A glossary of important Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging terms

Introduction

This is an undoubtedly flawed, incomplete, and far-from-perfect collection of terms being used in the mainstream media and on social media that many people may not be entirely familiar with.

My reasons for and philosophy about creating it are – in order not to *center* myself! – at the end.

Please reach out if you see errors or omissions; my email is in the footer.

In saying that, I must add that yes, these terms are defined by me after significant research, and yes, my definitions reflect my beliefs about how the world is and how it can improve. So I will take all reasonable ideas and corrections under consideration and make updates that seem appropriate, but I will not respond to opposing or hateful disagreement.

One more thing: I have specifically not included terms that have been in common useage for some time. However, again, if you feel a term has been left out that should be included, by all means let me know.

Finally, because many definitions use terms also defined here, the glossary is fully cross-referenced and clickable.

By all means, share freely. I want this to be useful, but please share in its entirety and in this original form.

The Terms

AAPI

Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders. This term has become especially relevant with the rise in anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ableist

Discrimination and prejudice against people with *disabilities*. See *anti-ableism*.

Able-bodied

Someone who is not physically *disabled*. See *non-disabled*, which is generally the preferred term.

Accessibility

Making everything from buildings to websites easily usable by as many people as possible.

"Accessibility is being able to get in the building. *Diversity* is getting invited to the table. *Inclusion* is having a voice at the table. *Belonging* is having your voice heard at the table!" Shelley Pierce Loose, President of the Ms. Wheelchair America Board.

AFAB

Assigned Female At Birth.

Affirmative Action

Policies that attempt to create more *equity* by taking *marginalization* into consideration in the allocation of resources (jobs, housing, etc.).

AGAB

Assigned Gender At Birth

Agender

Someone who feels no particular identification with any gender.

Ageist / ageism

Discrimination against someone because of their age. Typically refers to discrimination against older individuals, but could also refer to younger generations.

Ally / allyship

An individual outside the group they are supporting. For instance, a straight person who supports the rights of *LGBTQIA+* individuals, or a white person who supports the rights of people of color.

I recently (as of the 2021-07-30 version 12 of this Glossary) saw this video, and it is a fabulously caring, compassionate, beautiful reflection of allyship and what it can be and how it benefits us *all*.

https://fb.watch/73M_2P_JG6/

Alt text / alternative text

Providing a text-based description of images on the web as part of *accessibility*. Visually-impaired individuals often use screen readers to read web pages aloud; alt text gives them otherwise unavailable information about images on the page.

AMAB

Assigned Male At Birth

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act, signed on July 26, 1990, requires schools, workplaces, and public transportation to be *accessible* through ramps, elevators, designated parking spaces, curb cuts, and so on, making these places and services accessible for anyone with any *disability*. For more, see the ADA website: https://www.ada.gov/.

Antifa / antifascist

Unaffiliated groups and individuals with no centralized organizer, acting to oppose *fascism* and extreme right-wing ideology. While not responsible for all the violence attributed to them, they are also not specifically nonviolent and can be militant.

Anti-ableism

Taking action to include *disabled* people in all contexts – business, arts, film, etc.

Anti-racist

Someone who acknowledges that *racism* and *white privilege* exist, understands that, as Ibram X. Kendi writes in his book *How to be an Anti-Racist,* "Racial inequity is a problem of bad policy, not bad people," and works to change systems and policy at whatever level they can influence – even if that's simply within their own life.

Anti-Semitic/ anti-Semitism

Someone who explicitly dislikes or is prejudiced against Jewish individuals.

Asexual

Someone who feels little or no sexual attraction to anyone, of any gender.

B corporation

From the B Corporation website:

"Certified B Corporations are businesses that meet the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability to balance profit and purpose. B Corps are accelerating a global culture shift to redefine success in business and build a more inclusive and sustainable economy."

Certification involves the entire organization – operations, business model, impact upon employees, community, environment, and customers.

See more: https://bcorporation.net/

Belonging

The fourth component of DEI&B – *diversity*, *Equal* / equality / equitable / equity, *inclusion*, *and belonging*.

"Accessibility is being able to get in the building. *Diversity* is getting invited to the table. *Inclusion* is having a voice at the table. *Belonging* is having your voice heard at the table!" Shelley Pierce Loose, President of the Ms. Wheelchair America Board.

