Term Glossary

YWCA Metropolitan Chicago

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These are terms YWCA Metropolitan Chicago uses frequently in its Inclusion Chicago work. These terms, of course, are relevant to everyday life, work, and interactions. We intend this glossary to be a living document, updated periodically, to serve as a resource to all who want to approach their work with thoughtful attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Affinity Bias - a preference for people who share qualities with us or people we like.

Ageism - discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes against people of a particular age group, usually middle or advanced age and the elderly.

Ally - (in the context of social justice) a person of one social identity group who stands up in support of members of another group; typically a member of a dominant group standing beside member(s) of a group being discriminated against or treated unjustly regardless of identity; (in the context of the LGBTQIA+ community) a person who recognizes and supports sexual and gender diversity, challenges homophobic, heterosexist, and transphobic language and behaviors, and who is willing to continue to learn about and explore the forms of bias that exist within society and within themselves.

Anchoring Bias - a bias that influences by information already known or first shown.

Anti-Racism - the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life; requires the acknowledgment of the existence and impact of systemic racism and the proactive identification and removal of racism-based policies, premises, and inequities from those systems (similarly see Decolonization/Anti-Colonization).

Appropriation (Cultural) - theft of cultural elements—including symbols, art, language, customs, etc.—for one's own use, commodification, or profit, often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture; results from the assumption of a dominant (i.e. White) culture's right to take other cultural elements.

Asexual/Ace - an individual who experiences little or no sexual attraction.

Attribution Bias - a bias that refers to the systematic errors that a person makes when they try to find reasons for their own behaviors and motivations as well as the behaviors and motivations of others.

Availability Bias - a tendency to believe that examples of things that come easily to mind happen more frequently than they do in reality.

Belonging - the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group or place.

Beauty Bias - the influence of a person's physical attributes on our opinion of them rather than merit.

Bias - a favorable or unfavorable prejudice towards one thing, person, or group compared with another.

Bigotry - intolerant prejudice that glorifies one's own group and denigrates members of other groups; obstinate or unreasonable attachment to a belief, opinion, or faction; in particular, prejudice against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular group.

BIPOC - refers to Black, Indigenous, and other people of color and aims to emphasize the historic oppression of Black and Indigenous people.

Bisexual/Bi - people who have the capacity to form attraction and/or relationships to more than one gender; the potential to be attracted – romantically and/or sexually – to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree.

Brave Space - while a "safe space" is a communal agreement to be able to share your point of view from an authentic place, a "brave space" is a communal setting where all members understand and agree that what each says may be challenged or generate a reaction and further exchange.

Cisgender/Cis - a term used to describe someone whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Co-Liberator - more than being an ally; more than being sympathetic towards those who experience discrimination or simply believing in equality; someone who proactively acts with and for others in pursuit of ending oppression and creating equality; a co-liberator (1) educates themselves about different identities and experiences, (2) challenges their own discomfort and prejudices, (3) learns and practices the skills of being a co-liberator daily not just when it is convenient or visible to others, (4) takes action to create interpersonal, societal and institutional change.

Compliance - adherence to government laws, rules, regulations, and mandates.

Coming Out - the process through which a person comes to acknowledge and accept their sexual or gender identity. Coming out is a life-long process, not a singular event. Coming out involves coming out to oneself and to others. It is important to remember that an individual may be "out" in some contexts but not in others.

Confirmation Bias - a bias causing us to search for, favor, interpret, and recall information that supports an existing belief.

Critical Race Theory - the movement that considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies take up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step by step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and principles of constitutional law.

Culture - the way of thinking, ways of acting, and material objects that together form a people's way of life (i.e. symbols, language, values and beliefs, norms, etc.).

Cultural Competence - a process of learning about and becoming allies with people from other cultures, thereby broadening our own understanding and ability to participate in a multicultural process. The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect for the ways that others live in and organize the world and an openness to learn from them; results in the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts.

Cultural Humility - respecting the validity of other people's culture and questioning the primacy of one's own perspective.

Cultural Intelligence - acquiring cultural awareness of self and others, recognizing ethnocentrism, identifying biases, understanding consequences of cultural assumptions.

