

ALLYSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

GLOSSARY

LANGUAGE FOR NAVIGATING SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

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Ableism is [discrimination](#) and social [prejudice](#) against people with disabilities. Ableism characterizes persons as defined by their disabilities, and as inferior to the non-disabled. At the same time on this basis, people are assigned or denied certain perceived abilities, skills, and/or [character traits](#). In ableist societies, [able-bodiedness](#) is viewed as the norm; people with disabilities are viewed as deviating from that norm. A disability is seen as something to overcome or to fix, for example, through medical treatments.

Adultism is the behaviors and attitudes based on the assumptions that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without agreement. Adultism is popularly used to describe any [discrimination](#) against young people and is distinguished from [ageism](#), which is simply prejudice on the grounds of age; not specifically against youth.

Ally: An action, not an identity. Members of the advantaged group who recognize their privilege and work in solidarity with oppressed groups to dismantle the systems of oppression(s) from which they derive power, privilege and acceptance. Allied behavior means taking intentional, overt and consistent responsibility for the changes we know are needed in our society, and does so in a way that facilitates the empowerment of persons targeted by oppression. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways. The ally framework also implies that one does not feel directly implicated by the oppression.

Anti-Black Racism: Describes how white supremacy creates a racialized hierarchy that requires blackness (and people of African descent) to occupy the most marginalized position in the hierarchy. Anti-black racism often appears as prejudice and racial animosity toward black people by both white and non-black ethnic minorities in the United States. Anti-black racism is buoyed by the Model Minority Myth and racial resentment.

The Buffer Zone: A range of jobs and occupations that structurally serve to maintain the wealth and power of the ruling class by acting as a buffer between those at the top of the pyramid and those at the bottom. The buffer zone serves a threefold function: taking care of people, keeping hope alive, and controlling people. Originated by Paul Kivel.

Calling In: Based in the belief that mistakes happen and that harm is an opportunity for transformation, especially when mistakes/harm occurs in a relationship with shared values

and within communities seeking justice and freedom. Involves addressing someone's behavior more privately and personally, identifying the hurtful behavior, and making space to talk about it with compassion and patience.

"I picture "calling in" as a practice of pulling folks back in who have strayed from us... as a practice of loving each other enough to allow each other to make mistakes; a practice of loving ourselves enough to know that what we're trying to do here is a radical unlearning of everything we have been configured to believe is normal. (Ngọc Loan Trần)

Classism: Differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class. Systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the dominant class groups. It's the systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class.

Collective liberation: recognizes that all of our struggles are intimately connected, and that we must work together to create the kind of world we know is possible. We believe that every person is worthy of dignity and respect, and that within systems of oppression everyone suffers.

Colonialism/Colonization: The policy and practice of a power in creating borders, then extending control past those borders over other land/people. Usually includes acquisition and expansion of property, creation of settler colonies, spread of disease, exploitation, enslavement and displacement of indigenous populations, and absorption and assimilation of the colonized into the culture of the colonial power in order to destroy any remnant of the foreign cultures that might threaten the colonial power by inspiring rebellion. Colonialism is often based on the ethnocentric belief that the morals and values of the colonizer are superior to those of the colonized.

Decolonization: The undoing of colonialism, including dismantlement of outside rule, reclamation of indigenous practices and reconnection to self, family and community.

Environmental Racism: The set of structures, institutions, practices and ideas that produces unhealthy, poisoned environments, concentrated in low-income communities and communities of color worldwide

Eurocentrism: is the practice of viewing the world from a European perspective and with an implied belief, either consciously or subconsciously, in the preeminence of European or European-American culture.
Frontline Communities -

Gender: Gender denotes a social, cultural, or psychological condition, as opposed to that of biological sex. Some people do not have a gender identity that corresponds to their biological sex. Sometimes these individuals will identify as transgender, transsexual, intersexed and or genderqueer.

Hegemony: Hegemony refers to unchallenged, unquestioned systems and practices of power that are maintained not only by those who benefit from these practices, but by those who are subordinated by them. Hegemony is a form of social control that coerces people through

cultural means and without the use of brute force to act against the interests of their own communities as a result of internalizing the logic and demands of those in power.

Heterosexism: Structural, interpersonal, or other forms of discrimination or prejudice against anyone who does not conform to binary gender norms based on the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal/correct sexual orientation.