(As also quoted under *Accessibility*.)

BIPOC

Black,
Indigenous, and
People
Of
Color

Black or black?

Why are we seeing Black with a capital B, and not capitalizing the w in white?

Many longstanding journalistic outlets have written about their reasons (links below). The short answer is that there's a shared experience of being Black, and specifically a shared experience of *racism*, that is

different from a more general sense of whiteness – especially since white is the cultural default. (See *racist*, *systemic racism*, *white fragility*, and *white supremacy*.)

There are differences of opinion on capitalizing the W in white – and part of the challenge there is that a common use of a capital W for white is by *white supremacists*. Others, however, think about the capital W as an acknowledgement that whiteness is a *thing* that needs to be recognized, less as an indication of respect and more as a pointer to social, cultural, and economic inequity. The *Washington Post*'s style guide, linked below, discusses some of these issues.

Clearly, different media outlets and style guides have different opinions on this, and obviously we all have to make our own choices.

For me personally, capitalizing Black is a sign of respect, acknowledging that Black people deal with a lot of inequity and violence simply because of the color of their skin, and a statement that I'm doing my best to be educated and aware of the challenges inherent in a world of *systemic racism*.

The AP News: https://apnews.com/article/7e36c00c5af0436abc09e051261fff1f

The *New York Times*: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/05/insider/capitalized-black.html

The *Columbia Journalism Review: https://www.cjr.org/analysis/capital-b-black-styleguide.php*

The *Washington Post:* https://www.washingtonpost.com/pr/2020/07/29/washington-post-announces-writing-style-changes-racial-ethnic-identifiers/

Black Lives Matter (BLM)

A movement responding to the systemic violence of police against Black people and people of color. From Wikipedia:

"Black Lives Matter is a decentralized political and social movement advocating for non-violent civil disobedience in protest against incidents of police brutality and all racially motivated violence against black people."

The counter-cries of "All lives matter" and "Blue lives matter" (the latter referring to police) are *racist* statements that overlook the fundamental statistical reality that Black people are injured and killed by police at a significantly higher rate than whites.

See also *white supremacy* and *white fragility*.

Body positivity

A social movement declaring acceptance for all bodies, regardless of appearance, shape, size, or ability. Is sometimes used in a *performative* way.

Calling out / calling in

"Calling out" is typically done in a public space, such as in person or on a public social media thread.

"Calling in" is typically done in private, such as one-on-one or in a private message, email, or text.

However, either can be done in public or in private.

"Calling out" is usually more direct and even forceful; it's intended to stop behavior that is overtly hurtful and triggering.

"Calling in" is usually more curious, with an intention to help someone see different perspectives and come to deeper understanding.

NOTE that either calling out or calling in are especially effective when done by an *ally*.

This is an useful resource:

http://www.racialequityvtnea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Interrupting-Bias_-Calling-Out-vs.-Calling-In-REVISED-Aug-2018-1.pdf

Cancel culture

A form of protest typically used against popular personalities or public figures or companies in response to something they did that's considered offensive or inappropriate.

It goes beyond harassment, heckling, or troll behavior in that it actively calls for someone to be fired from their job or put out of business.

See this article for further information:

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/14/opinion/cancel-culture-.html

Centering

If you have been *called out* or *called in*, and you refuse to listen to the different perspectives being suggested but continue to talk about yourself and your experience, you are centering yourself.

If you're a white person in a discussion on race, *racism*, and *diversity*, and you insist on sharing your story instead of listening to what the people of color have to say, you are centering yourself.

Don't.

On the other hand, it is essential to proactively *center* voices, individuals, and groups that have historically been ignored, silenced, and relegated to the edges. We can do this in our communities, families, and at work, to everyone's benefit.

Check your privilege

A request to someone who's said or done something coming from a perspective of *privilege*, asking them to step back and consider how their experience is not the same as that of *marginalized* people. It's a form of *calling out* or *calling in*.

Cis / cisgender(ed)

Someone is said to be "cis" or "cisgendered" if their appearance and *sexual identity* aligns with cultural expectations of their birth gender.

Cishet

Combination of "*cis*" and "heterosexual / *heteronormative*," indicating that someone both identifies with their birth gender, and chooses romantic or sexual partners of the opposite sex. Pronounced (since someone asked!) "cis het" ("siss het").

