



Conversation Starter Concepts

Toward Shared Understanding of Systems of Oppression + How to Build Anti-Racist, Equitable and Inclusive Organizations

This document is offered as a starting point to foster organizations creating their own shared language and shared understanding of racial equity and inclusion in their work and inside their institutions. The intention is for these conversation-starter concepts to inspire additions, offering different definitions, self-reflection and deeper dialogue.

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I. Forms of Oppression, Their Manifestations & Antonyms

Ableism

Ableism is a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be 'fixed' in one form or the other. Ableism is intertwined in our culture, due to many limiting beliefs about what disability does or does not mean, how able-bodied people learn to treat people with disabilities and how disabled people are often not included at the table for key decisions. (Leah Smith, #ableism, Center for Disability Rights)

Ageism

Stereotyping of and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age. (Nelson, TD, *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, MIT Press, 2002)

Anti-Blackness

The visible and less visible ways of voiding blackness of value, while systematically and structurally marginalizing Black people and their issues. Says journalist and author Ta-Nehisi Coates, "If there's one thing missing in our country, it's an acknowledgment of the broad humanity of Black folks. Racism—and anti-Black racism in particular—is the belief that there's something wrong with Black people." (first definition adapted from The Council for Democratizing Education)

Antisemitism

The belief or behavior hostile toward Jews just because they are Jewish. It may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews, for instance, or political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews. (ADL website)

Christian Hegemony

The everyday, pervasive, and systematic set of Christian values and beliefs, individuals and institutions that dominate all aspects of our society through the social, political, economic, and cultural power they wield. (Paul Kivel)

Discrimination

Action based upon prejudice. It is unfair actions toward a social group and its members based upon prejudice about that group. This occurs at the individual level. Also, it exists on a spectrum, from ignoring/a lack of interest to hatred or violence towards people.



Implicit/ Unconscious Bias

Implicit bias refers to the attitudes and 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. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection. (The Kirwan Institute)

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

Islamophobia

In short, Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism. At length, Islamophobia is a fear, hatred, or prejudice toward Islam and Muslims that results in a pattern of discrimination and oppression. Islamophobia creates a distorted understanding of Islam and Muslims by transforming the global and historical faith tradition of Islam, along with the rich history of cultural and ethnic diversity and its adherents, into a set of stereotype characteristics most often reducible to themes of violence, civilizational subversion and fundamental otherness. Islamophobia must also be understood as a system of both religious and racial animosity that is perpetuated by private citizens as well as cultural and political structures. (Council on American-Islamic Relations, "Islamophobia 101")

Meritocracy

A meritocracy is a political system in which economic goods and/or political power are vested in individual people on the basis of talent, effort, and achievement, rather than wealth or social class. Advancement in such a system is based on performance, as measured through examination or demonstrated achievement. (Dictionary.com)

Meritocracy Myth

According to the ideology of the American Dream, America is the land of limitless opportunity in which individuals can go as far as their own merit takes them. According to this ideology, you get out of the



system what you put into it. Getting ahead is ostensibly based on individual merit, which is generally viewed as a combination of factors including innate abilities, working hard, having the right attitude, and having high moral character and integrity. Americans not only tend to think that is how the system should work, but most Americans also think that is how the system does work (Huber and Form 1973, Kluegel and Smith 1986, Ladd 1994). (Steven J. McNamee and Robert K. Miller, Jr., "The Meritocracy Myth," University of North Carolina at Wilmington)

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely on their marginalized group membership. Examples of racial microaggressions: A white man or woman clutches or checks his or her purse or wallet as a Black man approaches or passes them. (Hidden message: You and your group are criminals.) Or an Asian American, born or raised in the United States, is complimented for speaking "good English." (Hidden message: you are not a true American. You are a perpetual foreigner in your own country.) (Derald Wing Sue, "Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Higher Education.")

Organizational Trauma

Events at work that shake the foundations of an organization and leave staff feeling bewildered, distrustful, insecure or even unsafe. Types of workplace trauma include layoffs, mergers and acquisitions, violence in the workplace, death or serious injury, natural disaster, fire, flood, major reorganizations, turnover of senior leadership or loss of key talent. Organizational trauma usually has the following qualities: a loss; a shakeup in roles or responsibilities; or breakdown in communication, trust and/or productivity where workers feel powerless or hopeless. Much like trauma that individuals suffer, organizational trauma is emotionally and cognitively overwhelming. Trauma can fracture our self-protective structures, making us feel vulnerable and helpless. Trauma has a lasting psychic and cultural impact, especially if left unaddressed. Symptoms of trauma in individuals include:

- Physical: headaches, neck or back pain, chest pain, stomach aches, lack of energy, change of appetite, difficulties with sleeping, restlessness, shaky feelings, and panic attacks
- Emotional: irritability, anger, rage, a heightened level of suspicion, losing trust in those previously trusted, anxiety, feelings of hopelessness, denial and feelings of futility for the future.
- Cognitive: blaming others, negative, magnified, catastrophic thinking; poor attention, concentration and memory; and difficulty making decisions or solving problems
- Behavioral: withdrawal, avoidance, emotional outbursts, suspiciousness, and an increase in alcohol or drug consumption, pacing and immobilization.

