



racial equity

glossary

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Accountability

In the context of racial equity work, accountability refers to 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. To be accountable, one must be visible, with a transparent agenda and process. Invisibility defies examination; it is, in fact, employed in order to avoid detection and examination. Accountability demands commitment. It



might be defined as “what kicks in when convenience runs out.” Accountability requires some sense of urgency and becoming a true stakeholder in the outcome. Accountability can be externally imposed (legal or organizational requirements), or internally applied (moral, relational, faith-based, or recognized as some combination of the two) on a continuum from the institutional and organizational level to the individual level. From a relational point of view, accountability is not always doing it right. Sometimes it’s really about what happens after it’s done wrong.

Accountability and White Anti-Racist Organizing: Stories from Our Work, Bonnie Berman Cushing with Lila Cabbil, Margery Freeman, Jeff Hitchcock, and Kimberly Richards (2010).




Ally

1. 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.

1. OpenSource Leadership Strategies, *"The Dynamic System of Power, Privilege, and Oppression"* (2008).
2. This definition was found on the *White Noise Collective* webpage *"Shared Understandings"* **with multiple sources.**

2. 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.



Anti-racism

Anti-Racism is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach, and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.



Race Forward, "Race Reporting Guide" (2015).

Anti-racist

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 none needs developing, and supporting policies that reduce racial inequity.

Ibram X. Kendi, *How To Be An Antiracist*, Random House (2019).





BIPOC

A term referring to “Black and/or Indigenous People of Colour.” While “POC” or People of Colour 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,

Nayantara Sen & Terry Keleher, Race Forward (2021).





Black Lives Matter

A political movement to address systemic and state violence against African Americans. Per the Black Lives Matter organizers: “In 2013, three radical Black organizers—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. [Black Lives Matter] 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."

Black Lives Matter, "[Herstory](#)" (accessed October 2019).



Cultural Racism

Cultural racism refers to representations, messages and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with white people or “whiteness” are automatically “better” or more “normal” than those associated with other racially defined groups. Cultural racism shows up in advertising, movies, history books, definitions of patriotism, and in policies and laws. Cultural racism is also a powerful force in maintaining systems of internalized



supremacy and internalized racism. It does that by influencing collective beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behavior, what is seen as beautiful, and the value placed on various forms of expression. All of these cultural norms and values in the U.S. have explicitly or implicitly racialized ideals and assumptions (for example, what “nude” means as a colour, which facial features and body types are considered beautiful, which child-rearing practices are considered appropriate.)

RacialEquityTools.org, MP Associates, Center for Assessment and Policy Development, and World Trust Educational Services.





Discrimination

1. The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, and other categories.


1. Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative, [A Community Builder's Tool Kit](#), Appendix I (2000).
2. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, ["Laws Enforced by EEOC"](#) (accessed June 2013).

2. [In the United States] the law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, colour, religion, national origin, or sex. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers reasonably accommodate applicants' and employees' sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.



Diversity

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender—the groups that most often come to mind when the term “diversity” is used—but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.



It is important to note that many activists and thinkers critique diversity alone as a strategy. For instance, Baltimore Racial Justice Action states: “Diversity is silent on the subject of equity. In an anti-oppression context, therefore, the issue is not diversity, but rather equity. Often when people talk about diversity, they are thinking only of the “non-dominant” groups.”

1. UC Berkeley Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity, “Glossary of Terms” (page 34 in 2009 Strategic Plan).
2. Baltimore Racial Justice Action, “Our Definitions” (2018).

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,
edited by Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin,
Routledge, 1997.



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.

Cheryl Staats, [State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2013](#),
Kirwan Institute, The Ohio State University.





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 colour.

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 colour.

Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building by Maggie Potapchuk, Sally Leiderman, Donna Bivens, and Barbara Major (2005).



Marginalization

A social process by which individuals or groups are (intentionally or unintentionally) distanced from access to power and resources and constructed as insignificant, peripheral, or less valuable/privileged to a community or “mainstream” society. This term describes a social process, so as not to imply a lack of agency. Marginalized groups or people are those excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life. Examples of marginalized groups include, but are by no means limited



to, groups excluded due to race, religion, political or cultural group, age, gender, or financial status. To what extent such populations are marginalized, however, is context specific and reliant on the cultural organization of the social site in question.

The University of British Columbia's [Equity & Inclusion Glossary of Terms](#), citing [The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods](#)





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.

Derald Wing Sue, PhD, "[Microaggressions: More than Just Race](#)" (Psychology Today, 17 November 2010).



Oppression

1. Systemic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing, and disadvantaging of certain social identities in contrast to the privileged norm; when some people are denied something of value, while others have ready access.