Code-switching

Changing the language you speak – not English versus Spanish versus French (etc.), but the slang, terms, and cadence of your language – based on social context, e.g., at work versus at home. It can also refer to changing dress, hairstyle, and the like, in order to be socially acceptable within a white, *cisgendered*, *patriarchal* society.

Critical race theory

An academic approach to viewing history and the law as it intersects with issues of race and *racial justice*. Originating in the mid-1970s, the basic premise is that *racism* is a social construct embedded in legal systems and policies.

Cultural appropriation

The adoption of another culture's traditions or practices, without serious study or proper attribution.

There's a lot of gray area here, and tremendous opportunity for misunderstanding.

Taking another culture's tradition and using it for yourself – for instance, a white person adopting Native American traditions – is appropriation.

Understanding your own heritage, even if it may not immediately appear to be aligned with a particular cultural tradition you're drawn to, is something else. I know people who were, for instance, drawn to Celtic traditions, but felt awkward about this until a DNA test revealed that their ancestors were in fact Celtic.

Personally, I'm certified to teach a meditation practice developed by a white woman that draws on many meditative traditions, including several different Buddhist practices – Tibetan and other.

Some level of social and cultural integration and synthesis is inevitable. In my opinion, the dividing line has to do with seriousness of study and intent.

Dead name

The given-at-birth name that *trans* people leave behind when they make their gender transition and take on a new name.

Differently-abled

A term attempting to be politically correct in referring to someone with a *disability*.

Don't use it.

Disability justice

A movement begun in 2005 that works to address *disability* within the *intersectionality* of other identities and forms of oppression. See Wikipedia for a more in-depth explanation:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disability_justice

Disabled / disability

Per dictionary.com: someone who has "a physical or mental condition that limits movements, senses, or activities."

Discrimination

Any unjust treatment of an individual or group based on their race, gender, disability, and so on. See *marginalized*, *systemic injustice*, *microaggression*, and *equity*.

Disinformation

False information specifically intended to mislead. Basically a lie, though more extensive than "just" a lie since it's often used to refer to propaganda, especially as spread by a foreign country or conspiracy theorist group. Also see *misinformation*.

Diversity

Creating communities and organizations that include a wide variety of different people – race, religion, physical ability, *gender identity*, cultural background, perspectives, ways of thinking.

Diversity hire

Someone from a *marginalized* group who is hired in order to "check the diversity box." See also *tokenism*.

Education

Why is "education" on this list? Because all too many white people turn to their Black friends and colleagues to educate them on *racism*, *anti-racism*, and many of the other terms defined here; likewise, many *cis* people go to their *gender-diverse* friends and colleagues for education on *LGBTQIA+* issues, and *non-disabled* individuals ask their *disabled* acquaintances for education on issues of *disability*.

Don't. It's not their job to teach you. There are many books, movies, blogs, and podcasts out there for you to reference. They've got enough to deal with; let's not burden them further.

Entitled

The belief that one is inherently deserving of *privilege* or special treatment; feeling that one has the right to do or say what you want, regardless of its impact on others or the ability of others to do the same. See also *patriarchy*.

Environmental justice

The *equitable* treatment and involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, religion, nationality, gender, income (etc., etc.) relative to environmental issues.

