

TERMINOLOGY FOR ANTI-BIAS LANGUAGE

I. CONCEPTS

Stereotype: A generalization about a group of people that may or may not be based in truth, most commonly used to unfairly categorize people. Everyone stereotypes. Although stereotypes can be perceived as both negative and positive, they have long lasting negative impacts on both targeted and non-targeted groups.

Bias: A conscious or unconscious preference that inhibits a person's capacity for impartial judgment.

Prejudice: An unfair pre-judgment of an individual based on real or perceived group membership and bias.

Bigotry: Holding blindly and intolerantly to a particular creed, opinion; narrow-mindedness; intolerance; prejudice.

Privilege: Privilege operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives advantages, access, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of marginalized groups. In the United States, privilege is granted to people who have membership in one or more of these social identity groups: white people, nondisabled people, heterosexuals, males, Christians, middle/upper/owning class people, middle-aged people, cisgendered, and English-speaking people. Privilege is commonly invisible to or taken for granted by people who have it. People in dominant groups often believe that they have earned the privileges that they enjoy or that everyone could have access to these privileges if only they worked to earn them. In fact, privileges are unearned and they are granted to people in the dominant groups whether they want those privileges or not, and regardless of their stated intent.

Power: Ability to exert control and influence over institutions, resources and cultural norms.

Discrimination: An action or behavior that favors some people and disadvantages others.

Oppression: Any attitude, action or institutional structure that subordinates a person because of their membership in a targeted group.

- Examples of target groups are: Women, Transgender people, Asians, African Americans, Latino/as, individuals with disabilities, Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Jewish individuals, Native Americans, the Elderly, Children.
- Oppression can be intentional or unintentional.

Microaggression: A small act of mostly non-physical aggression. The term was first coined in the early 1970's. More recently, psychologist Dr. Derald Wing Sue (2007) described microaggressions as, "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults" toward marginalized groups. Microaggressions take many forms. Some behaviors include: objectification, use of biased language, assumptions of inferiority, denial of others feelings and experiences, invisibility, and jokes.

Microinequity: An act in which an individual is singled out, overlooked, ignored, or otherwise discounted based on an unchangeable characteristic such as race or gender. A microinequity generally takes the form of a gesture, different kind of language, treatment, or even tone of voice. The perceptions that cause microinequities are deeply rooted and unconscious. Microinequities are not one-time events. The cumulative effect of microinequities can impair a person's performance, damage self-esteem, and may eventually lead to that person's withdrawal. In the original articles on the subject in the 1970s, Mary Rowe defined microinequities as "small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove, events which are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator, which occur wherever people are perceived to be different."

Scapegoat: An individual or group singled out for unmerited negative treatment or blame. Scapegoating is often associated with bullying and/or stereotyping.

Tokenism: The policy or practice of making a perfunctory gesture toward the inclusion of members of underrepresented groups. Tokenism is usually intended to create a false appearance of inclusiveness and deflect accusations of discrimination.

Diversity: Recognition of individual differences. These differences can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical abilities, nationality, language, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic background.

Inclusion: The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement of the diversity of an organization, system, and/or community in order to create equal access, well being, and a sense of belonging for all members.

Ism: The combination of *prejudice* and *power* that creates a *system of advantages* based on dominant structures and ideology/ideas.

Racism: Racism is a system of oppression that consists of racial prejudice and discrimination – supported by institutional power and authority – used to the advantage of one race and the disadvantage of another race or races. The critical element which differentiates racism from prejudice and discrimination is the use of institutional power and authority to support white supremacy, reiterate prejudices, and enforce discriminatory behaviors in systematic ways with far-reaching outcomes and effects.

Anti-Blackness: It is the inability to recognize Black humanity. Stemming from the legacy of slavery, it locates Black people as property, inhuman, and disposable. Anti-blackness is a fundamental component built into the culture, value system, and creation of the US. It incorporates society's hatred of Blackness and justifies violence against Black people. (Reference: ["Call it what it is: Anti-Blackness," kihana miraya ross](#), New York Times (June 4, 2020)).