2. 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. Rita Hardiman and Bailey Jackson state that oppression exists when the following 4 conditions are found:



- the oppressor group has the power to define reality for themselves and others,
- the target groups take in and internalize the negative messages about them and end up cooperating with the oppressors (thinking and acting like them),
- genocide, harassment, and discrimination are systematic and institutionalized, so that individuals are not necessary to keep it going, and
- members of both the oppressor and target groups are socialized to play their roles as normal and correct.

Oppression = Power + Prejudice

"What Is Racism?" – Dismantling Racism Works (dRworks)
web workbook.



People of Colour

Often the preferred collective term for referring to non-White racial groups. Racial justice advocates have been using the term “people of colour” (not to be confused with the pejorative “coloured people”) since the late 1970s as an inclusive and unifying frame across different racial groups that are not White, to address racial inequities. While “people of colour” can be a politically useful term, and describes people with their own attributes (as opposed to what they are not, e.g., “non-White”), it is also important whenever possible to identify people through their own racial/ethnic group, as each has its own distinct experience and meaning and may be more appropriate.



Power

1. Power is unequally distributed globally and in U.S. society; some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Although power is often conceptualized as power over other individuals or groups, other variations are power with (used in the context of building collective strength) and power within (which references an individual's internal strength). Learning to "see" and understand relations of power is vital to organizing for progressive social change.



2. Power may also be understood as the ability to influence others and impose one's beliefs. All power is relational, and the different relationships either reinforce or disrupt one another. The importance of the concept of power to anti-racism is clear: racism cannot be understood without understanding that power is not only an individual relationship but a cultural one, and that power relationships are shifting constantly. Power can be used malignantly and intentionally, but need not be, and individuals within a culture may benefit from power of which they are unaware.

3. (A) The ability to name or define. (B) The ability to decide. (C) The ability the set the rule, standard, or policy. (D) The ability to change the rule, standard, or policy to serve your needs, wants, or desires. (E) The ability to influence decision makers to make choices in favor of your cause, issue, or concern. Each of these definitions can manifest on personal, social, institutional, or structural levels:

1. Intergroup Resources, [“Power”](#) (2012).
2. Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, [“Racism and Power”](#) (2018) / [“CARED Glossary”](#) (2020).
3. YWCA, [“Our Shared Language: Social Justice Glossary”](#) (2016, accessed Oct 2021).

Personal Power

1. Self-determination.
2. Power that an individual possesses or builds in their personal life and interpersonal relationships.

Social Power

1. Communal self-determination.
2. A grassroots collective organization of personal power.
3. Power that social groups possess or build among themselves to determine and shape their collective lives.

Institutional Power

1. Power to create and shape the rules, policies, and actions of an institution.
2. To have institutional power is to be a decision maker or to have great influence upon a decision maker of an institution.

Structural Power

To have structural power is to create and shape the rules, policies, and actions that govern multiple and intersecting institutions or an industry.



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.

Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative, *A Community Builder's Tool Kit*, Appendix I (2000).





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.

Colours of Resistance Archive, "[Privilege](#)" (accessed June 2013).



Race



For many people, it comes as a surprise that racial categorization schemes were invented by scientists to support worldviews that viewed some groups of people as superior and some as inferior. There are three important concepts linked to this fact:

1. Race is a made-up social construct, and not an actual biological fact.
2. Race designations have changed over time. Some groups that are considered “white” in the United States today were considered “non-white” in previous eras, in U.S. Census data and in mass media and popular culture (for example, Irish, Italian, and Jewish people).

3. The way in which racial categorizations are enforced (the shape of racism) has also changed over time. For example, the racial designation of Asian American and Pacific Islander changed four times in the 19th century. That is, they were defined at times as white and at other times as not white. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, as designated groups, have been used by whites at different times in history to compete with African American labour.

1–2. PBS, *"Race: The Power of an Illusion"* (2018–2019 relaunch of *2003 series*).

3. Paul Kivel, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice* (Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 2002), page 141.



Racial Equity

1. Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or that fail to eliminate them.

2. A mindset and method for solving problems that have endured for generations, seem intractable, harm people and communities of colour most acutely, and ultimately affect people of all races. This will require seeing differently, thinking differently, and doing the work differently. Racial equity is about results that make a difference and last.

1. [Center for Assessment and Policy Development.](#)
2. [OpenSource Leadership Strategies.](#)



Racial Justice

1. The systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice—or racial equity—goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.

2. Operationalizing racial justice means reimagining and co-creating a just and liberated world and includes:

1. Race Forward, [*“Race Reporting Guide”*](#) (2015).

- understanding the history of racism and the system of white supremacy and addressing past harms,
- working in right relationship and accountability in an ecosystem (an issue, sector, or community ecosystem) for collective change,
- implementing interventions that use an intersectional analysis and that impact multiple systems,
- centering Blackness and building community, cultural, economic, and political power of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Colour (BIPOC), and
- applying the practice of love along with disruption and resistance to the status quo.