Cultural Self-Awareness - recognizing patterns influencing self-identity, acknowledging the dynamic nature of both culture and identity, recognizing ethnocentrism.

Decolonization/Anti-Colonization - the active resistance against colonial powers, and a shifting of power towards political, economic, educational, cultural, psychic independence and power that originate from a colonized nation's own indigenous culture. This process occurs politically and also applies to personal and societal psychic, cultural, political, agricultural, and educational deconstruction of colonial oppression.

Discrimination - ways in which individuals are singled out, overlooked, ignored, or discounted based on unchangeable characteristics and/or differences.

Diversity - the existence of variations of different characteristics in a group of people. These characteristics could be everything that makes us unique, such as our cognitive skills and personality traits, along with the things that shape our identity (e.g. race, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, cultural background).

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).

Ethno-centricism - a belief, often unconscious, in the superiority of one's own ethnic group or the universality of one's own culture-bound practices and preferences; often results in the evaluation of other cultures through the lens of and according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture.

Equality - treating everyone the same and giving everyone access to the same opportunities (i.e. according to their needs).

Equity - refers to both a condition as well as process. It is the condition that is achieved if individuals' and/or a groups' identity is no longer marginalized and no longer predicts, in a statistical sense, how one and/or a group fares socially; issues and manifestations of inequalities are eliminated, including policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by marginalized identities; requires "a mindset and method for solving problems that have endured for generations, seem intractable, harm people and communities of color most acutely, and ultimately affect people of all races; involves proactively seeing differently, thinking differently, and doing the work differently.

Gay - an adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic, and/ or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., gay man, gay people). Sometimes lesbian (n. or adj.) is the preferred term for women. Avoid identifying gay people as "homosexuals," an outdated term considered derogatory and offensive to many lesbian and gay people.

Gender - historically the behavioral, interpersonal, and psychological traits a given society commonly associates with a person's sex assigned at birth but also determined or identified by individuals themselves.

Gender Binary - the idea that there are only two genders (man/woman) and that every person is either one or the other.

Gender Expression - outward appearances and behaviors through which people perform or communicate their gender, including one's: clothing, hairstyle, vocal patterns, and body language.

Gender Neutral/Inclusive - inclusive language that can apply equally to people of all genders; include terms like "partner" or "significant other."

Gender Identity - one's inner sense of being or not being a particular gender, i.e. feminine, masculine, androgynous, etc.

Group Thinking Bias - changing one's stance to confirm to peer pressure or the majority stance; also known as Conformity Bias.

Halo Bias - whereby our perception of someone is positively influenced by our opinions of that person's other related traits.

Heteronormative - assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is inherently superior or preferable to non-heterosexual identities.

Hispanic - a term to identify people, cultures, or countries related to Spain, the Hispanidad, Spanish language, culture, or people (also see "LatinX").

Homophobia - a fear of people attracted to the same sex. Intolerance, bias, or prejudice is usually a more accurate description of antipathy toward LGBTQIA+ people.

Horn Bias - bias whereby one's opinion of another is unduly shaped by a single negative trait.

Identity - the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make a person (self-identity as emphasized in psychology) or group (collective identity as pre-eminent in sociology).

Impact - outcome as experienced by a certain group or across different groups (along race, class, gender, etc.).

Implicit Bias - attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

Inclusion - authentically bringing historically excluded, underrepresented, and marginalized individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Indigenous - distinct social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources where they live, occupy or from which they have been displaced.

Intersectionality - a term coined by civil rights attorney and professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw as "a prism to see the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism, many times, interacts with patriarchy, heterosexism, classism, xenophobia — seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities created by these systems actually create specific kinds of challenges" (i.e. when racial justice does not include a critique of patriarchy and homophobia, the particular way that racism is experienced and exacerbated by heterosexism, classism etc., falls outside of our political organizing); the phenomenon of significant numbers of people in marginalized communities not being served by social justice frames because those frames do not address the particular ways that individuals are experiencing discrimination.

Intersex - An umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome pattern that can't be classified as typically male or female. Those variations are also sometimes referred to as Differences of Sex Development (DSD.) Avoid the outdated and derogatory term "hermaphrodite." While some people can have an intersex condition and also identify as transgender, the two are separate and should not be conflated. (For more information, visit interactadvocates.org).

