

# RACIAL EQUITY GLOSSARY

Language is an extremely powerful tool, allowing us to generate ideas, share stories, communicate our perspectives, and learn from others.

A single word can evoke hatred or hope, fear or friendship, power or peace.

Curated in partnership with the Off-Color ERG, the following list is by no means comprehensive. It is intended to provide insight as part of a larger education on race and bias, and to encourage people to feel comfortable speaking openly with each other about these issues.



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**ALLY** *Noun.* Someone who supports equal human rights and civil rights; advocates on behalf of a marginalized person or group of people; and challenges discrimination.

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**ANTIRACISM** *Noun.* The work to actively defy racism by advocating for racial equality and supporting policies, systems, and structures that reduce racial inequity.

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**BIAS** *Noun, transitive verb.* A mindset in favor of or against a thing, idea, person, or group of people, that is usually unfair or prejudiced. Bias can be conscious (i.e., knowingly having a prejudicial view of a group of people) or unconscious (i.e., unknowingly assuming something about someone just because they belong to a group of people), and can lead to discrimination.

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**CIVIL RIGHTS** *Noun.* Certain basic freedoms legally afforded to citizens by a government.

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**COLORISM** *Noun.* A type of prejudice that judges people based on the lightness or darkness of their skin. This kind of prejudice usually exists within a race or ethnicity and often sees people who are part of the same race or ethnicity judging, subcategorizing, and stereotyping each other.

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**CULTURE** *Noun.* An umbrella term for the social behaviors and norms within a society or community. Culture can encompass language, customs, cuisine, traditions, beliefs, laws, arts, and more.

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**CULTURAL APPROPRIATION** *Noun.* The adoption of certain, often superficial cultural elements by a person or group of people who do not belong to that culture. This is particularly problematic when members of a dominant culture appropriate elements from a marginalized culture, especially when doing so without proper attribution or respect for that culture or the elements thereof. This can perpetuate stereotypes and result in a limited understanding or complete misunderstanding of a culture and/or its elements.

**CULTURAL  
ASSIMILATION**

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*Noun.* The process by which a person or group of people takes on cultural attributes (e.g., language, behavior, etc.) of a dominant culture.

**DIASPORA**

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*Noun.* A dispersed population of people who have been scattered from their original homeland to another location or locations. The move from a peoples' geographic origin can be the result of a voluntary and/or involuntary migration.

**DISCRIMINATION**

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*Noun.* The prejudicial treatment of a person or group of people based on race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, and/or other characteristics.

**DISENFRAN-  
CHISED**

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*Adjective, verb.* Refers to when a person or group of people have been deprived of rights, power, opportunities, and/or privileges.

**DIVERSITY**

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*Noun.* Within a group of people, this refers to a variety of characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, mental and/or physical ability, socioeconomic status, age, and more. This diversity brings together different perspectives that may not exist within a homogenous group.

**ETHNICITY**

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*Noun.* An identity independent of race, characterized by a common group of cultural attributes, such as ancestry, language, nationality, traditions, and more.

**ETHNOCENTRISM**

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*Noun.* The belief that someone's own ethnicity or culture is superior to all others.

**EQUALITY**

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*Noun.* The distribution of the same rights and resources, regardless of individual needs. Since people have varying needs, equality in this sense is often not fair. Many equal opportunities can only be gained through unequal resources.

**EQUITY**

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*Noun.* The distribution of rights and resources based on individual needs, rather than equality. Since people have varying needs, equitable treatment can often better achieve fairness than equal treatment.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

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*Noun.* Certain basic freedoms that all people everywhere are inherently entitled to.

## **INSTITUTIONAL- IZED RACISM**

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*Noun.* A system deeply embedded in a society, wherein political, social, and economic policies, practices, and structures create and protect power for the dominant race, by oppressing one or more marginalized races. This normalizes racism within a society, thereby further oppressing those marginalized races and creating little opportunity for those people to rise above their disenfranchised place in that society.

## **INTERSECTION- ALITY**

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*Noun.* Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, this refers to the idea that multiple identities (e.g., gender, race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, age, mental and/or physical ability, etc.) intersect to create a whole that is different from its distinct parts. Each of someone's individual identities results in different privileges, prejudices, and experiences that are inextricably linked and compounded with those of their other identities.