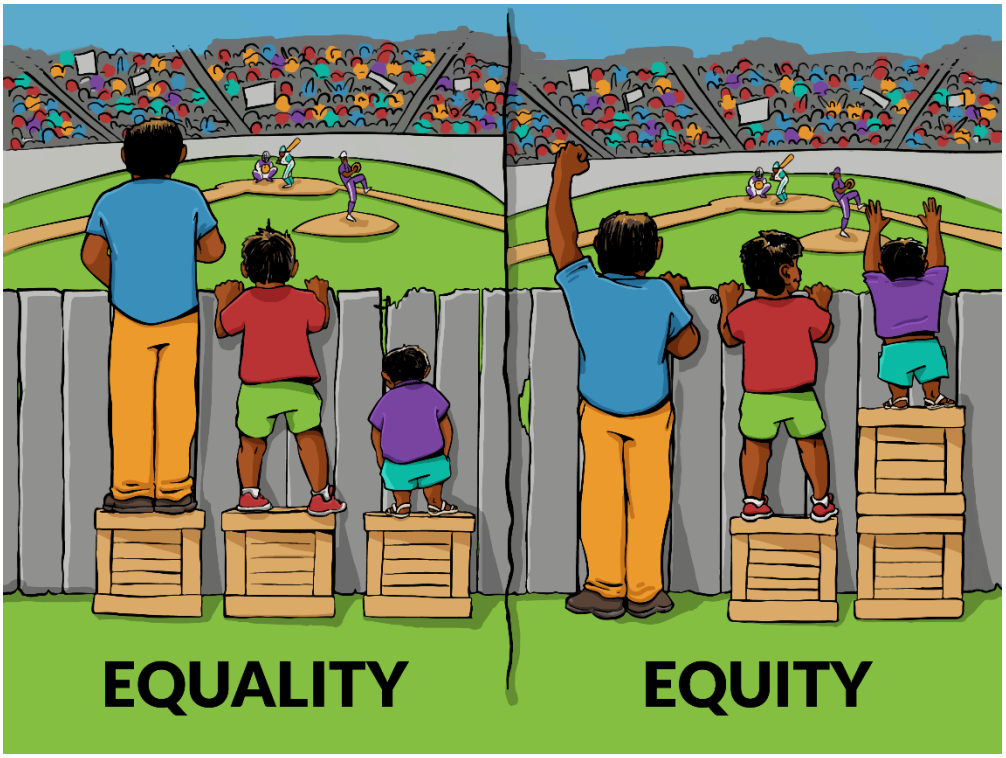
For instance, it's unfortunate but true that *BIPOC* often live in more heavily polluted areas than white people, simply because those areas are (with good reason) less desirable and therefore lower income; they also work in lower-paying jobs that are impacted by pollution, such as landfills, industrial plants, and shipping depots. See *systemic racism*.

Equal / equality / equitable / equity

Simple reality: we are not all equal in opportunity, and statistically speaking *marginalized* populations are starting from a different point than mainstream white, *non-disabled* people. Treating everyone equally might seem to be *fair*, but in fact it perpetuates the problem.

The cartoon below very simply illustrates the difference. Thanks to the Interaction Institute for Social Change for making it freely available.

Note that this very clearly illustrates many of the issues around *accessibility* for *disabled* individuals.



Ethnocentric / ethnocentrism

Someone who evaluates other cultures based on the traditions, standards, and norms of their own culture. Tends to lead to *bias* and *discrimination*. See *multicultural*.

Fair

Defining what's "fair" is challenging. Most children would say "fair" is, everyone gets the same amount of ice cream. But when we look at *systemic injustice*, we start to realize that "fair" may need different outcomes depending upon the population involved. See also *reparations*.

False equivalence

Otherwise known as "But what about …" or *whataboutism*, false equivalence is when someone tries to discredit a position or argument because the person or group taking that position or making the argument once did something supposedly similar.

There are some excellent examples and further discussion here:

https://www.developgoodhabits.com/false-equivalence/

Far Left / Far Right

"Left" and "right" are typically used to refer to liberal and conservative political views.

"Far left" includes those advocating true *socialism* and, for some, communism.

"Far right" includes extreme nationalism and authoritarian tendencies. See also *white supremacy*, which would be considered a far-right ideology..

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Fatphobic

Fear and dislike of, and/or discrimination or bias against, anyone perceived as overweight. See also *body positivity*.

Folx

An alternative spelling to "folks," it's a *gender-neutral* collective noun intended to be more inclusive of *LGBTQIA+* and *non-binary* individuals.

Fascism

A far-right ideology based on the premise that some people are better than others, and those people should be the ones in control of government and society, while the "lesser" people must be disciplined and forced to behave. See also *white supremacy* and *antifa*.

Gaslighting

From the 1944 movie *Gaslight*, starring Ingrid Bergman, Charles Boyer, Angela Lansbury, and Joseph Cotton, it refers to the abusive practice of manipulating someone into doubting their own experience and questioning their own sanity.

Statements that diminish or devalue *marginalized* people's experience, such as "It's just one incident," or "They didn't mean it that way," or "You're too sensitive," and so on, are all forms of gaslighting as well as being *microaggressions*.

Gender-diverse

Anyone not identifying as *cis*.

Gender-fluid

Someone whose sense of *gender identity* shifts between masculine and feminine.