Intersectionality: The concept and reality that it is not enough to take on one kind of oppression without acknowledging other kinds of oppression (and privilege) that interlock and fuel one another. Originated by Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberlé Crenshaw to explain the experience of women of color in an anti-discrimination case in which references to women were assumed to be white, and references to was gendered as male.

Kyriarchy: A social system or set of interconnected, interacting, and self-extending systems built around domination, oppression and submission, in which a single individual might be oppressed in some relationships and privileged in others. An intersectional extension of the idea of patriarchy beyond gender. Kyriarchy encompasses sexism, racism, homophobia, economic injustice, and other forms of dominating hierarchies in which the subordination of one person or group to another is internalized and institutionalized. Coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in 1992.

Liberatory Consciousness: A mindfulness of systems of oppressions and how individuals have been and are continually socialized to play roles in maintaining these systems. It empowers individuals to take actions to interrupt oppressive acts and institutions with the ultimate goal of deconstructing these systems. It includes: awareness, analysis, action & accountability/allyship.

Microaggressions: Brief, everyday (and often unconscious) slights, insults, indignities and denigrating messages sent to oppressed identities by well-intentioned privileged identities who are unaware of the hidden messages being communicated.

Oppression: Systematic, institutional, individual (and often unconscious and/or internalized) domination, devaluing, disadvantaging, targeting or marginalizing of one social identity in contrast to a more powerful social identity for the social, economic and political benefit of the more powerful group. Prejudice plus power.

Patriarchy: An historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression in which those assigned male, or those exhibiting characteristics that have been assigned male, hold ultimate authority and privilege central to social organization, occupying roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property. It implies and entails female subordination. Can result in gendered outcomes even without specific gendered animus articulated between individuals.

Power: Many kinds: personal power, people power, co-power, institutional power, positional power, referred power, expert power, obstructive power, cultural power, structural power, transcendent power (simplified to power over, power with and power within)

Privilege: Systematic favoring, valuing, validating and advantaging of certain social identities at the expense of others. Often in the form of basic human rights denied to some based on identity. This can range from visible (professional opportunities) to subtle (setting the “norm” against which others are judged). In the US, privileged identities include US Citizen, male, white (i.e. European ancestry, settler), affluent/financially secure, heterosexual, cis-gendered, thin, able-bodied and Christian).

Racism: Race prejudice + (structural) power. Often manifests as actions, practices, or beliefs that consider individuals to be divided into races, based on color of skin, that can be ranked as inherently superior or inferior to others, or that members of different races should be treated differently.

Reverse Racism: A non-term. People of color do not have the same institutional power to back up individual or group prejudices that white people have. *See definition of Racism.*

Sexism: Gender or sex prejudice + power. Often involves imposing a limited or false notion of masculinity and femininity on individuals along with a belief that a person of one sex is intrinsically superior to a person of the other.

Socialization: The process of consciously and unconsciously learning norms, beliefs, and practices from individuals, media and institutions about who does/does not have power and privilege as it relates to social identities and how the self is positioned in relationship to them.

Transgender: Transgender people are people who have a [gender identity](#), or gender expression, that differs from their [assigned sex](#). *Transgender* is also an [umbrella term](#): in addition to including people whose gender identity is the *opposite* of their assigned sex ([trans men](#) and [trans women](#)), it may include people who are not exclusively masculine or feminine (people who are [genderqueer](#), e.g. [bigender](#), [pangender](#), genderfluid, or agender). Other definitions of *transgender* also include people who belong to a [third gender](#), or conceptualize transgender people as a third gender. Being transgender is independent of [sexual orientation](#). transgender people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, [bisexual](#), [asexual](#), etc., or may consider conventional sexual orientation labels inadequate or inapplicable.

Whiteness: A social construct that has changed over time, and has been used to explain problems with people who have refused to assimilate to the dominant colonizing culture in Europe and the US even after centuries of exposure. As a racial term, it now refers to people of primarily European background. British colonists referred to themselves as “people,” “citizens,” or “Christians,” and others were referred to by their racial categories. In the US, the term did not always include Jews, the Irish, Eastern Europeans, and Italians. These groups were included within concept of whiteness as a response to chattel slavery in order to prevent interracial uprisings.

White Fragility: White people in North America live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress. This insulated environment of racial protection builds white expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress. It is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display

of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium. (Robin DiAngelo)

White Supremacy: An historically based, institutionally and culturally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent for the purpose of establishing, maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

White Savior Complex: The idea that what a white person has to offer is better than what others have and they should share it. Reinforces white, colonial “norms.”