Isms - a way of describing any attitude, action or institutional structure that subordinates (oppresses) a person or group because of their target group: race (racism), gender (sexism), economic status (classism), age (ageism), religion, sexual orientation, language, etc.

JAQing Off - "I'm just asking questions" as a lead-in to a bad faith question, which has underlying biases and illogical premise; often about some perceived benefit a marginalized group has received. (i.e., Whataboutism).

LatinX - a gender-neutral neologism, sometimes used to refer to people of Latin American cultural or ethnic identity in the United States. The ⟨-x⟩ suffix replaces the ⟨-o/-a⟩ ending of Latino and Latina that are typical of grammatical gender in Spanish. Note that it should not be used interchangeably with the term "Hispanic" or not assumed to be generally accepted among Latinx/Hispanic communities.

LGBTQIA - the letters refer to "L" for lesbian, "G" for gay, "B" for bisexual, "T" for transgender, "Q" for queer, "I" for intersex, and "A" for asexual; the plus sign is to be inclusive of all the other sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions not already in this acronym. Note: "Q" can also be "questioning," although more frequently means "queer" today.

Liberation - a movement seeking equal rights and status for a group; the act of freeing someone from imprisonment, slavery, or oppression; release.

Marginalization - the process or result of dismissing a group; communicating that they are not important and cannot influence social or economic decisions or events; the fact of putting somebody in a position in which they have no power.

Micro-Aggression - a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority.

Non-Binary - non-binary, similar to genderqueer, is a spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or exclusively feminine—identities that are outside the gender binary of man and woman.

Oppression - 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; scholars have offered that oppression exists when four conditions are found: (1) the oppressor group has the power to define reality for themselves and others, (2) the target groups take in and internalize the negative messages about them and have to cooperate with the oppressors (thinking and acting like them), (3) genocide, harassment, and discrimination are systematic and institutionalized, and (4) members of both the oppressor and target groups are socialized to play their roles as normal and correct.

Power - 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; may also be understood as the ability to influence others and impose one's beliefs.

Power over: win-lose, involves having power taken from someone else and then using it to dominate and prevent others from gaining it.

Power with: finding common group among different interests and building collective strength, based on mutual support, solidarity, and collaboration.

Power to: unique potential of every person to shape their life and world; when based on mutual support, it opens up the possibilities of joint action or power with.

Power within: a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge, includes the ability to recognize individual differences while respecting other; the capacity to imagine and have hope; affirms the common human search for dignity and fulfillment.

Prejudice - a preconceived or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members; negative attitudes 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; preconceived opinions that are not based on reason or actual experience.

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.); usually invisible to those who have it because we are taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.

Pronouns - a pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc.) specifically refer to people that one is talking about.

Queer - an adjective used by some people whose sexual orientation is not exclusively heterosexual (e.g. queer person, queer woman); typically, for those who identify as queer, the terms lesbian, gay, and bisexual are perceived to be too limiting and/or fraught with cultural connotations they feel do not apply to them; some people may use queer, or more commonly genderqueer, to describe their gender identity and/or gender expression (see non-binary); once considered a pejorative term, queer has been reclaimed by some LGBTQIA+ people to describe themselves; however, it is not a universally accepted term even within the LGBTQIA+ community. When Q is seen at the end of LGBT, it typically means queer and, less often, questioning.

Race - a social construct - not an actual biological fact – designed to divide people into groups ranked as superior and inferior; a racialized categorization used to assign rights and access to resources and wealth; "the 'racial' worldview was invented to assign some groups to perpetual low status, while

others were permitted access to privilege, power, and wealth. The tragedy in the United States has been that the policies and practices stemming from this worldview succeeded all too well in constructing unequal populations among Europeans, Native Americans, and peoples of African descent" (American Anthropological Association).

Racism - structural expression and enforcement of racial prejudice and privilege (race prejudice + social and institutional power).

Racial Disparity - the imbalances and incongruities between the treatment of racial groups, including economic status, income, housing options, societal treatment, safety, and myriad other aspects of life and society. Contemporary and past discrimination in the U.S., and globally, has profoundly impacted the inequalities seen in society today. This section highlights resources covering racial disparity in our society, with a focus on questioning the foundations of racial disparity and providing access to information to develop possible solutions.

