



RACIAL LITERACY

Compiled by Dr. Alexandria Connally, NPW Racial Equity and Inclusion Consultant the following definitions are intended to increase understanding, create a common framework, and shared language to advance racial equity in the nonprofit sector. The resources at the end of each definition are linked and offer a wealth of thought-provoking information.

Ally

Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways.

An action, not an identity. Members of the advantaged group recognize their privilege and work in solidarity with oppressed groups to dismantle the systems of oppression(s) from which they derive power, privilege, and acceptance. Requires understanding that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways. It means taking intentional, overt, and consistent responsibility for the changes we know are needed in our society, and often ignore or leave for others to deal with; it does so in a way that facilitates the empowerment of persons targeted by oppression. This framework can be used to imply that one does not feel directly implicated by the oppression. (*Shared Understandings*)

Anti-Racism

The work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach, established in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts. (Racial Equity Tools)

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An **Anti-Racist** is someone who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing antiracist ideas. This includes the expression of ideas that racial groups are equals and do not need developing, and supporting policies that reduce racial inequity. ([How To Be An Antiracist](#).)

BIPOC

A term referring to “Black and/or Indigenous People of Color.” While “POC” or People of Color is often used as well, BIPOC explicitly leads with Black and Indigenous identities, which helps to counter anti-Black racism and invisibilization of Native communities. ([Creating Cultures and Practices for Racial Equity: A Toolbox for Advancing Racial Equity for Arts and Cultural Organizations](#))

Equity vs. Equality

Equity: Working to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives.

Equality: Ensuring that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives. Like equity, equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things. Once everyone enjoys a similar level of health and well-being, we can focus on preserving fairness by giving everyone the same things: this is equality. As the Pan-American Health Organization puts it, “equity is the means, equality is the outcome.” (<https://wecprotects.org/racial-justice-glossary/>)

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). ([Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook, Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity](#))

Implicit Bias

Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals’ attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist

within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals' stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is often used to measure implicit biases with regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other topics. (*State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2013*,)

Interpersonal Racism

(also called individual racism or personally mediated racism) - occurs between individuals, and is what most people think of when using the term racism.

- The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individual that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can occur at both an unconscious and conscious level, and can be both active and passive (*Wijeysinghe, Griffin, & Love, 1997*)
- Individual racism refers to an individual's racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviors and is "a form of racial discrimination that stems from conscious and unconscious, personal prejudice" (*Henry & Tator, 2006*) (*Anti-Racist Resources*)

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 people of color.

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. (*Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*)

Intersectionality

Aspects of identity, including race, class, gender, and others intersect and shape the oppression and privilege that individuals experience in their daily lives. The concept of intersectionality was developed by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s. Intersectionality provides a basis for understanding and examining how various aspects of one's identity work with one another in

interpersonal and structural contexts Intersectionality brings to light dynamics of discrimination that can be obscured if discrimination is only considered in siloes and can provide a richer understanding of one's positionality within structures of power. (<https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>)

Internalized Racial Inferiority

The acceptance of and acting out of an inferior definition of self-given by the oppressor is rooted in the historical designation of one's race. Over many generations, this process of disempowerment and disenfranchisement expresses itself in self-defeating behavior. (*PISAB*)

Internalized Racial Superiority

The acceptance of and acting out of a superior definition is rooted in the historical designation of one's race. Over many generations, this process of empowerment and access expresses itself as unearned privileges, access to institutional power, and invisible advantages based upon race. (*PISAB*)

Microaggression

The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. (*Microaggressions: More than Just Race*)

Racial Justice

The work to uproot historically racist systems and replace them with fair, just, and equitable policies and practices. (<https://wecprotects.org/racial-justice-glossary/>)

Racial Equity

Providing everyone what they need to be successful by taking race and the impacts of racism into account. This is distinct from racial equality, which is treating everyone the same. (<https://wecprotects.org/racial-justice-glossary/>)

Racial Trauma

Racial trauma, or race-based traumatic stress (RBTS), refers to the mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes [1]. Any individual that has experienced an emotionally painful, sudden, and uncontrollable racist encounter is at risk of suffering from a race-based traumatic stress injury [2]. In the U.S., Black,

Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) are most vulnerable due to living under a system of white supremacy. (*Mental Health America*)

Structural Racism

The normalization of many systems and dynamics that routinely advantage whites while producing inequities among racial and ethnic groups and cumulative, chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of white domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society — including its history, culture, politics and economics. It involves reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present. (*Racial Equity Tools*)

White Supremacy

The idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group while casting people and communities of color as worthless (worth less), immoral, bad, and inhuman and “undeserving.” Drawing from critical race theory, the term “white supremacy” also refers to a political or socio-economic system where white people enjoy structural advantage and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and an individual level. (*What Is Racism?*)