2. Maggie Potapchuk, *"Transforming Organizations by Operationalizing Racial Justice"* (MP Associates, July 2023).





Racism

Racism = race prejudice + social and institutional power

Racism = a system of advantage based on race

Racism = a system of oppression based on race

Racism = a white supremacy system

Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

[“What Is Racism?”](#) – Dismantling Racism Works (dRworks)
[web workbook](#)



Social Oppression

Refers to oppression that is achieved through social means and that is social in scope—it affects whole categories of people. This kind of oppression includes the systematic mistreatment, exploitation, and abuse of a group (or groups) of people by another group (or groups). It occurs whenever one group holds power over another in society through the control of social institutions, along with society's laws, customs, and norms. The outcome of social oppression is that groups in society are sorted into different positions



within the social hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Those in the controlling, or dominant group, benefit from the oppression of other groups through heightened privileges relative to others, greater access to rights and resources, a better quality of life, and overall greater life chances. Those who experience the brunt of oppression have fewer rights, less access to resources, less political power, lower economic potential, worse health and higher mortality rates, and lower overall life chances.





Structural Racism

1. 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 colour. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of White domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics, and entire social fabric. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in a particular institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually reproducing old and producing new forms of racism. Structural

racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism – all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.

2. For example, we can see structural racism in the many institutional, cultural, and structural factors that contribute to lower life expectancy for African American and Native American men, compared to white men. These include higher exposure to environmental toxins, dangerous jobs and unhealthy housing stock, higher exposure to and more lethal consequences for reacting to violence, stress, and racism, lower rates of health care coverage, access, and quality of care, and systematic refusal by the nation to fix these things.

Chronic Disparity: Strong and Pervasive Evidence of Racial Inequalities by Keith Lawrence, Aspen Institute on Community Change, and Terry Keleher, Applied Research Center, for the Race and Public Policy Conference (2004).

Systematic Racism

1. This is an interlocking and reciprocal relationship between the individual, institutional and structural levels which function as a system of racism. These various levels of racism operate together in a lockstep model and function together as a whole system. These levels are:

- Individual
(within interactions between people)
- Institutional
(within institutions and systems of power)
- Structural or societal
(among institutions and across society)

2. In many ways “systemic racism” and “structural racism” are synonymous. If there is a difference between the terms, it can be said to exist in the fact that a structural racism analysis pays more attention to the historical, cultural, and social psychological aspects of our currently racialized society.

1. Canadian Race Relations Foundation, [Glossary of Terms](#).
2. Aspen Institute, [“11 Terms You Should Know to Better Understand Structural Racism”](#) (2016).





White Privilege

1. 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 experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.

1. Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women Studies" (1988).
2. Transforming White Privilege: A 21st Century Leadership Capacity, CAPD, MP Associates, World Trust Educational Services (2012).

2. Structural White Privilege: A system of white domination that creates and maintains belief systems that make current racial advantages and disadvantages seem normal. The system includes powerful incentives for maintaining white privilege and its consequences, and powerful negative consequences for trying to interrupt white privilege or reduce its consequences in meaningful ways. The system includes internal and external manifestations at the individual, interpersonal, cultural and institutional levels.

The accumulated and interrelated advantages and disadvantages of white privilege that are reflected in racial/ethnic inequities in life-expectancy and other health outcomes, income and wealth and other outcomes, in part through different access to opportunities and resources. These differences are maintained in part by denying that these advantages and disadvantages exist at the structural, institutional, cultural, interpersonal and individual levels and by refusing to redress them or eliminate the systems, policies, practices, cultural norms and other behaviors and assumptions that maintain them.

Interpersonal White Privilege: Behavior between people that consciously or unconsciously reflects white superiority or entitlement.

Cultural White Privilege: A set of dominant cultural assumptions about what is good, normal or appropriate that reflects Western European white world views and dismisses or demonizes other world views.

Institutional White Privilege: Policies, practices and behaviors of institutions—such as schools, banks, non-profits or the Supreme Court—that have the effect of maintaining or increasing accumulated advantages for those groups currently defined as white, and maintaining or increasing disadvantages

for those racial or ethnic groups not defined as white. The ability of institutions to survive and thrive even when their policies, practices and behaviors maintain, expand or fail to redress accumulated disadvantages and/or inequitable outcomes for people of color.








Xenophobia

Any attitude, behavior, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the belief that immigrants are inferior to the dominant group of people. Xenophobia is reflected in interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels oppression and is a function of White supremacy.

Lee Cokorinos, "*The Racist Roots of the Anti-Immigration Movement*," The Black Agenda Report (2007).



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