

Terms to Understand, Issues to Address

Oppression Glossary

Discrimination – how we mistreat groups of people based on our prejudice; a behavior.

Hegemony – a social structure in which a dominant group sets the agenda, makes the rules, and exercises its power over a subjected group.

Masculinity or Masculinities (more accurate) – behaviors and culture associated with men and the different ways of being a man; socially constructed expressions or performances.

Oppression – being controlled or denied a human need or something of value based on the group to which one belongs. Prejudice + Power = Oppression.

Patriarchy – a social system in which males hold primary power and are predominate in roles of leadership, moral authority, and social privilege; a system that subordinates and oppresses females.

Power – the ability to be, do, and decide; the capacity to accomplish something or influence an outcome; having agency to make something happen.

Prejudice – prejudgment—positive or negative—of what we think and feel about certain groups of people; a disposition expressed in discrimination.

Privilege – having unearned benefits based on the group to which one belongs.

Racism – prejudice with power to impose that prejudice on another people group; a system of advantage and oppression based on race.

Sexism – prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender, especially against women and girls; a belief that one sex or gender is superior to or more valuable than another sex.

Systemic power – the power in cultural patterns and institutions that allows one group to impose its standards, goals, and norms over others.

Violence – the exercise of physical, emotional, or social power that harms others or oneself.

Anti-racism Glossary

Anti-racism – proactive and deliberate efforts by individuals and collectives to oppose and dismantle racism in its individual, institutional, systemic, and cultural forms

Anti-racism audit – a focused examination of all levels of an institution’s life based on an analysis of the results of an institution’s actions rather than its intentions

Cultural appropriation – the unacknowledged use and employment of another group’s cultural practices, symbols, and other representations for use or financial gain without accountability or connection to the original community

Cultural racism – forcing members of one group to “do life” according to standards, norms, and ways of being as defined by another group

Implicit bias – attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner

Identity power – racism’s ability to define racial identities according to the status of inferior and superior

Individual racism – acting out racial prejudices by individuals in a context where those prejudices are reinforced by society

Institutional racism – the support for and promotion of control and access to organizations in a manner that benefits one group and oppresses another; stated intent to provide race-based privilege and engage in racial oppression is not necessary for institutional racism to be at work

Internalization of racism – the psychological acceptance of, belief in, and acting upon the associated identities of inferiority by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) community members and superiority by white community members

Oppressive power – racism’s ability to oppress, demean, and harm the BIPOC community

Race – a biological myth and a social reality constructed in the 17th and 18th centuries by Europeans as part of the colonial project, entrenched with notions of white superiority; in the United States, a caste system that mediates privilege, power, resources, and status

Racism – race prejudice plus the systemic misuse of power

Systemic racism – the macro-level distribution of power and privilege to one group and the oppression of another through the institutions that constitute that system; examples include the educational, health care, and transportation systems

White privilege – unearned benefits—both financial and psychological—afforded individuals and groups with light enough skin and European facial features to be perceived as white

White power – racism’s ability to provide power and privilege to white people and white society based on the perception of white identity