White Fragility: A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress on the part of white people becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include, but are not limited to, the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt; and/or behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.

White Supremacy Culture: White supremacy culture is the idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. White supremacy culture is reproduced by all of the institutions of our society. In particular the media, the education system, western science (which played a major role in reinforcing the idea of race as a biological truth with the white race as the "ideal" top of the hierarchy), and the Christian church have played central roles in reproducing the idea of white supremacy (i.e. that white is "normal," "better," "smarter," "holy" in contrast to Black and other People and Communities of Color. White supremacy culture has been historically constructed and expresses, justifies, and binds together the white supremacy system. It is the glue that binds together white-controlled institutions and white-controlled systems to form a global structure of white supremacy.

Colorism: Prejudice or discrimination against individuals with dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group.

Sexism: Sexism is a system of oppression based on prejudice against one's gender. Sexism is any attitude, action, or institutional practice – backed up by institutional power – which subordinates people because of their (real or perceived) gender.

Misogyny: Hatred, dislike, contempt, and/or ingrained prejudice against women and/or girls.

Classism: Classism is a system of oppression based on class status. Classism is any attitude, action, or institutional practice that subordinates people due to their economic condition. A person's class is determined by access to a mix of resources including, but not limited to money, culture, contacts, and formal education. Class includes food, clothing, language, cars, entertainment, work, and much more.

Ageism: Ageism is a system of oppression based on age. Ageism is an attitude, action, or institutional practice backed up by institutional power that subordinates people because of their age, usually directed towards older people and younger people.

Ableism: Ableism is a system of oppression based on ability. Ableism is any attitude, action, or institutional practice backed by institutional power that subordinates people because of their perceived ability. It is any social relations, practices, and ideas that presume that all people are without a disability. The mere presumption that everyone does not have a disability is effectively discriminatory, often creating environments that are hostile to people with disabilities.

Audism: Audism is the notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or to behave in the manner of one who hears, or that life without hearing is futile and miserable, or an attitude based on pathological thinking which results in a negative stigma toward anyone who does not hear. Audism can manifest in many people, but it is most predominant in hearing people. It is this mentality that led Tom L. Humphries to coin the term in his doctoral dissertation in 1975. People who practice audism are called audists. Audism is a form of ableism, discrimination on the basis of (dis)ability.

Disability: A socially constructed experience that identifies systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) as contributory factors in disabling people. This social model definition promotes the notion that while physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychological variations may cause individual functional limitation or impairments, these lead to disability only if society fails to take account of and include people regardless of their individual differences. The social model further recognizes disability as a community and a culture.

Disability Discrimination: Also referred to as "Ableism" or "Disablism," disability discrimination is discrimination against people based, most often, on their physical or cognitive abilities. An "ableist" society is said to be one that assumes people without disabilities are the 'norm'. Continued discrimination results in public and private structures and services, including education and social resources. It is also a system by which a society denigrates, devalues, and thus oppresses those with disabilities, while privileging those without disabilities.

Heterosexism: Heterosexism is a system of oppression based on one's sexual orientation and/or not conforming to a *gender binary* (a social construction of gender allowing only two gender expressions). Heterosexism is any attitude, action, or institutional practice backed by institutional power that subordinates people because of their sexual orientation and/or a gender presentation/identity that does not maintain the gender binary. This includes **Homophobia**, which is the fear or hatred of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or queer people. It is also fear of being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer and/or fear of being perceived as any of those identities.

Islamophobia: Islamophobia refers to fear and hostility towards Islam and Muslims. Such fear and hostility leads to discrimination against Muslims, exclusions of Muslims from mainstream political or social process, stereotyping, the presumption of guilt by association, and hate crimes.

Jewish Oppression: Jewish oppression is a combination of historical and cultural practices that marginalizes, blames, and alienates Jewish people. Such practices include cultural invalidation, punishment, pogroms, concentration camps, and forced assimilation. Jewish is a term that covers ethnicity, culture, and religion. It is possible to be connected to any one without the others or to be all three. By extension, it is possible to experience discrimination and oppression in any (or all) of these categories. Jewish oppression has come to be synonymous with anti-semitism. Please see below.