It is important to acknowledge and recognize that trauma is pervasive, and its impact is broad and diverse; deep and life-shaping; often self-perpetuating and differently affects the more vulnerable; and, affects how people behave at work and approach asking for and receiving help. Staff can also experience the



workplace as being re-traumatizing. Our goal is to create organizations with cultures grounded in a trauma-informed approach and resiliency (see definitions in this document). (adapted from, Darcy Jacobsen, "Protecting Employees from Organizational Trauma," *workhuman*, 11/18/12; Pat Vivian and Shana Hormann, *Organizational Trauma and Healing*, 2013; and Arabella Perez et al, "Trauma Informed Approach and the SAMSHA Research Project THRIVE)

Power Over

Power over is how power is most commonly understood. This type of power is built on force, coercion, domination and control, and motivates largely through fear. This form of power is built on a belief that power is a finite resource that can be held by individuals, and that some people have power and some people do not. (Sustaining Community, "4 types of power: What are power over; power with; power to and power within?," 2/1/19)

Prejudice

Prejudice occurs on the individual level. It is learned pre-judgement about social groups based upon stereotypes. All people have prejudices. Prejudice is learned from the environment that a person interacts with, such as parents, schools, and media. (Adapted from DiAngelo 2012)

Privilege

Privilege refers to certain social advantages, benefits, or degrees of prestige and respect that an individual has by virtue of belonging to certain social identity groups. Within American and other Western societies, these privileged social identities--of people who have historically occupied positions of dominance over others--includes whites, males, heterosexuals, Christians, and the wealthy, among others. (Garica, Justin D. 2018. "Privilege (Social Inequality)." *Salem Press Encyclopedia*.)

Racialization

Racialization is the process by which racial understandings are formed, re-formed and assigned to groups of people and to social institutions and practices, and to the consequences of such understandings. The effects of racialization accumulate over time. Some of the effects are altered, at times sharply, as in the case of the passage of civil rights legislation, but they are not erased, even with the election of the first Black president. (Grassroots Policy Project)

Racial Socialization

The process of learning and internalizing the values, beliefs and norms about our racial group and about racial groups other than our own. (Robin DiAngelo, 2012)



Racial Trauma

Racial trauma, a form of race-based stress, refers to people of color and Indigenous individuals' reactions to dangerous events and real or perceived experiences of racial discrimination. Such experiences may include threats of harm and injury, humiliating and shaming events, and witnessing racial discrimination toward other people of color and Indigenous individuals. Although similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), racial trauma is unique in that it involves ongoing individual and collective injuries due to exposure and re-exposure to race-based stress. (Comas-Díaz, L., Hall, G. N., & Neville, H. A. (2019). Racial trauma: Theory, research, and healing: Introduction to the special issue. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 15.)

Racism

"A form of oppression in which one racial group dominates others. In the United States the dominant group is white, therefore racism is white racial and cultural prejudice and discrimination, supported intentionally or unintentionally by institutional power and authority and used to the advantage of whites and the disadvantage of people of color." Racism includes economic, social, and political power and continues by a system of beliefs about the racial group. Ultimately, it leads to the unequal distribution of resources in society. (DiAngelo 2012)

Reverse Racism

A 1979 California Law Review article defines reverse discrimination or reverse racism as a phenomenon where "individual black and members of other minority groups began to be given benefits at the expense of whites who, apart from race, would have had a superior claim to enjoy them." Reverse racism—or any race-conscious policy—became a common grievance, one that helped shape a certain post-civil-rights movement view of America where black people were the favored children of the state, and serving white people were cast aside. A 2016 Public Religion Research Institute poll indicates that half of all Americans, 57 percent of all white people, and 66 percent of the white working-class believe that discrimination against white people is as big a problem in America as discrimination against black people. A 2016 HuffPost/YouGov poll found that Trump voters think anti-white discrimination is a much more prevalent problem than is discrimination against any minority group. (Vann R. Newkirk II, "The Myth of Reverse Racism," *The Atlantic*, 8/5/17)

The system of racism begins with a race designating itself as superior to another and enacting social, legal and political controls that advantage that race. For racism to exist, a race must have power and privilege to sustain those social, legal and political controls. There has never been a time in American history when a race other than white has had power and privilege over another—especially in the case of AfricanAmericans. That is not to say that minorities cannot be prejudiced or practice discriminatory behaviors because they definitely can and have do so. Bigotry, the stubborn intolerance of any race, creed, belief or opinion different from one's own, can be practiced by any race. As a part of a community that has experienced tremendous amounts of bigotry and racism to this day, it is important that minorities direct



our anger and hurt at the institution of racism and not people. (adapted from Mikala Everett, "Black people cannot be racist, and here's why, *The University Star*, 2/15/16)