## **MARGINALIZED**

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*Adjective, verb.* Refers to a culture or group of people that has been made disadvantaged, disenfranchised, and/or disempowered by the dominant culture or group.

## **MICROAGGRES- SION**

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*Noun.* A brief, often casual display of discrimination, insensitivity, or hostility toward a person or group of people, because they are a part of a marginalized group. Microaggressions can be intentional, unintentional, or even well-intentioned.

## **MODEL MINORITY**

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*Noun.* A group of people whose members are stereotyped as being in some way more talented or successful than members of other groups within a society. While these stereotypes are seemingly "positive," they are generalizations that perpetuate prejudice.

## **OPPRESSION**

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*Noun.* The unjust subjugation of a person or group of people by those in power. Within a system of institutionalized racism, the structural oppression of a marginalized race is used to protect the social, economic, and/or political power of the dominant race.

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**PASSING**

*Adjective, verb.* Refers to when someone who belongs to one group (characterized by race, ethnicity, gender, mental and/or physical ability, etc.) is perceived as a member of a different group. When someone who belongs to a marginalized group passes (intentionally or unintentionally) for a member of a dominant group, they gain the privilege afforded to the dominant culture for which they are passing.

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**PEOPLE OF COLOR (POC)**

*Noun.* An umbrella term for any person whose race is not white. It is also common to see “BIPOC” (for black, indigenous, and people of color). While “POC” and “BIPOC” are common in the United States, it is more common to see “BME” (for black and minority ethnic) or “BAME” (for black, Asian, and minority ethnic) in the UK. NOTE: The term “people of color” does not encompass all groups of ethnic minorities, as some of them are white.

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**PREJUDICE**

*Noun.* The prejudgment of someone or something, usually rooted in stereotypes.

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**PRIVILEGE**

*Noun.* A societal advantage afforded to people or groups of people, usually because they are (or pass for) members of a dominant culture. Someone’s privilege stems from various aspects of their identity (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, mental and/or physical ability, etc.), as well as the intersectionality thereof.

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**RACE**

*Noun.* An identity largely based on physical traits (e.g., skin color, hair type, facial features, etc.), rather than cultural attributes.

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**RACISM**

*Noun.* The discrimination against or hatred of a specific race or races of people, which, depending on power dynamics, can be perpetuated by an individual, a group of people, or an entire society. When those in power are explicitly racist against a marginalized race, their actions exploit, disenfranchise, and oppress that race further, leading to racism on a cultural and/or systemic level.

**STEREOTYPE** *Noun, verb.* An overly generalized belief or assumption about an entire group of people. NOTE: Stereotypes aren't necessarily negative, but they are always problematic.

**TOLERANCE** *Noun.* The ability to coexist with something or someone (e.g., a behavior, an opinion, a person, a group of people, etc.) without necessarily agreeing with or approving of it or them. In the context of race and ethnicity, tolerance is characterized by an absence of prejudice, referring instead to open-mindedness and acceptance, regardless of differences.

**TOKENISM** *Noun.* The inclusion of someone from a minority or marginalized group strictly for appearances, to create the illusion of diversity or equality. Because this is a superficial attempt at diversity and inclusion, it will not spark any real ideological or tangible change within a system or organization.

**WHITE FRAGILITY** *Noun.* Coined by Robin DiAngelo in 2018, this refers to the idea that white privilege insulates white people, protecting them from race-based stress and creating comfort around current racial bias and systemic injustice. Without a proper education of racism, they become defensive to information when it is finally presented to them, rather than being receptive and productive. Like white privilege, white fragility is not only a result of institutionalized racism, but a structure that supports it.

**WHITE PRIVILEGE** *Noun.* The unearned societal advantages afforded to white people for no other reason than that they are white in a society where the dominant race is white. White privilege is a direct result of institutionalized racism that favors white people and oppresses people of color, in addition to being a structure within that system.

**WHITE SUPREMACY** *Noun.* The belief that the white race is superior to all other races and should therefore be the dominant race. In addition to people of color, white supremacists also discriminate against certain white minorities. This form of racism has historically manifested itself – and continues to manifest itself – in oppressive, violent, and even deadly ways.