

OUR SHARED LANGUAGE: SOCIAL JUSTICE GLOSSARY

Please note that the terms are not organized alphabetically, rather, they appear in a topical/ sequential order designed to enhance understanding. The terms below have been grouped together because of their relationship to one another. The grouping is to help us see how words that have quite different meanings are often used interchangeably, which adds to the dysfunction of race relations and dialogue.

POLITICS, POWER & PRIVILEGE

- **Politics** - 1. The struggle for or over power. 2. The struggle to attain, maintain, build or take power.

Power - 1. The ability to name or define. 2. The ability to decide. 3. The ability to set the rule, standard, or policy. 4. The ability to change the rule, standard, or policy to serve your needs, wants or desires. 5. The ability to influence decisions makers to make choices in favor of your cause, issue or concern.

- **Types of Power**

Each of these definitions of power can manifest on personal, social, institutional, or structural levels.

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

Example: When a person chooses a new name for themselves rather than the one given to them, this is an act of personal power.

- b. **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.

Example: Over the last few years individuals who identify as multiracial or multiethnic have used their social power to name themselves into existence and build a community around the shared experience of being multiracial or multiethnic. The growing social power of the multiracial/ multiethnic community is a direct challenge to institutions premised on a binary understanding of race (i.e., you are either this or that.)

- c. **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.

Example: A school principal or the PTO of a local school have institutional power at that school.

- d. **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.

Example: The city school board, mayor, and the Secretary of Education have structural power in the educational industry.

- **Minoritized Population** - 1. A community of people whose access to institutional and structural power has been severely limited regardless of the size of the population. As a result, the community is constantly being disenfranchised and disempowered by the Majoritized population. 2. Also referred to as a subordinated population.
- **Majoritized population** - 1. A community of people whose access to institutional and structural power has been structurally guaranteed, regardless of the size of the population. As a result, the community routinely disenfranchises and disempowers the most vulnerable communities known as the **Minoritized populations**. 2. Also referred to as a **dominant** population.
- **Cultural Default** - 1. The status quo; a category or reality specific to one group of people that is used as a rule or standard for all people and groups. 2. Taking the preferences, practices, and policies of a ruling elite and universalizing them so that they feel “natural” or function as social norms. 3. Often referred to in academic circles as hegemony.

Examples: Racial justice movements address the cultural default of Whiteness: beauty standards; definitions of culture, civility and humanity; what counts as knowledge; etc.

- **Eurocentrism**- 1. The process and product of the cultural default of Whiteness. 2. The utilization of European cultural standards as universal standards that all should be judged by. 3. To orient to European people and cultures as the benchmark of: humanity, culture, truth, virtue, style, beauty, civility, knowledge, and ethics; a deification of European people and their cultures.
- **White Privilege**- 1. The unearned privileges associated with identifying as or appearing White in a racist society. 2. Living and existing as a White (appearing) person in a world that operates on the cultural default of Whiteness. 3. A tool that a White ally can use to challenge racist oppression in the spaces and places they have access to.

Privilege - 1. The unearned social, political, economic, and psychological benefits of membership in a group that has institutional and structural power. 2. Living and existing in a world where standards and rules are premised upon your needs wants and desires. 3. To identify with or be identified as a member of a dominant social group (as opposed to a Minoritized group).

- **Oppression** - 1. A system for gaining, abusing and maintaining structural and institutional power for the benefit of a limited dominant class. 2. The inequitable distribution of structural and institutional power. 3. A system where a select few hoard power, wealth and resources at the detriment of the many. 4. The lack of access, opportunity, safety, security and resources that Minoritized populations experience; a direct result of a vacuum created by privilege. 5. A state of being that is the opposite of social justice.
- **Community Organizing** - 1. The art and science of social movements. 2. The theories, practices and skills that people use to create movements for social transformation. 3. A communal process of using, building and demonstrating power in order to influence decision makers to get things the community needs or wants. 4. The ultimate response on the continuum of responses to social injustice. It is a communal process of building power (often by developing a broad coalition of stakeholders) to put an extraordinary amount of pressure on a person that has institutional or structural power to change a policy or practice that negatively impacts the stakeholder communities.

Example: The famous Montgomery Bus boycott is a primary example of community organizing. Unfortunately, rather than focusing on all the work the locals did to build power in their community,

we instead tell a depoliticized story about Rosa Parks as an elder with tired feet. The truth of the situation is that she was a trained community organizer; she was a member of the local NAACP and a primary organizer of the Boycott movement; and that what she did that day in refusing to yield her seat was a deliberate and planned direct action (tactic) of the Boycott Movement.