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism is an ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of indigenous peoples and cultures. Essentially hegemonic in scope, settler colonialism normalizes the continuous settler occupation, exploiting lands and resources to which indigenous peoples have genealogical relationships. Settler colonialism includes interlocking forms of oppression, including racism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism. This is because settler colonizers are Eurocentric and assume that European values with respect to ethnic, and therefore moral, superiority are inevitable and natural. However, these intersecting dimensions of settler colonialism coalesce around the dispossession of indigenous peoples' lands, resources, and cultures. (Alicia Cox, "Settler Colonialism," Oxford Bibliographies_Literary and Critical Theory, 7/26/17)

Sexism

Prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination based upon sex. Typically, this is to the disadvantage of women. Throughout history men have made more money and held more power than equally qualified women.

Structural Racism

Structural racism in the U.S. is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics—historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal—that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. It is a system of hierarchy and inequity, primarily characterized by white supremacy—the preferential treatment, privilege and power of white people at the expense of racially oppressed people. Structural racism lies *underneath, all around and across society*. It encompasses: (1) history which lies underneath the surface, providing the foundation for white supremacy in this country; (2) culture, which exists, all around our everyday lives, providing the normalization and replication of racism; and (3) interconnected institutions, policies, key relationships and rules across society providing legitimacy and reinforcements to maintain and perpetuate racism.

Supremacy of Whiteness (White Supremacy)

The term used to capture the all-encompassing centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as white, and the practices based on this assumption. (DiAngelo, *What Does It Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy*, 2017)

"By 'white supremacy' I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are



widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.” (Frances Lee Ansley, legal scholar)

Xenophobia

Xenophobia is the fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign. This simple definition should just be thought of as it relates to personal prejudice. It permeates into our national culture and historically has been baked into our laws and institutions. It has always been a part of U.S. cultural fabric. The violence and discrimination against Asians and people of Asian descent linked to the Covid-19 pandemic are recent manifestations. Racist language against Mexican and Central Americans by President Trump and his supporters during the last two general election cycles are another. Xenophobia has resulted in discriminatory housing, education, employment, and other public policy. (Adapted from various sources including, “Covid-19 Fueling Anti-Asian Racism and Xenophobia Worldwide,” Human Rights Watch, 5/12/20)

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 benefit from white privilege are not conscious of it. Examples of privilege might be: shopping in a store without being followed; coming to a meeting late and not have one’s lateness attributed to one’s race; driving a car in any neighborhood without being perceived as being in the wrong place or looking for trouble; turning on the television or looking to the front page of a newspaper and seeing people of one’s racial background represented; taking a job without having co-workers suspect that you got it because of your racial background; send your 16-year old out without having to give him/her/they a lesson on how to respond if stopped by the police. (Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies.”)



II. Economic, Political and Social Systems that Built, Sustain and Rely on Racism

American Imperialism

American Imperialism is a term that refers to the economic, military, and cultural influence of the United States internationally. The influence can be gained via military force; providing the support of preferred factions in a country or region; economic trade policies; preferential diplomacy and in other ways.

(adapted from Mary Bonk, *Gale encyclopedia of US economic history*, 1999)

Colonialism

Control by one power over a dependent area or people. It occurs when one nation subjugates another, conquering its population and exploiting it, often while forcing its own language and cultural values upon its people. (Erin Blakemore, "What is colonialism?," National Geographic, 02/19/19)

Imperialism

The policy or ethos of using power and influence to control another nation or people. (Erin Blakemore, "What is colonialism?," National Geographic, 02/19/19)

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is about the social relations of power between men and women, women and women, and men and men. It is a system for maintaining class, gender, racial and heterosexual privilege and the status quo off power--relying both on crude forms of oppression, like violence; and subtle ones, like laws; to perpetuate inequality. Patriarchal beliefs of male, heterosexual dominance and the devaluation of girls and women lie at the root of gender-based violence. Patriarchy is a structural force that influences power relations, whether they are abusive or not. ("Patriarchy and Power," Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence)

Racial Capitalism

Racial capitalism, a term advanced by UC-Santa Barbara professor and political theorist Cedric Robinson, describes a world system dependent on violence, imperialism, and genocide in order to extract social and economic value from a person of a different racial identity. In the U.S. context, it refers to the extraction of value from Black people, indigenous people and others of nonwhite racial identities. (adapted from various sources including Robin D.G. Kelly's, ["What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?"](#)

Boston Review, 1/12/17)