Racial Identity - an individual's awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe themselves based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience.

Racial Trauma - refers to the mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes.

Reparations - a duty of states to acknowledge and address widespread or systematic human rights violations, in cases where states have caused the violations or did not seriously try to prevent them; reparations initiatives seek to address the harms caused by these violations; they can take the form of compensating for the losses suffered or can also be future oriented—providing rehabilitation and a better life to victims—and help to change the underlying causes of abuse; reparations publicly affirm that victims are rights-holders entitled to redress.

Respectability - the way in which marginalized identities and communities police each other according to the values of the dominant, privileged, and powerful identities and communities (for example, people of the Black community telling other individuals within their community not to "act so black/ghetto" or wear their hair "appropriately").

Safe Space - places created for individuals who feel marginalized to come together to communicate regarding their experiences with marginalization, most commonly located on university campuses in the western world.

Sex - the medical assignment of "female," "intersex," or "male," or 'female' based upon the external genitalia that an individual exhibits at birth. The biological sexes are commonly seen as mutually exclusive, and it is often believed that a person's assigned sex dictates their gender identity; this is not true for many.

Sexism - prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex.

Sexuality - the range of components that make humans sexual beings; including both emotional and physical components, as well as behavioral preferences, cultural practices, fantasies, and feelings of affection and emotional affinity.

Sexual Identity - a person's self-description of the romantic, sexual, and/or emotional relationships with another or others - such as bisexual, gay, lesbian, heterosexual, asexual, pansexual, etc.

Sexual Orientation - emotional, romantic, sexual, affectional, or relational attraction (or a combination of these) to persons of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to both sexes or more than one gender.

Stereotype - a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

Systemic - relating to a system, affecting, or connected with the whole of body.

Transgender/Trans - an umbrella term that refers to people whose self-identification, anatomy, appearance, manner, expression, behavior, and/or other perceptions differ from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Note: not everyone whose appearance or behavior is gender-atypical identify as trans.

Note: Using terms such as "tranny," "she-male," "shim," "it," "hermaphrodite," "transgendered" is offensive and derogatory.

Underrepresented - insufficient or disproportionately inadequate representation; not proportionately brought to mind or served.

White Fragility - discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a White person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice; emotions such as anger, fear and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation; resistance in the way of pointed and defensive questions.

White Privilege - refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are White;

Structural White Privilege: a system of White domination that creates and maintains belief systems that make current racial advantages and disadvantages seem normal, 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, also includes internal and external manifestations at the individual, interpersonal, cultural and institutional levels; also refers to 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.

White Savior Complex - refers to a White person who intents and believes that they are providing help to non-White communities but is doing so, often unknowingly in a self-serving or ego-centric manner; an idea in which a white person, or more broadly a white culture, "rescues" people of color from their own situation; otherwise explained, this refers to Western people "fixing" the problems of struggling nations or people of color without understanding their history, needs, or the region's current state of affairs; this role is considered a modern-day version of what is expressed in the poem "The White Man's Burden" (1899) by Rudyard Kipling.

White Supremacy - the idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group while casting people and communities of color as worthless (worth less), immoral, bad, and inhuman and "undeserving." Drawing from critical race theory, the term "white supremacy" also refers to a political or socio-economic system where white people enjoy structural advantage and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and an individual level.

Whiteness - giving privileges to some, while denying them to others with the justification of biological and social inferiority; refers to the specific dimensions of racism that serve to elevate White people over people of color; conceptualized as a constellation of processes and practices rather than as a discrete entity (i.e. skin color alone); Whiteness is dynamic, relational, and operating at all times and

on myriad levels. These processes and practices include basic rights, values, beliefs, perspectives, and experiences purported to be commonly shared by all but which are actually only consistently afforded to White people.

Womanist - social theory based on the history and everyday experiences of Black women.

Sources

Black Equality Resources

dictionary.com

Diversity Best Practices

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Pacific University Oregon

Racial Equity Tools

Springer Link Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology

The Trevor Project

University of Wisconsin Milwaukee LGBTQIA+ Resource Center

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Womanist Working Collective

World Bank

YWCA Seattle