Gender identity

A person's lived experience of their gender. May or may not match their physical gender appearance. See *cis*, *sexual identity*, *gender-fluid*, and *LGBTQIA+*.

Gender-neutral

A way of referring to a person or group of people that doesn't specify or imply what gender they may be.

An example is the use of the traditionally plural pronoun *they* for one person.

See also *folx*.

Handicapped

Considered offensive. Use *disabled* instead.

Heteronormative

The official definition: referring to a world in which heterosexuality is the "norm" or "preferred" mode.

However, I've also heard it used as a synonym for *cisgendered*.

Homophobic

Someone who explicitly dislikes or is prejudiced against anyone in the *LGBTQIA+* community is considered to be homophobic.

Inclusion / inclusivity

This quote from the Network of Executive Women treasurer Erby L. Foster, Jr., sums it up:

"*Diversity* is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance."

Inclusion is about providing access to opportunity, resources, and communities for everyone, regardless of who they are.

Income inequality/ gender pay gap

In 2020, the overall median salary for men versus women shows a pay gap of 19%: women earn 81 cents for every dollar earned by a man.

When controlled for type of work, women earn 98 cents to men's $1 for the same work performed at the same industry, job level, and experience.

BIPOC women (excluding Asian) overall earn 75 cents for every dollar earned by a white man.

Asian women earn 95 cents for each dollar earned by a white man.

When controlled as described above, Black women make 97 cents per dollar earned by a white man.

There are similar statistics for *disabled* individuals.

More details here: https://www.payscale.com/data/gender-pay-gap

Interchangeable Asian

In work, school, and other areas of life, people of Asian descent are often mistaken for each other.

See https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/06/business/the-cost-of-being-an-interchangeable-asian.html and https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/13/opinion/sunday/harvard-and-the-myth-of-the-interchangeable-asian.html

Intersectional / intersectionality

The ways in which different systemic issues "intersect" within individual experience and in communities. For instance, a Black lesbian woman experiences intersectionality through the impacts of *racism*, *systemic racism*, *marginalization*, *homophobia*, *fatphobic*, *patriarchy*, and *misogyny*.

Intersectionality helps us understand different forms of discrimination and *privilege* based on all the social and political identities within which individuals and cultures operate.

Intersexed

Someone born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the binary male/female categories. Once upon a time, might have been called a "hermaphrodite."

Jim Crow

Jim Crow laws were passed after slavery became illegal, in order for whites to enforce segregation. It took multiple Supreme Court edicts to overthrow them, starting with the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that desegregated public schools in 1954, and ending with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting

Rights Act of 1965. Unfortunately, in 2013 the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act, making it unenforceable. See Wikipedia for more on all of this.

Juneteenth

Refers to June 19th, 1865, which was the day on which enslaved Black people in Texas were finally notified that the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed and they were free. An annual holiday in some local areas.

It's worth noting that this was *two and a half years after* President Lincoln signed the proclamation.

Karen

Although no one knows who the original "Karen" is or was, this is a term used to describe *entitled* white women who use their *privilege* to act inappropriately. There have been a number of recent instances in the media of "Karen" behavior, such as the woman in Central Park, New York, who called the police when a Black man asked her to obey the rules and leash her dog. See also *white fragility*.

Latinx

A *gender-neutral* term for anyone of Latin heritage.

LGBTQIA+

Lesbian
Gay
Bisexual
Transgender
Queer or *Questioning*
Intersexed
Agender / *Asexual*
+ *Ally*

Mansplaining

When a man explains something to a woman in a patronizing way, or assumes he knows more than she does about a topic.

Classic examples include men who try to tell a woman how to pronounce or, yes, *spell* her own name, or tell her she should read her own book on a particular topic. Yes, these really happen.

Marginalized

Anyone who is on the edges or "margins" of mainstream society and is thereby disadvantaged in some way (often many ways). This could be based on race, gender, spirituality, disability, and so on.

Microaggression

Little things that happen that aren't in and of themselves notable, but in the aggregate are aggressive, exhausting, and overwhelming.

Often people who are the target of microaggressions are told "It's no big deal" and "You're too sensitive." See *gaslighting*.

This article is helpful:

https://www.futurity.org/microaggressions-reveal-racism-1543412/

Misinformation

False information being spread, but not necessarily with the intent to lie or mislead. If I retweet or share a post that's not accurate or true, but I haven't actually intended to spread wrong information or mislead, then it's misinformation. See also *disinformation*.

