influencing how we interact with one another interpersonally (gender expectations, sexual dynamics, space-taking, etc.).
- **People of Color:** A collective term for men and women of Asian, African, Latinx and Native American backgrounds, as opposed to the collective “White”.
- **Prejudice:** A preconceived judgment or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment and can be rooted in stereotypes, that denies the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized.
- **Privilege:** Exclusive access or access to material and immaterial resources based on the membership to a dominant social group.
- **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 characteristics: “A zone of possibilities.”
- **Race:** A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly race), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time

- **Safe Space:** Refers to an environment in which everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule or denial of experience.
- **Sexual Orientation:** An individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- **Social Justice:** Social justice constitutes a form of activism, based on principles of equity and inclusion that encompasses 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.
- **Stereotype:** A form of generalization rooted in blanket beliefs and false assumptions, a product of processes of categorization that can result in a prejudiced attitude, critical judgment and intentional or unintentional discrimination. Stereotypes are typically negative, based on little information and does not recognize individualism and personal agency.
- **Structural inequality:** Systemic disadvantage(s) of one social group compared to other groups, rooted and perpetuated through discriminatory practices (conscious or unconscious) that are reinforced through institutions, ideologies, representations, policies/laws and practices. When this kind of inequality is related to racial/ethnic discrimination, it is referred to as systemic or structural racism.
- **System of Oppression:** Conscious and unconscious, non-random and organized harassment, discrimination, exploitation, discrimination, prejudice and other forms of unequal treatment that impact different groups. Sometimes used to refer to systemic racism.
- **Tokenism:** Performative presence without meaningful participation. For example, a superficial invitation for the participation of members of a certain socially oppressed group, who are expected to speak for the whole group without giving this person a real opportunity to speak for her/himself.

The terms contained in this glossary have been reproduced from the following resources:

1. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion [Glossary](#). University of Washington.
2. Anti-Violence Project. [Glossary](#). University of Victoria.
3. Colors of Resistance. [Definitions for the Revolution](#).
4. Cram, R. H. (2002). *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook*.
5. Equity and Inclusion. [Glossary](#). UC Davis.
6. Potapchuk, M., Leiderman, S., et al. (2009). [Glossary](#). Center for Assessment and Policy Development.
7. Center for Diversity & Inclusion. [Glossary of Bias Terms](#). Washington University in St. Louis.
8. Ontario Human Rights Commission. [Glossary of human rights terms](#).

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