- **Ally** - 1. One who is not (most) directly impacted by an issue but works in solidarity with those who are most directly impacted by the issue. 2. One who understands that their primary role is to: a) educate themselves, b) educate their community, and c) lend their support to the leadership of those most directly impacted by the issue.

Multi-issue Literacy - 1. A cross-movement approach to social justice work. 2. The ability to “read” (code and decode) information from the vantage point of more than a single social justice concern/issue. 3. The result of intentional efforts to develop an understanding of the “root causes” of all oppression. 4. An understanding of the points of convergence and divergence of various concerns/issues that most affect particular communities. 5. The history, mission, and values of the YWCA call us to be organizationally literate across issues of age, gender, class, and race.

Example: A White racial -justice ally would be someone who has educated themselves on the issue of racial justice, seeks to be anti-racist in their everyday life, participates in the education of other White people about racial justice, actively works to use their White Privilege to support the cause of racial justice, seeks to transform spaces where they have power or influence, and supports people of color leadership on racial justice issues and in racial justice movements. There is a difference between being an ally and being an advocate; allies work closely with and in support of those most impacted by an issue. However, one can be an advocate and not work with or know any of the people or groups that you are advocating for.

- **Theory of Change** - A system of beliefs about how change and transformation happen. Our current theory of change revolves around five basic assumptions: (a) a social justice orientation demands that we actively seek to transform unjust social policies and practices in our present world; (b) democratic practice and plurality are key to social transformation; (c) women working together across lines of difference can transform and improve life for all women; (d) social problems must be addressed on multiple levels (direct service, issue education, policy advocacy) to end social inequities; (e) all women cannot be empowered if we do not address issues of race and racism.
 - **Women of Color** - 1. Political (not biological) identity of solidarity among and across Minoritized ethnic communities historically referred to as ethnic minorities or non-White people. 2. A term used to disrupt the Black/White racial binary in the U.S. 3. A linguistic tool of inclusion and reminder that people of the African diaspora are not the only people who have been racialized or have been impacted by institutional and structural racism; common variations include: people of color, youth of color, students of color, queer or LGBTQ people of color. Please click on the hyperlink to view an interview with Loretta Ross, co-founder and national coordinator of SisterSong - Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, sharing one of the birthing moments of the term “women of color.”
- Note:** Our use of this term is not to suggest that all Women of Color are the same, or that the term is accepted and used by all. The creation of the Women of Color framing came out of political

discussions among social activists about how to represent the common needs of various women from Minoritized racial/ethnic communities.

- **Xenophobia** - Fear and/or loathing of people who have social group identities or memberships that are different from your own; the “other” or “those people.”

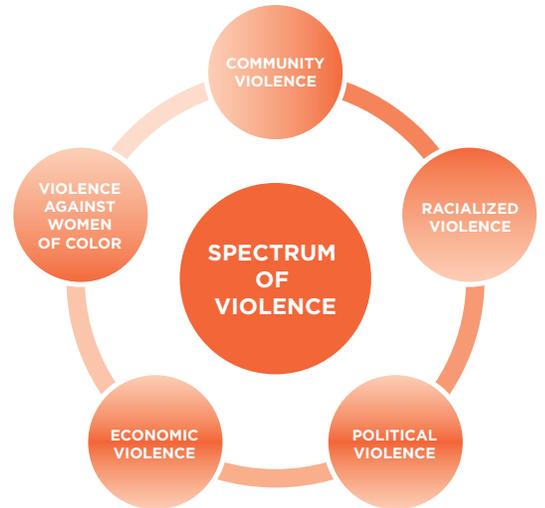
*Example: Since Sept. 11, 2001 and the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, American people and policy have become explicitly xenophobic. This xenophobia is directed at people who identify as or “appear” to be Muslim. This specific xenophobia is also known as **Islamophobia**.*

SPECTRUM OF VIOLENCE

- **Spectrum of Violence** - See fig 15. **1.** A model or understanding of violence built upon the assumptions that not all violence is: physical, visible, and/or valued equally. **2.** An acknowledgement that there are many types of violence in the world and not all of these types of violence are acknowledged or responded to equally. **3.** Beginning with Community Violence, the spectrum, goes clockwise, ordering types of violence from the most “visible” to the least “visible” (noticed in the mainstream). However, each point on the spectrum has “visible” and invisible aspects.

Example: violence against women and girls of color (sex trafficking, murder, sexual assault domestic violence or police brutality receives less attention (invisible) than police violence against men and boys of color (visible).