III. Common Individual & Organizational Responses to Forms of Oppression

Cancel Culture (Call-out Culture) within Organizations

Cancel culture describes the social norm or practice within groups and organizations of swiftly severing ties (“cancelling”) with someone who has committed an offensive or problematic act or shared offensive or problematic viewpoints. In some cases, cancelling is reactionary and not reflective of a well-formulated process designed to address harmful incidents. Relatedly, a “call-out” culture is one where individuals are confronted for offensive, problematic actions or viewpoints. With cancel and call-out culture, there is rarely opportunity for an individual to correct behaviors or make amends for the impact of their actions. Groups and organizations should consider when cancelling and calling-out is a necessary and appropriate response to protect others from harm and trauma; and when there should be other ways to protect; restore and heal from harm; and, create pathways for the offender to rejoin the community—albeit conditionally. (adapted by Kimberly Freeman Brown from the Urban Dictionary and various sources)

Class over Race Thinking

“Despite being the de facto champions of social equality, pretty much every past Democratic presidential candidate since the Johnson administration has shied away from making explicit reference to the ways the government has failed its Black citizens. Instead, a sort of stubborn economism has reigned, both among liberals (remember “It’s the economy, stupid?”) and the left (remember *What’s the Matter With Kansas?*). This has been a way of eliding so-called “cultural” issues and matters of identity on the mistaken assumption that those things were trivial distractions from the real business of the country, that they could somehow be teased apart from material “pocketbook” concerns of regular people. (Kara Voght, “Is It Race or Class? Darrick Hamilton Showed Bernie the Answer.” Mother Jones, 2/27/20)

Colorblindness (Colorblind Ideology)

Colorblindness is the racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals equally as much as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. At its face value, colorblindness seems like a good thing—focusing on commonalities between people, such as shared humanity. However, colorblindness alone is not sufficient to correct injustice—on a personal or structural



level. Colorblindness invalidates identities, denies the existence of the racist experiences, and limits the stories that get told, keeps people (particularly white people and the dominant white culture) comfortable, operates as a form of racism and keeps it thriving. (based on Monica T. Williams, "Colorblind Ideology Is a Form of Racism," *Psychology Today*, 12/12/11 and Jon Greenberg, "7 Reasons Why 'Colorblindness' Contributes to Racism Instead of Solves It," *everyday feminism*, 2/23/15.)

Denial

Refusal to acknowledge the societal privileges that are granted or denied based on an individual's race, ethnicity or other grouping. Denial exists on a spectrum ranging from the repudiation of the existence of societal privileges, to minimizing the impact of societal privileges; to remaining at a limited level of understanding of how societal privileges operate. Those who are in a state of denial—including some who may be unaware of this state—tend to believe, "I just don't think race has anything to do with this." Or, "Racism exists, but it doesn't have great bearing on this issue." Or, "I'm having a hard time understanding that analysis." In this way, the existence of a hierarchical system of privileges based on race can be ignored or engaged only at the depth of one's comfort or level of interest. (based on a definition from the Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative, *A Community Builder's Tool Kit*.)

Diversity Plateau

An organization successfully diversifies its staff, but has not yet instituted transformative change practices that help shift individual behaviors, organizational culture, and systems and structures toward equity (taking different actions across groups to level the playing field) and inclusion (openness to new ideas and ways of doing things). As a result, new staff members whose hire has diversified the staff composition face racialized, gendered, and other challenges that may impede their success. (Kimberly Freeman Brown)

Hypervigilance

People experiencing hypervigilance are unusually sensitive to the environment and people around them. When someone experiences hypervigilance, their subconscious is constantly anticipating danger. As a result, their senses are on high alert, ready to spot and respond to any danger. The situations they are trying to spot might be: a physical danger, a repeat of a traumatic event, something wrong in a relationship. People with hypervigilance feel and act as though there is always a threat around the corner. Normally, they are not responding to a real threat. Rather, their brain is overanalyzing, and overreacting to input from their senses. (Lana Burgess, "Hypervigilance: What you need to know," *MedicalNewsToday*, 9/7/2017)

Internalized Racism

Internalized racism is the situation that occurs in a racist system when a racial group oppressed by racism (often unconsciously and involuntarily) 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 dominant group's power. It involves three essential and interconnected elements:



Decision making – Due to racism, people of color do not have the ultimate decision-making power of the decisions that control their lives and resources. As a result, on a personal level, they may think white people know more about what needs to be done for them than they do. On an interpersonal level, they 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.

Standards – With internalized racism, the standards for what is appropriate, good or normal are grounded in elevating whiteness and denigrating blackness and other racial identities. As a result, people of color may have difficulty naming, communicating and living up to their 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 they are more violent than white people. They may not consider the existence of state sanctioned police violence or be aware of hidden violence perpetrated by white people and the systems and structures that minimize penalty. (based on the definition by Donna Bivens, "Internalized Racism: A Definition," Women's Theological Center.)