Anti-Semitism: Over time, anti-semitism has come to represent oppression of the Jewish community and Jewish people. Although, "Semite" is formally defined as a descriptor for people who come from and/or speak one of a group of related languages that are thought to come from a common language, Semitic. Semites, therefore, include Arabs, Canaanites, some Ethiopians, and Aramaean tribes, in addition to Jews. Semitic people have a shared history in the Arab peninsula, the Mediterranean coast, Mesopotamia, the Nile River delta, Israel and Palestine. Although there are other Semitic people, this is not the term to describe their targeting.

Transphobia: The irrational fear, loathing, hatred and discriminatory treatment used to take power away from people whose gender identity or gender representation (or

perceived gender or gender identity) does not match, according to social conventions, the sex they were assigned at birth.

Religious Bigotry: Holding blindly and intolerantly to a particular religious creed, opinion, prejudice, or narrow-mindedness.

Colonialism: The domination/enslavement of one people or nation by another people or nation for the sole benefit of the oppressor nation/state. Colonialism actively removes people's access to independence by denying them avenues to create and maintain ownership and/or control over products, family, and culture. This process occurs through, but is not limited to, the exploitation of people, labor, land, and resources.

Settler Colonialism: A distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty. Settler colonial states include Canada, the United States, Australia, and South Africa, and settler colonial theory has been important to understanding conflicts in places like Israel, Kenya, and Argentina, and in tracing the colonial legacies of empires that engaged in the widespread foundation of settlement colonies. Settler colonialism can be distinguished from other forms of colonialism by a number of key features. First, settler colonizers "come to stay": settler collectives intend to permanently occupy and assert sovereignty over indigenous lands. Second, settler colonial invasion is a structure, not an event: settler colonialism persists in the ongoing elimination of indigenous populations. Third, settler colonialism seeks its own end: unlike other types of colonialism in which the goal is to maintain colonial power imbalances between colonizer and colonized, settler colonization trends towards ending of colonial difference in the form of a supreme and unchallenged settler state and people. (Source: GlobalSocialTheory.org)

One Drop Rule: The one-drop rule is a social and legal principle of racial classification that was historically prominent in the United States asserting that any person with even one ancestor of sub-Saharan African ancestry ("one drop" of Black blood) is considered Black (*Negro* in historical terms). It's implications of racial purity being that anyone unable to pass for white in the context of the US racial hierarchy is assigned the lower status of being non-white or colored. This rule has been used to criminalize and incarcerate other racial groups, including Japanese-Americans and other Asian communities during World War II. (Source: [Who Is Black? One Nation's Definition](#) by F. James Davis (1991); read an excerpt here: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jefferson/mixed/onedrop.html>).

Blood Quantum: Blood quantum is defined in a variety of ways depending who is defining it and how it is or has been used socially or politically. According to the Association of American Indian Affairs, blood quantum is the amount of Indian blood you possess as determined by the number of generations of Native people you descend from, and it is the process that the federal government uses to determine whether they consider you a Native American or not. Between approximately 1885-1940, census rolls, the 1900 special Indian census, the Dawes Rolls, Durrant Rolls, and land conveyances involving Native people were taken. Based on that information, if any of your ancestors were on those rolls, you may be able to receive a “Certificate of Indian Blood”. However, in some communities a person could be counted as Full Blood but not meet the minimum Quantum to enroll in a particular tribe. Mainly because the person is of multiple tribes, but one only counts the tribe one is enrolling with. Some Nations, Tribes and Bands continue to use Blood quantum as a basis for enrollment and citizenship with a particular tribe. (Source: [Association of American Indian Affairs](#); Listen to [NPR’s Codeswitch Episode](#) for more information)

Internalized Oppression: An experience of oppression as internal and personal that occurs for people who are subjected to oppression. The internalizing of oppression can look like a belief in the prejudices and stereotypes about the identity group that the person is a member of. This is exhibited in attitudes, behaviors, speech and self-confidence. A person who has internalized oppression may alter their practices to reflect the stereotypes and norms of the dominant group. Internalized oppression can create low self-esteem and self-doubt. It can also be projected outward as fear, criticism or distrust of one’s own identity group.