Misogyny

A belief that women are inferior, especially referring to overt dislike and contempt for women. See *patriarchy*.

Multicultural / multiculturalism

Having multiple cultures within a society; the acceptance of multiple cultures and practices. See *ethnocentrism*.

Neurodiverse / neurotypical

Neurodiversity refers to individuals with any of a wide range of non-neurotypical brain configurations, such as ADD, ADHA, autism, and so on.

Neurotypical refers to those whose brain configurations are "typical," insofar as that's true of anyone.

Neurodiversity does not necessarily mean *disabled*, though many people believe it does.

NIMBY

Stands for Not In My Back Yard, meaning, whatever you're attempting to do – don't do it here, but it's okay to do it somewhere else.

Often seen in situations around low-income housing, nuclear power, and so on.

Non-binary

Someone whose sense of *sexual identity* doesn't fit the binary female / male definitions.

Non-disabled

Someone who is not *disabled* in any way. This term is generally preferred to *able-bodied*.

Patriarchy

A society where men (especially white men) hold the primary power and wield it to their advantage, politically, in property ownership, and in the suppression of women's rights, autonomy, and power. See *white supremacy*.

Performative

Actions or words apparently in alignment with progressive thought (*anti-racist*, for instance), but which are primarily for show or "performance"; done for the appearance of good rather than with any real substance.

Some companies, for instance, have created advertisements or other material in support of current movements (such as *Black Lives Matter* or *environmental justice*), but have continued with discriminatory hiring or environmentally unfriendly practices.

See *woke capitalism*.

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Postracial

The myth that *racism* is in the past.

Privilege / white privilege

A right or opportunity granted to someone based on who they are and / or where they're born – in this usage, based on the fact that they're white. Often denied by those who deny *racism* and *systemic racism* and/or claim our society is *postracial*.

The reality is that simply by virtue of having, as the saying goes, "won the genetic lottery," white people have privileges that they often aren't aware of until they look more deeply at issues of *systemic racism*. Likewise, being born in a more-affluent country or part of the country confers privilege, to some extent regardless of whether one is white or a person of color.

Pronouns

Pronouns are how we refer to ourselves; they are a form of identity. Respecting the pronouns people choose for themselves, regardless of how they may appear, is a form of respect.

Qanon

A *far-right* conspiracy theory.

Queer

An umbrella term for non-*cisgendered* people.

Questioning

Someone who is exploring (questioning) their *sexual identity*.

Racial justice

Systematic fair and equitable opportunity and treatment of all races; includes the creation and maintenance of specific, intentional systems and processes to achieve *equity*.

Racial profiling

Any judgement made about a person based on their apparent race rather than on their actual behavior. When a white woman holds her purse closer if a Black man is approaching, that's an example of racial profiling.

The following is a more extensive and revealing explanation; the link below is the *New York Times* article from which I took the quote.

"Harris offered a pair of stories as evidence of the importance of a Black woman's doing this work. Once, ear hustling, she listened to colleagues discussing ways to prove criminal defendants were gang-affiliated. If a racial-profiling manual existed, their signals would certainly be included: baggy pants, the place of arrest and the rap music blaring from vehicles. She said that she'd told her colleagues: 'So, you know that neighborhood you were talking about? Well, I got family members and friends who live in that neighborhood. You know the way you were talking about how folks were dressed? Well, that's actually stylish in my community.' She continued: 'You know that music you were talking about? Well, I got a tape of that music in my car right now.'"

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/20/magazine/kamala-harris-crime-prison.html

Racist / racism

Refers to the reality that we live in a society and culture that is inherently biased. While there are certainly people who are overtly, obviously racist – which I would say are *white supremacists* – the fact is that we have all grown up in a culture that is *systemically racist*, and we have absorbed those beliefs and ideas into our unconscious belief systems and *unconscious bias*.

Many white people take offense at this idea, claiming with some heat and anger that they aren't racist. However, because of the impact of culture and society, the reality is otherwise.

See *white fragility*.

Rape culture

When sexual violence is excused by "boys will be boys" and "she shouldn't have worn those clothes / been out by herself / had a drink," we're dealing with a culture that excuses violent behavior by men and makes it all the woman's fault.