Internalized Racial Superiority/ Dominance

"A complex multi-generational socialization process that teaches White people to believe, accept, and/or live out superior societal definitions of self and to fit into and live out superior societal roles." It is important to note that as this is a socialized behavior it is one that has been learned. This means that it can be challenged and changed. Furthermore, it often goes unquestioned by members of the dominant group because it is such a part of their life. They do not question that they have received benefits or have been given privileges based on their race.

Othering

"Othering" is a term that not only encompasses the many expression of prejudice on the basis of group identities, but we argue that it provides a clarifying frame that reveals a set of common processes and conditions that propagate group-based inequality and marginality. (John A. Powell and Stephen Menéndez, "[The Problem of Othering: Towards Inclusiveness and Belonging](#)," Institute of Othering & Belonging, UC Berkeley)



Power-Under

No one wants to take responsibility for impact, everyone feeling like victims of the world, powerless to shape the future. (adrienne maree brown adapting concepts from Power-Under: Trauma and Non-violent Social Change by Steven Wineman, 2008)

Progressive Exceptionalism

The belief that our faith or values, “good politics,” a history of activism that benefits people of color and/or women makes people of faith, white progressives or male progressives different (better) from the societal norm and their peers on matters of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.; and therefore, should be given the benefit of the doubt (or a pass for missteps) on their commitment to anti-racist, anti-sexist, and non-discriminatory practices and behaviors. (Grassroots Policy Project and Kimberly Freeman Brown)

Racial Innocuousness

When people of color consciously or unconsciously make themselves harmless or less threatening or offensive in an effort to avoid further racial trauma. In doing so, people of color and Indigenous individuals anticipate the emotional responses and needs of white individuals in interracial contexts and behave in ways to maintain psychological health and guard against acculturating to white supremacy. (Liu, et al, “Racial trauma, microaggressions, and becoming racially innocuous: The role of acculturation and White supremacist ideology.” (2019) *American Psychologist*, 74, 36-48.)

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat describes the experience of “being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype of one’s group. This social-psychological phenomenon has been shown to significantly decrease the performance of persons who belong to negatively stereotyped groups. Essentially, as long as a negative stereotype exists for a particular group and this negative stereotype is present in a given social setting, that group’s members will likely feel a measure of anxiety which can prevent them from performing at their optimal level. It is important to note that stereotype threat is not the primary *cause* of the disparity in performance between different social gaps. Structural, systemic, and cultural forms of oppression are a significant factor. The gaps have been shown to *widen* when stereotype threat is introduced. (“What is Stereotype Threat,” What is Psychology?)

Trauma

Trauma results from an event, series of events or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that can have lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social and emotional well-being (Missouri Department of Mental Health)



Virtue Signaling

The public expression of opinions or sentiments intended to demonstrate one's good character or social conscience or the moral correctness of one's position on a particular issue. (Oxford Dictionaries)

White Fragility

White people in North America live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from racestress. This insulated environment of racial protection builds white expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress, leading to what I refer to as White Fragility. White Fragility is 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. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white equilibrium. (Dr. Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," The international Journal of Critical Pedagogy, Vol.3, No. 3, 2011)



IV. Anti-Racist Concepts and Individual & Organizational Responses

Ally

Describes someone who supports a group other than one's own (in terms of racial identity, gender and gender identity, faith identity, sexual orientation, etc.). Allies acknowledge the disadvantage and oppression of groups other than their own; take risks and supportive action on their behalf; commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in the oppression of those groups; and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression. (Center for Assessment and Policy Development)

Anti-racism

Actively working against systems of racial oppression to create a more equitable world. "Anti-racism refers to taking a committed stand against racism, a stand that translates into action that interrupts racism in all of its forms, whether personal or institutional, blatant or routine, intended or unintended."

Anti-racism requires action, and consistently working against racism. It requires people to first learn about themselves and their internalized oppression or superiority. It ensures that there are multiple racial perspectives on issues and to continuously be educating oneself on issues related to race and racial injustices. (Trepagnier, 2010)

Anti-racist

A person who supports ideas and policies that affirm that the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences; and that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group. Anti-racists expose and eradicate racist ideas and do not allow them to proliferate without opposition. (Ibram Kendi, *How to Be An Anti-Racist*)

Belonging

Belonging or being fully human means more than having access. Belonging entails being respected at a basic level that includes the right to both co-create and make demands upon society. A just and inclusive society will see all its members as inside our circle of belonging. (["Bridging and Belonging: A Responsibility and Inheritance of the Dream,"](#) John A. Powell, Director, Belonging + Othering Institute, UC Berkeley, 1/18/2021)



Brave Spaces (See also Safe Space)