- **Violence** - **1.** A primary tool of oppression. **2.** A coercive spectrum of tools used to acquire, build and/or maintain power. **3.** A continuum of economic, political, cultural, religious, psychological, and physical resources, behaviors and practices used as vehicles of violence
 - **Community Violence** - A combination of violence directed at communities, such as police violence, war, and colonialism, and violence within communities, such as sexual and domestic violence.
 - **Political Violence** - **1.** A tool in the spectrum of violence used to exploit the most vulnerable people and communities in our society. **2.** The targeted coercive or abusive use of political systems, policies and/or practices in the service of acquiring, maintaining, and/or building power (institutional or structural) for a majoritized community.
 - **Economic Violence** - **1.** A tool in the spectrum of violence used to exploit the most vulnerable people and communities in our society. **2.** The targeted coercive or abusive use of economic systems, policies and/or practices in the service of acquiring, maintaining, and/or building power (institutional or structural) for a majoritized community.
 - **Violence against women of color** - A combination of violence directed at women of color and their communities, such as police violence, war, and colonialism, and violence used within communities against women of color, such as sexual and domestic violence.
- **Hate Crimes** - **1.** A form of community violence that targets the most vulnerable populations. **2.** Committed when a perpetrator intentionally selects and commits a crime toward someone based on actual or perceived membership in a particular group, usually defined by race, religion, ability, ethnic origin, gender identity or sexual orientation. Current federal laws make it a crime to commit bias-



Racialized Violence

- 1. A tool in the spectrum of violence used to exploit the most vulnerable people and communities in our society. 2. A form of racialized community violence. 3. Tool of oppression directed against communities of color, such as economic policies, cultural practices, political maneuvers, police brutality, war, criminal justice systems, hate crimes, genocide, and colonialism used in the service of acquiring, building, or maintaining institutional and structural power at the expense of people of color.

motivated acts against individuals or property. Hate crimes not only cause direct harm to the victim, but have an intimidating and isolating impact on the larger community than targeted originally.

- **Microaggressions** - 1. Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color. 2. The “normalized” (verbal and non-verbal) violent behaviors that daily challenge the full humanity and dignity of people who are or appear to be members of a minoritized population. Due to their frequency, microaggressions have a cumulative (negative) impact on the psychological, emotional, and/or physical well-being of the recipients of these assaults.
- **Racial Profiling** - 1. A form of racialized community violence. 2. Structural and institutional racial xenophobia. 3. Refers to the practice of a law enforcement agent or agency relying, to any degree, on race, ethnicity, religion, national origin in selecting which individuals to subject to routine or investigatory activities such as traffic stops, searches, and seizures. 4. A manifestation of racial

Racial Profiling

- The systemic targeting, surveillance, policing, and harassment of people of color that begins with the assumption that people of color are more likely to be criminals. At the community level, the discriminatory practice of racial profiling has emerged as a national concern. African-Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, and Arab-Americans, have reported being unfairly targeted by police who use race, ethnicity, national origin, religion and even gender when choosing which individuals should be subjected to stops, searches, seizures, and frisks on the streets, during routine traffic stops, at national borders and in airports.

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Example: In the aftermath of Sept. 11, law enforcement agents at the federal, state and local levels are permitted to engage in racial profiling to prevent terrorist related activities. Arabs and Muslims, and in many cases, any individual who “appears” to be Arab, Muslim, South Asian or Sikh are vulnerable to unfair treatment at the hands law enforcement who have the dual responsibility to protect communities they work in, while respecting the civil liberties of all those they serve.

- **Human Trafficking** - 1. A form of (targeted) community violence involving kidnapping, forced relocation, and forced labor. 2. The illegal and/or immoral forced relocation of people, typically for the purposes of forced labor and/or commercial sexual exploitation.

Example: a) The kidnapping, transport and selling of African people across the Atlantic Ocean (Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade) to be used as free labor in the “New World.” b) The kidnaping, transport and selling of women and girls across state lines and international borders (often to be used as sex workers); also referred to as sex trafficking.

BIAS, PREJUDICE, STEREOTYPE AND RACISM

- **Bias** - An orientation toward something or someone, this orientation can be positive, negative or neutral; a bias can be informed by a previous experience. In other words, biases can be rational.

Example: Any distrust of the U.S. Government that Native American communities have could be considered a rational bias rather than prejudice because there are actual historical and contemporary reasons for indigenous people not to trust the government: desecration of sacred land, genocide, forced relocation, biological warfare, and broken treaties to name a few.