Ally: Someone who understands the many layers of oppression, can identify positions of privilege that they hold, and actively works to rectify inequity.

Allyship: An active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person of privilege seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group of people. Allyship is not an identity—it is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people. Allyship is not self-defined—our work and our efforts must be recognized by the people we seek to ally ourselves with. (Source: [The Anti-Oppression Network](#))

Agency: The capacity to make choices and the ability to impose those choices on the world.

Equity: The state, quality or ideal of being just. Using the principles of fairness and ethics to apply justice to circumstances.

Social Justice: The promotion of a just society by challenging injustice. Social justice exists when all people receive equitable treatment, have their human rights upheld, and receive a fair allocation of community resources. In conditions of social justice, people are not discriminated against, nor are their welfare and well-being constrained.

Antiracism: Works with the complexities of difference and continually challenges the totalizing pretensions of racial and racist discourses. Given the relational aspects of difference, antiracism necessarily touches on the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and other forms of difference. Antiracism posits that:

- (1) Race, in that it is often plainly marked on the body, is one aspect of identity that assumes a stubborn saliency. This concept is foundational in critical antiracism theory.
- (2) The politics of antiracism requires the centrality of race in anti-oppression work that calls itself “antiracist.” (Source: [Handbook of Black Studies](#), Sage Publications. Molefi Kete Asante, Maulana Karenga. 2005 Pg. 108.)

Intersectionality (or intersectional theory): The study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination or discrimination. The theory suggests that—and seeks to examine how—various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, age and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. This framework can be used to understand how systemic injustice and social inequality occur on a multidimensional basis.

Centrality of Race: An understanding that race and racism form the fundamental basis of all oppression.

Centrality of Class: An understanding that capitalism and class form the fundamental basis of all oppression.

II. PEOPLE

People of Color: A term of solidarity referring to Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, Asians, Arabs, Middle Easterners, Pacific Islanders, and those who may identify as Multiracial. This term is preferred to other terms often heard, such as *minority* and *non-white*. While people of color are currently a numerical minority in the United States, they are the vast majority—nine-tenths—of the world’s population; White people are the distinct minority. Use of the term “minority,” therefore, obscures this global reality and, in effect, reinforces racist assumptions. To describe people of color as “non-white” is to use the White race as the standard against which all other races are described or as a referent in relation to whom all others are positioned. It is doubtful that White people would appreciate being called “non-black” or men would like being called “non-women.” The term “people of color” was born out of an explicitly political statement that signaled solidarity among progressive African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders. People may choose to identify this way due to a variety of factors including race, ethnicity, culture, physical appearance, class, and political perspective.

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC): A term adopted to replace People of Color in an effort undo Native invisibility, anti-Blackness, dismantle white supremacy and advance racial justice and highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context. We at artEquity unapologetically focus on and center relationships among BIPOC folks. (Adapted from thebipocproject.org.)

Multiracial: People whose ancestries come from multiple races. Unlike the term biracial, which often is only used to refer to having parents or grandparents of two different races, the term 'multiracial' may encompass biracial people but can also include people with more than two races in their heritage. Some transracial adoptees (a person adopted by parents of a different race) also identify as multiracial.

Minority: See above definition for People of Color.

Third World: The Third World refers to the colonized or formerly colonized countries of the world, including the nations and peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean Islands, who have a shared history of economic exploitation and oppression. The term gained increasing usage after the 1955 Bandung Conference of “non-aligned” nations, which represented a third force outside of the two world superpowers. The “First World” referred to the United States, Western Europe, and its sphere of influence. The “Second World” referred to the Soviet Union and its sphere. The “Third World”

represents for the most part, those nations that were, or are, controlled by the “First World.” However, many Africans and Asians are reclaiming the term “First World” in recognition of their place in world history as the oldest civilizations. Additionally, nations historically classified as “third world” are also now being referred to as “developing” countries.

African American: Refers to people of African descent who were born in the United States. The term is preferable to “Afro-American” because African heritage is clearly identified and named. This identity often refers to a shared history of forced migration as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and/or ancestors who were enslaved in the Americas.