Learning involves stepping out of what you know and your comfort zone and being willing to take risks. "Learning necessarily involves not merely risk, but the pain of giving up a former condition in favour of a new way of seeing things." (Boostrom 1998) When we learn new things and put ourselves out there we are vulnerable and feel exposed in what we do not know or understand. It does not necessarily feel safe. Brave Spaces ask people to step into their discomfort and be willing to learn and share what they know and do not know. (Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens, "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: A New Way to Frame Dialogue Around Diversity and Social Justice," *from The Art of Effective Facilitation*, 2013)

Bridging + Breaking

Social ties that link people together with others across a cleavage that typically divides society. Bridging is the opposite of breaking - social ties among an exclusive group who explicitly push away from other groups who are seen as dangerous or a threat. ("[Bridging and Belonging: A Responsibility and Inheritance of the Dream](#)," John A. Powell, Director, Belonging + Othering Institute, UC Berkeley, 1/18/2021)

Bystander Intervention

Bystander intervention is recognizing a potentially harmful situation or interaction and choosing to respond in a way that could positively influence the outcome. Here are five steps to help when you are a witness to a problematic or potentially problematic situation: (1) notice the event; (2) interpret it as a problem – err on the side assuming that there could be a problem and investigate; (3) assume personal responsibility – do not assume someone else will do something; (4) know how to help – get trained and/or develop your own personal strategies before events happen; (5) implement the help - act! (adapted from Lehigh University's, "What is Bystander Intervention?")

Call-in (Restorative) Culture within Groups and Organizations

Call-in culture describes an environment that has crafted a response to offensive and problematic behaviors by an individual that confronts and holds individuals accountable for inappropriate and unacceptable behavior; and creates pathways for addressing harm, restoration and reconciliation. Call-in culture within an organization makes room for both an acknowledgment that we all make mistakes; and, a requirement that individuals take responsibility for the impact they have on others when they make them—even if their intentions were good. (adapted by Kimberly Freeman Brown from Mariposa, "A Practical Guide to Calling In," 5/29/15, and other sources)



Centering Black and Brown People

“White supremacy — which has harmed everyone, including robbing white people of their own humanity — needs anti-blackness to thrive. Centering blackness removes both the fuel and the constraints of white supremacy, allowing everyone to be free of its tyranny.

Doing so acknowledges the historical root of this racial hierarchy that has intentionally placed black people at the bottom of society and gives us the opportunity to see the world through the lens of the black experience. It requires us to imagine how our rules and structures would be reorganized and envision a world where we all thrive because the bottom is removed. When we remove blackness from the bottom, everybody gets to be seen.” (Alicia Walters from the Black Thought Project in Siraad Dirshe, “What does it mean to center Black people?” New York Times, 6/19/20)

Co-Conspirator

Those who go above being an ally by using their privilege, taking risks and putting something on the line for someone else. An example of a co-conspirator is James Tyson, a white man who was arrested with Bree Newsome, the Black woman who climbed a flagpole in 2015 to take down the Confederate flag flying at the South Carolina State House soon after white supremacist Dylan Roof murdered nine African Americans attending Bible study at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC. Tyson protected Newsome from being tased by police. The two did not know one another beforehand. (see brief [video](#) of author and education professor Bettina Love define being a co-conspirator vs. an ally)

Diversity

Individual and group differences along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender and gender identification, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs and other ideologies. By valuing individuals and groups free from prejudice, a group creates a climate where equity and mutual respect are intrinsic; and, where difference can be engaged in service to mission fulfillment. (Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative, *A Community Builder’s Tool Kit*.)

Equity

Equity is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all staff, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented 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 needed to assist equality in the provision of opportunities to all groups. (UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity)

Equity-Mindedness

A demonstrated awareness of and willingness to address equity issues among institutional leaders and staff. (Center for Urban Education, University of Southern California)



Inclusion

The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity in ways that increase one's awareness, content knowledge, and understanding of the ways individuals interact within systems and institutions. Inclusion authentically brings traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and policy/decision-making. (based on a definition by Crossroads Charlotte Individual Initiative Scorecard for Organizations, Scorecard Overview.)

Microinterventions (to Microaggressions)

Microinterventions address microaggressions by mobilizing targets, allies and bystanders to confront and educate perpetrators. Strategic goals of Microinterventions are to make the invisible visible, disarm the microaggression, educate the perpetrator, and seek external reinforcement or support.

Microinterventions are important short-term actions to deal with racial trauma but are not sufficient to completely prevent the perpetration of microaggressions. (Sue, D. et al, "Disarming racial microaggressions: Microintervention strategies with targets, White allies, and bystanders," (2019), American Psychologist, 74, 128-142.)

Positive Deviance

Positive Deviance (PD) is based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges.

