



## Beyond Buzzwords Key Terms and Definitions

**Ally:** An individual who actively supports and works to advance the interests and rights of a marginalized group, often one to which they do not belong. Allies use their privilege to advocate for others, challenge injustice, and amplify marginalized voices.

**Anti-Racism:** The active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices, and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably. It's about proactively dismantling racist structures and challenging racist ideas.

**Belonging:** A deeper evolution of inclusion, **belonging** emphasizes the feeling of being accepted, safe, and truly at home within a group or organization. It's about feeling like you are an integral part of something, where your authentic self is not just tolerated but genuinely valued and affirmed.

**Bias (Implicit/Unconscious Bias):** Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases are often unintentional and can lead to unfair treatment, even by those who genuinely believe themselves to be unbiased.

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**BIPOC:** An acronym standing for **Black, Indigenous, and People of Color**. It's used to specifically highlight the unique histories and experiences of systemic racism and oppression faced by Black and Indigenous peoples, while also encompassing the broader category of people of color.

**Brave Space:** An alternative or complement to "safe space," acknowledging that meaningful discussions around DEI often require discomfort, vulnerability, and the willingness to engage with challenging perspectives. It emphasizes a commitment to respectful dialogue, accountability, and the option to "challenge by choice" rather than guaranteeing complete emotional safety.

**Colonization:** The act by which a colonizing power establishes control over a subjugated people or area, often exploiting its resources and people, and imposing its own culture, language, and social structures. This process often leads to the displacement, oppression, and cultural erosion of indigenous populations.



**Critical Race Theory (CRT):** A framework that examines how race and racism have shaped legal systems and societal structures in the United States. CRT posits that racism is not merely individual prejudice but is systemic and embedded in laws and institutions, challenging the idea of colorblindness.

**Culturally Responsive/Affirming:** Approaches, practices, or environments that acknowledge and value the diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities of individuals. It aims to create spaces and systems that are not just tolerant but actively affirm, celebrate, and leverage cultural differences as strengths.

**Decolonization:** The process of undoing the effects of colonialism, including the dismantling of colonial power structures, reclaiming indigenous cultures and languages, and achieving political, economic, and intellectual autonomy for formerly colonized peoples. It involves confronting and reversing colonial mindsets and systems.

**Discrimination:** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of characteristics like race, age, sex, or disability. Discrimination can occur at an individual level or be deeply embedded within systems.

**Diversity:** This refers to the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. It encompasses a broad spectrum of differences, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, and political views.

**Equity:** More than just equality, **equity** is about fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people. It involves identifying and actively working to eliminate barriers that have historically prevented the full participation and success of certain groups. Equity recognizes that different individuals or groups may need different support to reach an equal outcome.

**Gentrification:** The process of renovating and improving a house or district so that it conforms to middle-class taste. This often leads to the displacement of current low-income residents and businesses due to rising property values, rents, and changes in neighborhood character, often with significant racial implications.

**Inclusion:** This is the practice of ensuring that all individuals feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued within a group or organization. Inclusion goes beyond merely having diverse representation; it means actively creating an environment where everyone can participate fully and authentically, and where their unique perspectives are genuinely heard and appreciated.

**Intersectionality:** Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, this is a framework for understanding how different aspects of a person's social and political identities (e.g., race, gender, class, sexual orientation, disability) combine to create unique and often compounding experiences of discrimination and privilege. It highlights that these categories are not independent but are interdependent.



**Marginalization:** The process by which individuals or groups are pushed to the fringes of society, denied full participation, and limited in their access to resources, opportunities, and power. This is often a direct result of systemic oppression.

**Microaggression:** Brief, everyday verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward members of culturally marginalized groups. These subtle slights can accumulate and have a significant negative impact.

**Neurodiversity:** The concept that neurological differences (such as those found in autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and Tourette's syndrome) are natural and valuable variations of the human brain, rather than deficits or disorders. It advocates for recognizing and accommodating different ways of thinking, learning, and processing information.

**Oppression:** This refers to the systemic and pervasive mistreatment, exploitation, and control of one group by another, often through the abuse of power. Oppression is not just about individual acts of prejudice but is deeply embedded in institutions, policies, and societal norms, making it difficult for the oppressed group to achieve equality and liberation.

**Patriarchy:** A social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property. In this system, fathers or male figures often hold authority over women and children within the family and broader society.

**Prejudice:** Preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. Prejudice often involves negative feelings or attitudes toward a person or group solely based on their group affiliation.

**Privilege:** A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people. Privilege is often unearned and conferred by social systems, providing benefits to certain groups while disadvantaging others (e.g., white privilege, male privilege, cisgender privilege).

**Psychological Safety:** A belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes. It's a critical component for fostering inclusive environments where individuals feel secure enough to take interpersonal risks, share diverse perspectives, and innovate.

**Racism:** Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior. Racism can manifest as individual actions or be deeply ingrained in institutions and societal structures.

**Social Justice:** The concept that all people should have equal access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society. It involves working actively to dismantle



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systems of oppression and address historical and ongoing inequities to achieve a more just and equitable distribution of resources and power.

**Systemic Oppression (Structural Oppression):** This describes how social structures, institutions (like legal systems, education, healthcare), and policies inherently create and perpetuate disadvantage and inequality for certain groups. It highlights that bias and discrimination are often built into the very fabric of society, rather than being solely individual acts.

**Trauma-Informed:** An approach that recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery. It integrates knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and actively resists re-traumatization. Often discussed in the context of creating supportive environments for marginalized individuals.

**Upstander:** An individual who witnesses an injustice or harmful situation and takes action to intervene, support the victim, or challenge the perpetrator. This term emphasizes proactive intervention, contrasting with a "bystander" who observes without acting.

**White Supremacy:** A political ideology that perpetuates and maintains the social, political, and historical dominance of white people. It asserts that white people are inherently superior to people of other racial backgrounds and that white people should therefore dominate society.