

## *RACE TERMINOLOGY*

**African American:** Refers to people who were born in the United States and have African ancestry. It caught on in the U.S. in the 1980s as a more “particular and historical” term than the generic “Black.” Many people use the terms black and African American interchangeably.

**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.

**Antiracist:** An individual working against racist systems and policies.

**Bias:** A preference in favor of, or against a person, group of people, or thing. Bias is how our minds streamline thinking so we can quickly make sense of the world. These initial human reactions, often unconscious, are rooted in inaccurate information or reason and are potentially harmful. Biases are also part of being human. Once we know and accept we have bias, we can begin to recognize our own patterns of thinking. With awareness and a conscious effort, we have the power to change how we think and to challenge the negative or harmful biases within ourselves.

**Bigotry:** Intolerant prejudice that glorifies one's own group and denigrates members of other groups.

**Black:** Refers to dark-skinned people of African descent, no matter their nationality. Refers to people who were born in the United States and have African ancestry.

**Black Lives Matter:** A political movement to address systemic and state violence against African Americans. In 2013 Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi created a Black-centered political will and movement building project called #BlackLivesMatter. It was in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer, George Zimmerman. The project is now a member-led global network of more than 40 chapters. Members organize and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks’ humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.”

**Colorism:** The discrimination of people based on skin shades and is prevalent among people of the same ethnic or racial group. Though the practice has been around since the era of slavery, the term was believed to have been coined in the 1980s by Alice Walker, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author.

**Critical Race Theory:** This movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies take up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step by step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism and principles of constitutional law.

**Culture:** A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors and styles of communication.

**Double Consciousness:** This concept was coined by W.E.B. Du Bois. It refers to the idea that black people are essentially forced to have two identities and pressured to view themselves as they're perceived by their non-black peers.

**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 include: Haitian, African American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Irish, and Swedish (White).

**Explicit Bias:** Biases that you are consciously aware of, and that you admit to yourself and potentially others.

**Implicit Bias (Unconscious Bias):** Refers to attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious way, making them difficult to control and are often subtly expressed. We don't initially detect or intend implicit biases, but they can become more apparent with tools and careful self-introspection.

**Inclusion:** Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

**Individual Racism:** Refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways. The U.S. cultural narrative about racism typically focuses on individual racism and fails to recognize systemic racism. *Examples include believing in the superiority of white people, not hiring a person of color because "something doesn't feel right," or telling a racist joke.*

**Institutional Racism (Systemic Racism):** This occurs in an organization. These are discriminatory treatments, unfair policies, or biased practices based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for whites over people of color and extend considerably beyond prejudice. These institutional policies often never mention any racial group, but the intent is to create advantages.

**Interpersonal Racism:** Something that occurs between individuals. These are public expressions of racism, often involving slurs, biases, or hateful words or actions.

**Intersectionality:** Exposing [one's] multiple identities can help clarify the ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produce a qualitatively distinct life.

**Non-Racist:** The act of not being racist.

**People of color:** Was originally meant to be a synonym of “Black,” but its meaning has expanded to accommodate Latinos, Asians, Native Americans and other non-white groups. To say you are a person of color is more celebratory and positive than to say you are part of a “minority.”

**Prejudice:** A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics.

**Privilege:** Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we're taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.

**Race:** In the biological and social sciences, the consensus is clear: race is a social construct, not a biological attribute. Today, scientists prefer to use the term “ancestry” to describe human diversity. “Ancestry” reflects the fact that human variations *do* have a connection to the geographical origins of our ancestors—with enough information about a person's DNA, scientists can make a reasonable guess about their ancestry. However, unlike the term “race,” it focuses on understanding how a person's history unfolded, not how they fit into one category and not another.

**Racial Identity:** Race, has no biological basis – we are all one race, the human race. Yet *everyone* is assigned a racial identity whether they are aware of it or not. In the U. S. persons who identify as white rarely have to think about their racial identity because they live within a culture where whiteness has been *normalized*. This

white-dominant culture also operates as a social mechanism that grants advantages to white people, since they can navigate society both by feeling *normal* and being viewed as *normal*.

**Racial identity (externally imposed):** “*How do others perceive me?*”

**Racial identity (internally constructed):** “*How do I identify myself?*”

**Racist Bias:** Refers to unconscious biases we have about people of other races that affect our decisions and actions. The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance.

**White Dominant Culture:** Describes how white people and their practices, beliefs, and culture have been normalized over time and are now considered standard in the United States. As a result, Americans have all adopted various aspects of white culture, including people of color.

Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal.

**White Fragility:** Discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice.

**White Privilege:** Unearned, mostly unacknowledged benefits and advantages white people have from holding political, institutional, and economic power in society. These advantages are ones that other racial groups do not have, simply because they are non-white. For many white people, this can be hard to hear, understand, or accept. If you are white in America, you have benefited from the color of your skin.

**White Supremacy:** An ideology where white people are believed to be superior to nonwhite people.

\*All terminology has been sourced from various websites and articles. Please refer to our Resource guide for more information.