- **Prejudice** -An assumption of knowledge about something or someone not rooted in personal experiences with the particular something or someone in question; prejudice is informed by stereotype rather than experience.

Example: A White woman clutching her purse when a person of color gets on the elevator with her could be bias but given the prevalence of racism in US culture is more than likely prejudice.

- **Stereotype** - 1. A trait and/or characteristic assumed to be true of all members of a particular social group. Many American cultural practices and public policies are rooted in racial, gendered and class based stereotypes such as Asians are the model minority; meaning submissive,

Racism - 1. A form of racialized community violence (economic, political, cultural, and/or physical) that targets or has disproportionate negative impact upon people of color (POC). 2. When ones use of institutional or structural power is premised upon racial stereotype/prejudice or when ones use of institutional/structural power creates, maintains or reinforces policies and practices that further racial inequity. 3. Racial prejudice/stereotypes are symptoms of racism, not racism itself. 4. “Not liking” someone because of their race is a form of bias or prejudice which can exist solely on an individual basis but racism exists on institutional and structural levels. 5. institutional/structural power + racial bias/prejudice/stereotype = Racism; 6. Institutional/structural policies and practices + disproportionate negative impact on POC = Racism.

assimilating, and accommodating (e.g., honorary White people). 2. Stereotypes focus on one aspect of a person's identity to the exclusion of their full humanity.

- **Reverse Racism** - If we apply a power analysis, then reverse racism is not possible because people of color do not have enough institutional and structural power to be racist; though they can be biased or prejudiced. The same is true of "reverse sexism." Despite any bias or prejudices that women may have, they do not have enough institutional/structural power to "oppress" men.
- **Islamophobia** - A form of racism rooted in stereotypes that label all Muslim or Muslim "appearing" people as "terrorist." This form of racism manifests itself in hate crimes, federal actions such as the "Patriot Act" and increased surveillance or racial profiling of Muslims, Arab-Americans or anyone who "appears" to be either.

Example: Post-Sept. 11, islamophobia has been linked to an increase in targeted violence (hate crimes) against Sikhs, who many mistakenly interpret to be Muslim due to their traditional religious garb.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

- **Diversity** - A variety of things. Recognition of difference alone does not equal justice or inclusion. A diversity focus emphasizes "how many of these" we have in the room, organization, etc. Diversity programs and cultural celebrations/education programs are not equivalent to doing racial justice. It is possible to name, acknowledge, and celebrate diverse cultures without doing anything to transform the institutional or structural systems that produce, and maintain racialized injustices in our communities.
- **Equality** - To treat everyone exactly the same. An equality emphasis often ignores historical and structural factors that benefit some social groups/communities and harms other social groups/communities. Often as a response to racism, people will claim a "colorblind" orientation or seek to create "colorblind" policies that will treat all people equally. However, "colorblindness" often leads to inequity because it does not acknowledge the historical and contemporary systemic forces of oppression that do not allow all of us to be our full selves equally.
- **Equity** - To treat everyone fairly. An equity emphasis seeks to render justice by deeply considering structural factors that benefit some social groups/communities and harms other social groups/communities. Sometimes justice demands, for the purpose of equity, an unequal response.
- **Inclusion** - 1. An intentional effort to transform the status quo by creating opportunity for those who have been historically marginalized. 2. An inclusion focus emphasizes outcomes of diversity rather than assuming that increasing the amount of explicit diversity of people automatically creates equity in access/opportunity, or an enhanced organizational climate. 3. Begins with the needs, wants, and quality of life of the historically Minoritized population rather than the historically privileged.
- **Social Justice** - 1. An anti-oppression orientation to social and political organization. 2. The process and goal of addressing the root causes of institutional and structural "isms." 3. A vision of



the world where all groups of people can live (and be perceived) as fully human on all levels (personal, social, institutional, and structural). 4. A vision of the world not rooted in the dominance of any one group over all others. Such a vision would include recognizing the inherent worth and connectedness of all people, animals, plants, and all other resources of our planet and universe. Additionally, this vision of the world would not be rooted in a scarcity model that devalues things that are abundant (many can have access to or can acquire) and highly values that which is scarce or rare (very few can have access to or acquire).

