

Learning Resource

Anti-Oppression Terms List

This list is not inclusive of all the terms and definitions related to systems that maintain unearned privileges and unjust oppressions. NCJW is sharing this list to begin mutual learning and the adoption of a shared language.

White Supremacy: 1. International system of exploitation and oppression of people of color by white people in order to maintain the wealth, power, and privilege of people of European descent. 2. Structures that center and prioritize white people at the expense of people of color.

White Nationalism: An extreme ideology and movement attempting to build a white-ethno state by advocating for genocide against Black and Indigenous people, Jewish people, and other minorities. White Nationalism specifically utilizes anti-Semitic tropes in order to perpetuate anti-Blackness.

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

Privilege: 1. “A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people”.¹ 2. “A set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group.”²

Discrimination: Consciously or unconsciously treating someone else unfairly or holding them to different standards on the basis of conscious or unconscious prejudiced beliefs, and not on the basis of individual merit. Can manifest in the following ways:

- **Overt discrimination:** granting or denying rights or access to groups and/or individuals.
- **Unequal treatment:** treating someone poorly in comparison to others because of certain characteristics.
- **Systemic discrimination:** institutional policies and practices that result in the exclusion or promotion of certain groups.³

Prejudice: A preconceived opinion of another person that is unreasonable and not based in actual experience. It can be directed at people who experience oppression as well as at people who hold relative amounts of privilege.

Implicit Bias: Any unconsciously held set of associations about a social group, and can result in stereotyping. Implicit biases are the product of learned associations and social conditioning.⁴

Stereotyping: Assumptions about a person based on untrue and harmful tropes. These can sometimes seem positive or complimentary, but are harmful because they are generalizations about a person or entire group of people not based in actual experience.

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/privilege>

² <https://everydayfeminism.com/2014/09/what-is-privilege/>

³ <http://www.ucalgary.ca/cared/glossary>

⁴ <https://www.thoughtco.com/understanding-implicit-bias-4165634>

Racism: A system of white racial superiority over other races, resulting in white people receiving unearned benefits and privileges. The structural nature of racism means it is found in all our societal structures – our laws, education systems, workplaces, hiring practices, etc. – and is transmitted through practices, policies, attitudes, and beliefs.

Anti-Racism: 1: An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional, and systemic racism as well as the causes of racism, oppression, and injustice. 2: A lens that seeks to address and undermine racism by:

- understanding racism, prejudice, and stereotyping;
- moving beyond a multicultural lens of recognizing culture and difference to deal with issues of power, justice, and equity; and
- challenging and eliminating racism at all levels from personal to systemic.⁵

Oppression: “The use of power to disempower, marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate one social group or category, often in order to further empower and/or privilege the oppressor.”⁶ Oppressed groups may consist of people who share a historically marginalized identity like people of color, or individuals of a certain religion or gender.

Systemic Oppression: Discrimination that is omnipresent in our societal structures, like our laws, education, and customs.

Anti-Oppression: Actions that seeks to provide equitable approaches and practices to mitigate the effects of oppression.

Anti-Semitism: “Ideological oppression that targets Jewish people. In Europe and the United States, it has functioned to protect the prevailing economic system and the almost exclusively white Christian ruling class by diverting blame for hardship onto Jews.”⁷

Colonialism (US Context): 1. The ongoing system stemming from white supremacist ideology that codified into law the genocide of indigenous peoples, enslavement of peoples of African descent, and the privileging of white Europeans in what is now the United States. 2. De-facto control of foreign countries that are often called US territories; such examples include Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, and the US Virgin Islands.

Equity vs. Equality: Equity means to give everyone what they need to be successful. Equality means treating everyone the same. Equity and equality are two strategies we can use in an effort to produce fairness.

Liberation: A framework of action guided by the premise that the only way to end systemic oppression is by dismantling the system itself, as opposed to giving people equitable resources so they can exist under a system that doesn’t naturally benefit them.

“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”
-Aboriginal Activists Groups, Queensland, 1970s

⁵ <http://www.ucalgary.ca/cared/glossary>

⁶ <https://theantioppressionnetwork.com/what-is-anti-oppression/>

⁷ <http://jfrej.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/JFREJ-Understanding-Antisemitism-November-2017-v1-3.pdf>