This is rape culture, and it includes street harassment of women, violence against *LGBTQIA* people, sexual harassment in the office, and *microaggressions* against women and *LGBTQIA* people.

Reparations

Systemic racism and the long-term economic and social results of slavery have left Black Americans at an economic and social disadvantage. Reparations would attempt to offset this injustice through a variety of options, including investment in Black communities, scholarship funds, grants, and so forth.

For more information, see https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/10/30/black-americans-reparations/ and a long article by Ta-Nehesi Coates on "The Case for Reparations": https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnx0c2x3cmVwYXJhdGlvbnN8Z3g6NmVjMzIxYTFhZGVjYzU4ZA

Representation

Organizations often have reasonable *diversity* at entry levels, but as one ascends the organizational hierarchy, that drops away and there is less and less representation of diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences at higher levels.

Sexual identity / sexual orientation

Someone's identity may not align with their assigned-at-birth sex.

Sexual preference

A term often used to refer to *LGBTQIA* individuals. Because it implies that they have a "preference" – i.e., a choice – in their sexuality, it is offensive and should not be used. Use *sexual identity* or *sexual orientation* instead.

Socialism

Based on the principles of Karl Marx, socialism proposes that workers should take over factories, farms, and all other means of production.

From the National Geographic:

> Socialism is, broadly speaking, a political and economic system in which property and the means of production are owned in common, typically controlled by the state or

> government. Socialism is based on the idea that common or public ownership of resources and means of production leads to a more equal society.

(https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/socialism)

Socialism is *not* business regulation. Nor is it using tax dollars to build infrastructure (roads, bridges, etc.) or to fund education and health care. See also *far left*.

Special needs

Don't use it. People with *disabilities* aren't "special," they're just people, and they don't appreciate the patronizing tone of this, or the implication that they somehow need more than others. They're like anyone: they need to enter buildings, access resources, use a computer, and so forth, just like the rest of us.

Use *disability* or *disabled*.

Spoonie / spoons / spoon theory

The "spoon theory" was coined by blogger Christine Miserandino, who has Lupus. Using a handful of spoons to explain how someone with a *disability* impacting their energy has to be aware of each and every thing they do relative to how much energy they have to get through their day.

This is especially relevant for someone whose *disability* isn't evident to an observer, such as someone with with Lupus or another autoimmune disease. The blog title "But you don't look sick" is a poignant expression of this.

The article is worth reading:

https://butyoudontlooksick.com/articles/written-by-christine/the-spoon-theory/

Systemic racism / systemic injustice

The systems of our culture create and support *racism*. As long as *BIPOC* individuals face *racial profiling*, have to deal with *microaggressions*, are *tokenized* – and so on – we have systemic racism. Likewise, any *marginalized* group can also face systemic injustice based on *bias* and *discrimination*.

This short cartoon explains some of the basics: https://youtu.be/YrHIQIO_bdQ

TERF

This is an acronym for "trans-exclusionary radical feminist," meaning people who claim to be feminist, but specifically and often hatefully state that trans women are a danger to feminism and are not actually women. See *transphobic*.

Tokenism

Hiring only to "check the box" and create an appearance of diversity. See *diversity hire* and *woke capitalism*.

Tone policing

Criticizing someone's tone rather than addressing the actual issue they're raising. It attacks the person rather than dealing with the issue, criticizing the way something is presented instead of the topic itself. It's a *microaggression* and a form of *gaslighting*.

Trans(gender) / transsexual

Someone whose *gender identity* is different from their assigned-at-birth gender. Some trans people undergo medical procedures to bring their physical body more in line with their internal reality.

Transphobic

Someone who dislikes, fears, and/or hates *trans* individuals. They may or may not become violent or aggressive.

Unconscious bias / implicit bias

We all have unconscious bias, affecting our preference for "people like us" (affinity bias) and a tendency toward *racial profiling* and other destructive behavior.

Harvard has a series Unconscious Bias tests you can take here:

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html

Alan Alda's podcast interview of Dr. Kuheli Dutt, Diversity Officer at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University offers a lot of insight into unconscious bias:

https://omny.fm/shows/clear-vivid-with-alan-alda/how-lack-of-diversity-and-inclusion-in-science-hur

And this article describes the various types of unconscious bias:

https://builtin.com/diversity-inclusion/unconscious-bias-examples

See also *racist* and *systemic racism*.

