

Racial Equity & DEI Glossary

The first step in changing the narrative is understanding the words that shape the conversation. By no means is this an exhaustive glossary of DEI and racial equity terminologies. Think of it as a working document – add to it, share it widely, and update it often!

- **Ableism:** Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against people living with disabilities.
- **Accountability:** The ways in which individuals and communities hold themselves to their goals and actions, and acknowledge the values and groups to which they are responsible.
- **Anti-Racism:** The work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life.
- **Bias:** Prejudice in favor of/against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually unfairly or negatively.
- **Black Lives Matter:** A human rights movement, originating in the African-American community, that campaigns against violence and systemic racism toward black people.
- **Cisgender:** From the Latin cis-, meaning “on this side.” A person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth.
- **Cultural appropriation:** Generally entails adopting aspects of a minority culture by someone outside the culture, without sufficient understanding of its context or respect for the meaning and value of the original.
- **Gaslighting:** A form of psychological abuse by shaming, casting self-doubt, and/or altering the perception of truth.
- **Intersectionality:** The overlapping of various systems of oppression.
- **Microaggression:** A comment or action that unconsciously or unintentionally expresses or reveals a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group, such as a racial minority.
- **Multicultural competency:** A process of learning about and becoming allies with people from other cultures.
- **Oppression:** The systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group.
- **Preferred gender pronouns:** The pronouns that people ask others to use in reference to themselves. They may be plural gender neutral pronouns such as they, them, their(s). Or, they may be ze (rather than she or he) or hir (rather than her(s) and him/his).
- **Prejudice:** A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members.
- **Privilege:** Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group.
- **Restorative justice:** A theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by crime and conflict.
- **Systemic racism:** Policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization, and that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race.
- **Xenophobia:** extreme dislike or fear of foreigners, their customs, their religions, etc.

For more DEI terms and definitions, check out the sources that factored into the creation of this starter DEI glossary:

[Racial Equity Tools](#) | [Columbia School of Social Work](#) | [Harvard Human Resources](#) | [Cambridge Dictionary](#)