The Positive Deviance approach is an asset-based, problem-solving, and community-driven approach that enables the community to discover these successful behaviors and strategies and develop a plan of action to promote their adoption by all concerned. (What is Positive Deviance? From the Positive Deviance Collaborative)

Power To

"Power to" refers to the productive or generative potential of power and the new possibilities or actions that can be created without using relationships of domination. It is built on the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world. It is the power to make a difference, to create something new, or to achieve goals. (Sustaining Community, "4 types of power: What are power over; power with; power to and power within?," 2/1/19)

Power With

Power with is shared power that grows out of collaboration and relationships. It is built on respect, mutual support, shared power, solidarity, influence, empowerment, and collaborative decision making. Power with is linked to "social power, the influence we wield among equals." Power with can help build bridges within groups (e.g. families, organisations, social change movements) or across differences (e.g. gender, culture, class). Rather than domination and control, power with leads to collective action and the ability to



act together. (Sustaining Community, "4 types of power: What are power over; power with; power to and power within?," 2/1/19)

Principled Struggle

In struggle that is principled, we struggle for the sake of building deeper unity, that we are honest and direct while holding compassion, that we each take responsibility for our own feelings and actions, and seek deeper understanding by asking questions and reading a text (such as an article or proposal) before we launch our counter argument. (adrienne maree brown referencing Left Root's N'Tanya Lee in "A Call to Attention Liberation: To Build Abundant Justice, Let's Focus on What Matters," truthout, (3/16/18)

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is the belief that you won't be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes. It is a shared belief held by members of a team that others on the team will not embarrass, reject or punish you for speaking up. Psychological safety allows groups to fully take advantage of diversity of thought and experiences; as groups are better able to recognize problems and offer up creative solutions than groups of people with similar life experiences. (Adapted from "What is Psychological Safety at Work?," Center for Creative Leadership)

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. Racial equity is one part of racial justice and requires work to address root causes of inequities and not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race. (Center for Assessment and Policy Development)

Racial Justice

Racial Justice is the proactive advancement and reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and action that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all. (Applied Research Center)

Resiliency

For Black people and other people of color, constant exposure to racism and its impact is unavoidable. And even in environments where efforts are being made to combat and dismantle racism, people of color must craft and implement strategies to protect and sustain themselves. Research on resiliency strategies in response to racism describe the power of protective factors, namely: (1) exposure to specific "racial socialization" messages that are affirming; and (2) creating communities and spaces that are protective, nurturing and supportive. (Kimberly Freeman Brown and Nan Henderson, MSW, "Race and Resiliency—What does the research say?")



Restorative Justice (in organizations)

Adapted from the criminal justice reform community, restorative justice in organizations is the practice of creating pathways of healing, reconciliation and resiliency when there have been incidents where individuals or groups within an organization have caused harm. Core elements of restorative justice practices are: (1) repair—acknowledging, addressing, correcting and making whole individuals and communities who have been harmed; (2) encounter: bringing all willing parties (offenders, those who have experienced harm, and the broader community) together to decide how best to address harm; and, (3) transformation: taking action, measuring progress, and correcting course, when needed. (Kimberly Freeman Brown adapted from Centre for Justice & Reconciliation, “Lesson 1: What is Restorative Justice”)

Safe Space (see also Brave Space)

A place intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations. It is a place for people to feel that they are validated and safe to be themselves. Safe space is an aspiration—something that organizations should vigorously strive for while acknowledging that they are not yet there. Everyone in the organization must contribute to safe space practices and not expect that the leadership of an organization or a policy can make organizational space safe. (Kimberly Freeman Brown adapted from various sources)

Shared Power

Letting go of traditional frames of power and leading and allowing members of a group to have power and influence within the group and the leadership, mission and goals of the group. (Christina Van Winegerden, Stan Gotom Misha Burnstein, “Creating Sustainable Communities: Adult and Leadership Theories and Principles in Practice,” Encyclopedia of Strategic Leadership and Management, 2017)

Social Justice

Social justice is a virtue which guides us in creating those organized human interactions we call institutions. In turn, social institutions, when justly organized, provide us with access to what is good for the person, both individually and in our associations with others. Social justice also imposes on each of us a personal responsibility to collaborate with others, at whatever level of the “Common Good” in which we participate, to design and continually perfect our institutions as tools for personal and social development. The outcome of social justice is the equal distribution of resources and opportunities, in which outside factors that categorize people are irrelevant. (Center for Economic and Social Justice and the Pachamama Alliance)

Social Justice-Mindedness

Actively taking personal responsibility - alone and in concert with others - to achieve the equal distribution of resources and opportunities within our social, economic and political systems and institutions available to all in ways that render factors that have historically disadvantaged some more than others irrelevant.



