

Racial Justice Council Terms & Definitions

Racial Justice: The creation and proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, and outcomes for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, or the community in which they live.

1. **Ally:** A person of one social identity group who stands up in support of members of another group; typically a member of dominant group standing beside member(s) of targeted group. (*Diversity and Social Justice: A Glossary of Terms, Office of Multicultural Affairs, University of Massachusetts Lowell*)
2. **Colorblindness:** The act of pretending that race and racism doesn't exist by treating everyone "equally" and the same. Colorblindness is proven to be an ineffective tool in combatting racism, especially because it ignores societal influences such as culture and structural policies and programs that have historically oppressed non-white people. (*Adapted from Race: The Power of Illusion, What is Race?, PBS and Diversity and Social Justice: A Glossary of Terms, Office of Multicultural Affairs, University of Massachusetts Lowell*)
3. **Cultural Humility:** A process of critical reflection and lifelong learning for both individuals and institutions in a manner that acknowledges the experiences of others outside of themselves, values the worth and preserves the dignity of others, and recognizes and addresses individual and structural power imbalances. (*Adapted from Robert M. Ortega & Kathleen Coulborn Faller; Marcie Fisher-Borne, Jessie Montana Cain, & Suzanne L. Martin*)
4. **Discrimination:** Actions, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, which favor one group over others in the provision of goods, services, or opportunities. (*Diversity and Social Justice: A Glossary of Terms, Office of Multicultural Affairs, University of Massachusetts Lowell*)
5. **Diversity:** The wide variety of shared and different personal and group characteristics among human beings. (*Diversity and Social Justice: A Glossary of Terms, Office of Multicultural Affairs, University of Massachusetts Lowell*)
6. **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, and African-American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latinx); Polish, Irish, Swedish (white). (*Racial Equity Tools*)

7. **Equity:** The state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair which ensures the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement of all people. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept which involves identifying and eliminating barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society. *(Adapted from Annie E. Casey Foundation, Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide, 2014; Independent Sector)*
8. **Implicit Bias:** Implicit bias, or hidden bias, refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. *(Adapted from Massachusetts Public Health Association, Health Equity Policy Framework, 2016)*
9. **Inclusion:** The act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. More than simply diversity and numerical representation, inclusion involves authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging. Inclusive groups by definition are diverse, but diverse groups are not always inclusive. Inclusion ensures respect in words and actions for all people. *(Adapted from Annie E. Casey Foundation, Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide, 2014; Independent Sector)*
10. **Intersectionality:** A framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by overlapping complexities of oppression and privilege. *(Adapted from YW Boston, What is Intersectionality and What Does it Have to Do With Me, 2017)*
11. **Marginalized:** Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community. *(Diversity and Social Justice: A Glossary of Terms, Office of Multicultural Affairs, University of Massachusetts Lowell)*
12. **Microaggression:** Subtle/everyday insults or oversights that intentionally or unintentionally communicate power dynamics, hostility, or judgement based solely upon an individual's membership in a group other than one's own.
13. **Oppression:** When a segment of the population systematically and over time, engages in unjust use of power and authority to prevent another segment from attaining access to resources. This includes race-based disadvantages, discrimination and exploitation based on skin color or other marginalized social locations. *(Adapted from Annie E. Casey Foundation, Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide, 2014; Lum, 2017; Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center, Glossary of Terms, 2017)*
14. **People of Color:** An evolving social and political construct created by non-White groups to describe a shared category they belong to as a basis for solidarity and liberation.
15. **Prejudice:** A preconceived judgment about a person or group of people, based on policies, systems, institutions, media, stereotypes, and unsupported generalizations; usually indicating negative bias and leading to discrimination. *(Adapted from Diversity and Social Justice: A Glossary of Terms, Office of Multicultural Affairs, University of Massachusetts Lowell)*

16. **Privilege:** Systemic, race-based advantages and preferential treatment based on skin color that leads to inequitable access to resources, opportunities, and rewards for non-dominant groups.
17. **Race:** A socially constructed system of categorizing humans largely based on observable physical features (phenotypes) such as skin color and on ancestry. There is no scientific basis for or discernible distinction between racial categories. The ideology of race has become embedded in our identities, institutions, and culture and is used as a basis for domination and discrimination, including opportunities and resources. (*Adapted from Annie E. Casey Foundation, Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide, 2014*)
18. **Racism:** The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races, leading to discrimination and unequal treatment of people based on their race or ethnicity. (Source: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/racism>). There are various forms of racism including institutionalized, interpersonal, and internalized racism.
19. **Structural Racism:** The racial bias across institutions and society. It describes the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color. Since the word “racism” often is understood as a conscious belief, “racialization” may be a better way to describe a process that does not require intentionality. Race equity expert John A. Powell writes: “‘Racialization’ connotes a process rather than a static event. It underscores the fluid and dynamic nature of race... ‘Structural racialization’ is a set of processes that may generate disparities or depress life outcomes without any racist actors.” (*Annie E. Casey Foundation, Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide, 2014*)
20. **White Privilege:** Unearned advantage based on race, which can be observed both systemically and individually, like all unearned privileges in society (such as those related to class, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or ability). (*Peggy McIntosh, White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, 1989*)
21. **White Supremacy:** A historically based system of exploitation and oppression that creates and concentrates the wealth, power, and privilege of White people at the expense of non-White people. This system is supported and perpetuated through culture, beliefs, ideas, policies, laws, and institutions that make it appear to be rational and/or ethical, or that obscure the existence of the system itself, how it actually operates, its real impact, or who benefits from it.

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