- Continuum of Response to Social Injustice - 1. A multipronged or holistic response to addressing

Inclusive Organization

- An organization that proactively enlists intentional strategies to remove barriers to access, participation and success of those who were historically or are currently systematically excluded by or marginalized within the organization. 2. An organization that actively seeks the transformation of its organizational policies and practices, to foster the involvement and success of those who have been excluded or marginalized.

social injustices. 2. A belief that social transformation requires a spectrum of responses from meeting immediate needs (via direct service provision) to transforming institutional and structural policies and practices (via public policy advocacy). 3. The YWCA continuum of response includes: direct services, issue education and advocacy.

1. **Direct Service** - The highest priority in the continuum where you help individuals navigate a current crisis situation. This is the most immediate form of response to a social injustice. Direct service may also include skill or capacity development opportunities that are longer term rather than immediate such as leadership development or enhanced vocational skills.
2. **Issue Education** - To supply people with information or educational materials or other opportunities to learn more about a social justice topic or issue.
3. **Advocacy** - To work on behalf of those most negatively affected by a specific policy or practice. Those who are being advocated for may not have any idea that this action is taking place.

CULTURE, ETHNICITY & RACE

- **Culture** - A shared way of life among a social group. This shared way of life includes commonalities in: geography, language, history, traditions, rituals, belief systems, etc.
- **Ethnicity** - 1. Membership in a particular cultural group. 2. Often confused with race; ethnic groups are self-formed and identified whereas racial groupings were created by a single group and imposed on everyone else.
Example: U.S. indigenous people are often referred to collectively as Indians, American Indians or Native Americans, however, the indigenous people of North America exist as many separate nations and ethnic groups that have different languages, histories and cultural practices.
- **Social Construction** - An unreal “real” thing. Social constructions are not “natural”; they do not exist outside of language and human imagination; in this sense they are unreal. However, our way of life is built upon the belief in or dedication to socially constructed categories such as “race.” As such, though “unreal” social constructions have real world consequences for all of us. The movie “The Matrix” is often used to teach people how social constructions work.

VARIATIONS ON RACE & RACISM

- **Racialization** - 1. The ongoing process by which we all are shaped by racial grouping or “racialized” by structural policies/practices, institutional/organizational cultures, and interpersonal interactions. 2. Our daily experiences of being “raced” or “racialized.” 3. An acknowledgment that these daily experiences look and are experienced differently across various communities and category of identity.
- **Post-Racial** - 1. A belief that we as a society have moved beyond race; that race and racism are no longer relevant because as a society we have addressed all of the racialized barriers to full and equal participation in American society. 2. The election of Barack Obama as President of the United States marks for many the moment America became a post-racial society.
- **Racial Justice** - 1. A social justice orientation with a focus on dismantling the root causes of racism (institutional and structural policies and practices) rather than merely the symptoms of racism (racial bias, racial prejudice, racial stereotypes). 2. Requires a focus on and commitment to the communities most directly negatively impacted by racism.
- **Racial Binary** - The Western/U.S. tendency to only think and talk about race and racism in terms of Black and White people; thus making invisible the racialization of other people of color including bi/multiracial and bi/multiethnic people.

Race - 1. A social rather than biological construction. 2. A theoretical invention of a European scientist used to separate and rank human beings into three distinct biological categories: Caucasoid (European), Negroid (African) and Mongoloid (Asian). According to this “science” these three species of humans evolved completely separate from one another with no common ancestors. The science of race proclaimed that White/ Europeans (Caucasoid) are the most evolved of the three human species and Black/Africans are the least evolved. 3. The term race as applied to humans was invented as equivalent to the term species used to reference (non-human) animals and plants. 4. An umbrella term used to minimize ethnic variety and emphasize broader group identity markers most often rooted in appearance, skin tone, and ancestral homelands or origins.

Example: The racialized term Asian includes numerous ethnic groups and nationalities such as Hmong, Korean, Pilipino, Taiwanese, Laotian, Vietnamese, Chinese and Japanese. Despite the fact that some of these nations and people were colonizers and other were colonized, the concept of “race” draws our focus to similarities of these diverse groups of people rather than the many ethnic/cultural differences among the group.

- **Multiracial/Multiethnic** - 1. Of or pertaining to two or more racial/ethnic identities. 2. An identity category growing in usage and popularity by those who understand their racial/ethnic identity and heritage to be rooted in more than one racial/ethnic tradition. 3. Made up of, involving or acting in the interest of more than one racial/ethnic group. Example: In 1946 when the YWCA passed the Interracial Charter, our organization officially became a multiracial organization. Although we know that women of color have been involved in the YWCA movement since 1889, it is at this point in history that the YWCA began to enlist intentional strategies to remove barriers that hindered the full participation of women of color in the movement, at all level of leadership.