Black: A term referring to people of African descent who may be from any part of the world.

Arab: Refers to people who are born in or descendants of one of the 22 Arab Nations (Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritanian, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen) as defined by the League of Arab Nations. The term “Arab,” depending on the context, can refer to a range of identity-related factors including geography, citizenship, language, politics, ethnicity, and race.

Middle Eastern/Southwest Asian: The Middle East/Southwest Asia is a historical and political region of Africa and Eurasia with no clear definition. The term “Middle East” was popularized around 1900 by the British, and has been criticized for its loose definition. The Middle East includes countries or regions in Southwest Asia and parts of North Africa. This term is widely used to refer to Persian countries as well as Arab nations. Middle Eastern or Southwest Asian can refer to people who are born in or descendants of these regions.

South Asian: The South Asian community in the United States is comprised of individuals with ancestry from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. The community also includes members of the South Asian diaspora – past generations of South Asians who settled in many areas around the world, including the Caribbean (Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago), Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda), Canada, Europe, the Middle East, and other parts of Asia and the Pacific Islands (Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore). The community is comprised of individuals who practice a variety of religions and speak different languages, yet share similar immigration histories and racialization. For example, South Asians practice Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism,

and Zoroastrianism. The most common languages other than English spoken by South Asians in the United States include Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu.

Asian American: Refers to people of Asian descent living in the United States, including people of Indian, Pakistani, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Chinese descent, etc. Please note that the term “Oriental” is considered obsolete and pejorative.

Pacific Islander: Refers to people from the islands of the Pacific, specifically within the region of Oceania (composed of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia) such as Samoa, New Guinea, Fiji, Guam, Tahiti, etc. It is helpful to remember that not every person born in or descended from this region identifies as Pacific Islander, so it is better to ask them how they identify.

Latino: Refers to people from Mexico, Central America (such as Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador), South America (such as Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay), and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean (such as Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Cuba). The term also includes Chicanos (Mexican Americans). The term Latino refers to a shared cultural heritage (Black, Native American, and Spanish), a history of colonization by Spain, and in many cases a common language (Spanish). As a result, people who identify as Latino come from a variety of countries, cultural contexts, and racial groups.

In addition, the term “Hispanic” is one of the several terms of ethnicity employed to categorize any person, of any racial background, of any country and of any religion who has at least one ancestor from the people of Spain or Spanish-speaking Latin America, whether or not the person has Spanish ancestry. The preference for the classifier, Latino, over Hispanic partly derives from its emphasis on heritage from Latin America and not Spain.

Latinx: A gender inclusive term sometimes used in lieu of *Latino* or *Latina* or *Latin@*. The -x replaces the standard -o and -a endings in Spanish, Portuguese and related languages, which form nouns of the masculine and feminine genders, respectively. *Latinx* was reportedly first used online in 2004 and interest in the term spiked in 2016 online. The term has gained popularity in social media, and is mostly used by those who seek to advocate for individuals who identify as genderqueer or non-binary. (Sources: [Latinx. A Brief Guidebook](#), by Alrene Gambio; [Mapping and recontextualizing the evolution of the term Latinx: An environmental scanning in higher education](#), by Christobal Salinas, Jr and Adele Lozano; and Google Trends).

Native American: Refers to the descendants of the people who originally inhabited the North, South, and Central America prior to conquest by Europeans. There is still a debate as to whether the term Native American or Indian is preferred. Many Native Americans do use “Indian” and “tribe” in referring to their own people. However, many other Native Peoples suggest that “Indian,” “tribe,” and a host of similar words are incorrect and carry derogatory connotations in our society. It is recommended to refer to a particular people or nation by name, such as Cherokee, Hopi, and Seminole.