(Kimberly Freeman Brown, adapted from Center for Economic and Social Justice and the Pachamama Alliance definition of social justice)



V. Helpful Fields of Study

Stratification Economics

A field of study pioneered by Darrick Hamilton and Sandy Darity that offers structural and sociological explanations for economic inequality as opposed to behavioral or genetic reasons. (Kara Voght, "Is it Race or Class? Darrick Hamilton Showed Bernie the Answer." Mother Jones, 02/27/20)



VI. Foundational Definitions

BIPOC

BIPOC is an acronym that stands for “Black, Indigenous and people of color,” and is used to emphasize the distinct history and common erasure of Black and Indigenous peoples’ experiences even as common experiences among people of color are embraced. According to the BIPOC project, “We use the term BIPOC to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context.” (Adapted from Sandra Garcia, “Where Did BIPOC Come From?”, NYT, 6/17/20 and The BIPOC Project)

Cis-gender

Adjective that means “identifies as their sex assigned at birth” derived from the Latin word meaning “on the same side.” A cisgender/cis person is not transgender. “Cisgender” does not indicate biology, gender expression, or sexuality/sexual orientation. In discussions regarding transgender issues, one would differentiate between women who are trans and women who aren’t by saying trans women and cis women. Cis is not a “fake” word and is not a slur. (Trans Student Educational Resources)

Ethnicity

A social construct that divides people on the basis of common nationality or shared cultural traditions. Ethnicity connotes shared cultural traits and a shared group history. Some ethnic groups also share linguistic or religious traits, while others share a common group history but not a common language or religion. Race, versus ethnicity, refers to the concept of dividing people into groups on the basis of various sets of physical characteristics and presumes shared biological or genetic traits, whether actual or asserted. (based on a definition by Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*.)

Equality

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. But not everyone starts at the same place, and not everyone has the same needs. Since everyone is different and we embrace these differences as unique, we must also redefine our basic expectations for *fairness* and *success* as contingent upon those individual differences. We often do not take these differences into account, which privileges some people over others. Privilege is when we make decisions that benefit *enough* people, but not all people. Privilege is allowed to continue when we wrap it up with actions of equality. (Amy Sun, “Equality is Not Enough: What the Classroom Has Taught Me About Justice, 9/16/14, Everyday Feminism)



Identity

Identity is a set of characteristics and aspects that make up who we are. There are many different aspects that make up our identity (race, gender, sexual orientation, age, education, and nationality- just to name a few) At any point in time, we are showing key aspects of our identity, and some are more salient than others depending on the situation/where we are in life. Identity is not static.

Intersectionality

"The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage." People have different identities that all affect their role and place in society. In some aspects people are advantaged, while in others disadvantaged. Identities are intersectional.

Oppression

The social act of placing severe restrictions on an individual, group or institution. Typically, a government or political organization that is in power places these restrictions formally or covertly on oppressed groups so that they may be exploited and less able to compete with other social groups. The oppressed individual or group is devalued, exploited and deprived of privileges by the individual or group which has more power." (Barker, 2003)

Positionality

"The concept that our perceptions are shaped by our position within society. These positions allow us to see and understand some social dynamics while obscuring others." (DiAngelo, 2012) This also exists in organizations and where one is placed within an organization affects their view of what is happening within the organization.

Power

Most simply, generally and traditionally stated, power is the ability to produce an intended outcome. With respect to power in organizational life, power could be described as having the ability to set priorities and make decisions; commit resources; set organizational culture expectations about "appropriate" behaviors; decide what work and ways of working are seen as successful, important and valuable. (Adapted from Fred Nickols, Power: The Ninth Myth of OD, Bertrand Russell)

Race

When we talk about race, we don't mean a biological or genetic category, but rather, a way of interpreting differences between people, which creates or reinforces inequalities among them. In other words, "race" is an unequal relationship between social groups, represented by the privileged access to power and resources by one group over another. Race is socially constructed, created (and recreated) by how people are perceived and treated in the normal actions of everyday life. The unequal boundaries of color have been at time permanent barriers to the economic development, educational and social advancement for



millions of Americans, living in what for them was a deeply flawed and often hypocritical democracy. (Manning Marable, *Structural Racism in American Democracy*, 2000)

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life. (Trans Student Educational Resources)

Whiteness

"A term to capture all of the dynamics that go into being defined and/or perceived as white in society. Whiteness grants material and psychological advantages (white privilege) that are often invisible and taken for granted by whites." (DiAngelo, 2012) White is considered the standard upon which others are based or the norm. It plays out in many ways across society, but it is often invisible and not discussed

'Whiteness,' like 'colour' and 'Blackness,' are essentially social constructs applied to human beings rather than veritable truths that have universal validity. The power of Whiteness, however, is manifested by the ways in which racialized Whiteness becomes transformed into social, political, economic, and cultural behaviour. White culture, norms, and values in all these areas become normative natural. They become the standard against which all other cultures, groups, and individuals are measured and usually found to be inferior" (Henry & Tator, 2006, pp. 46-67).