Virtue signaling

Doing or saying things that are more about showing how "good" and "right" you are than about actually taking action on an issue.

See *performative*.

Whataboutism / whataboutery

Whataboutism is a means of deflecting a question by saying that the thing being asked about is somehow irrelevant because "what about" this thing that someone else is supposedly doing or did, or that it's hypocritical to even ask the question because "what about" this thing that you did.

A prime example: the counter-claim to "Black Lives Matter" that "All lives matter" is a whataboutism attempting to deflect attention from the fact that Black people are significantly more likely to be killed by police.

White fragility

Many (most?) white people are uncomfortable and defensive when facing issues of *racism* and *white supremacy*. They will emphatically deny being *racist* (unless they claim it as a badge of honor).

But as the definitions of *racial profiling*, *racist*, *systemic racism*, and *unconscious bias* point out, this is ingrained in our culture and therefore in our belief structures and unconscious behaviors.

White privilege

See *privilege*.

White savior complex / white saviorism

The belief and tendency for white people to "rescue" BIPOC by making statements about what should be done / what they're going to do to "fix" things, usually in a self-serving sort of way (see *performative*).

White supremacy

The belief that white people are superior to all other races. Usually includes heavy doses of *patriarchy* and *misogyny*.

Woke

This can have two meanings, depending upon context.

The original meaning refers to someone who is aware of issues of *systemic racism*, *patriarchy*, and so on, and is consciously working to improve.

The second meaning is derogatory, referring more to *performative* or *virtue signaling* declarations of "wokeness."

Woke capitalism

Representational or *performative* / *virtue signaling* responses of a company to issues such as *systemic racism*. Statements are made, but there's no substance behind it – no actual significant, impactful action is taken.

WHY I DID THIS

I have been appalled by the extent to which I've wandered through life unaware of my own *privilege*, and of the depth and profound impact of *systemic racism* on people of color and *systemic injustice* on people with disabilities. As a woman, and a woman who achieved success in the corporate world before starting my own business, I certainly knew about *microaggressions*, *misogyny*, and *patriarchy*, but I somehow – and to my shame – never took a longer look at what *BIPOC*, *LGBQTIA*, and *disabled* people struggle with.

Part of *privilege* is being unaware.

In the process of educating myself, I stumbled over many terms being used today, but whose meaning I was either unsure of, or completely stumped by.

I teach and consult on change leadership, especially for the first-line and middle manager. These are the people who impact the vast majority of any organization's individual employees. They *need to know* how to respond to issues of *diversity*, *inclusion*, and *racism*.

But I kept making the excuse that as a white *cishet* woman, I'm not qualified to address these topics. Wouldn't it be arrogant of me to even try?

Perhaps. But it's also not reasonable, right, or rational to expect only those affected by these issues to *educate* others. They're dealing with more than enough just trying to get through all the crap and live their lives.

Given that I have a whole eight-module (soon to be nine) program on Empowered Leadership, how could I *not* include these questions in my curriculum?

I started by asking a Black friend if she would let me interview her. *OUCH*. She very graciously didn't *call me in* about what I was doing, and it was only in retrospect that I realized my mistake. I owe her an apology.

And then I just figured, okay, let me start where I was stuck: with the words.

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Words have power. Words are, in the end, all we have to communicate. (Yes, there's body language. But without words, body language is limited to the point of uselessness.)

"The words we speak create the House we live in." That quote from Hafiz says it all.

I started with a few words that puzzled me. And it went from there, growing and growing almost uncontrollably. I've made updates over time (the version number is in the page footer, and I'm sure there will be more as people continue to point out what I'm overlooking or getting wrong.

This thing feels important. Maybe you'll agree, and maybe you won't. You may or may not agree with the perspective from which I've defined these terms. I researched them all, but there's clearly what, for lack of a better word (ha!), I'll call a liberal philosophy. That's where I take a stand; if you disagree, fine, but I won't engage in discussion about who's right and who's wrong. And please note that perspective and philosophy is different from mistakes and errors; I'm happy to correct the latter.

I hope you'll read this Glossary, share it with your colleagues and friends, and use it to gain greater understanding of the public and private conversations occurring today.

And as I said in the Introduction, by all means drop me an email if you find an error or have a term you'd like me to include. I can't promise to take all suggestions – some may be matters of opinion – but I will review them all.

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