Indigenous: This term has different meanings depending on country and context. It can be applied to any ethnic group inhabiting the geographic region with which they have the earliest historical connection. A contemporary working definition will include ethnic groups (and their descendants) who have an historical continuity or association with a given region, or parts of a region. Those who formerly or currently inhabit the region before its subsequent colonization or annexation, or lived alongside other cultural groups during the formation of a nation-state may also identify as Indigenous. People can also identify if they lived independently or largely isolated from the influences of the claimed governance by a nation-state; and who, furthermore, have maintained at least in part their distinct linguistic, cultural and social/organizational characteristics, and in doing so remain differentiated in some degree from the surrounding populations and dominant culture of the nation-state.

White: White can refer to people of European descent, including the English, Irish, Italian, German, Greek, Dutch and Polish. White identity has been institutionally upheld as a way to give or deny social and political power. In U.S. history, those at some point not considered white have included: Irish, Germans, Ashkenazi Jews, Italians, Spaniards, Slavs, and Greeks. The process of officially being defined as white by law often came about in court disputes over pursuit of citizenship (but also to create and maintain laws, voting rights, property, and privileges for one group and institutionally deny those rights to everyone else). The Immigration Act of 1790 offered naturalization only to “any alien, being a free white person.” This was ultimately determined by religious practices, education, inter-marriage and a community’s role in the United States.

People with Disabilities: People who are impacted by social factors and/or structural barriers that limit significant life activities or experiences. *People first language*, putting the person before the disability, is preferred to descriptors such as “handicapped” or “disabled.” It is important to remember and respect that some people with disabilities may self-identify with these terms or others generally considered to be pejorative. Some disability groups also strongly object to using euphemisms to describe disabilities (such as “physically challenged” or “differently abled”). Note: Federal regulations use the

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wording, “individuals with handicaps,” and define this as any person who either (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially impairs one or more life activities, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

Queer: An umbrella identity term encompassing lesbians, questioning people, gay men, bisexuals, non-labeling people, and anyone else who does not strictly identify as heterosexual. “Queer” was used as a derogatory word in the 1940’s and 1950’s. Currently, it is being reclaimed by some people and used as a statement of empowerment. Some people identify as queer to distance themselves from the rigid categorization of “straight” and “gay.” Some lesbian, gay, questioning, non-labeling, and bisexual people, however, reject the use of this term due to its tendency to sometimes deny the differences between these groups.

Lesbians: Women who form primary loving and sexual relationships with women. Some women may also use the term “gay” to describe themselves.

Bisexual: A person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to those of the same gender, as well as to those of another gender. These attractions can manifest in differing ways and to differing degrees over a person’s lifetime.

Gay: Someone who is primarily and/or exclusively attracted to members of their own sex or gender. In certain contexts, this term is used to refer only to those who identify as men.

Transgender: Broadly speaking, transgender people are individuals whose gender expression and/or gender identity differs from conventional expectations based on the physical sex they were assigned at birth. The word transgender is an umbrella term which is often used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences, including: cross-dressers, drag queens, drag kings, gender queers, and people who have a gender that is outside the female/male binary.

Cisgender: Cisgender is the state of one’s gender identity matching one’s ‘assigned sex.’ Cisgendered individuals’ assigned sex (male or female) largely match the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that society considers appropriate for one’s sex. These individuals have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity. Cisgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation.

Intersex: A general term used to self-identify or describe a person who is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t fit the narrow medical definitions of female or male. The term “hermaphrodite” is considered pejorative by many intersex folks, and has been historically used to medically identify a person with combined female and male genes and/or genitalia.

Women: A gender identity that can be connected to femaleness, femininity, and non-female gender identities/expressions. Not all females identify as women and not all women identify as female. In some contexts adult females are not seen as “girls” and should not be referred to as such.

Men: A gender identity that can be connected to maleness, masculinity, and non-male gender identities/expressions. Not all males identify as men and not all men identify as male. In some contexts adult males are not seen as “boys” and should not be referred to as such.

Non-binary/Genderqueer: Terms used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. These terms are not a synonym for transgender or transexual and should only be used if someone self-identifies as non-binary and/or genderqueer. (Source: [GLAAD Media Reference Guide](#))

Please remember that the racial and cultural categories and terms are fluid and overlapping. For example, a person from Nigeria living in the United States might refer to themselves as African, Black, Nigerian, or a Black, Indigenous, and Person of Color. Their child, if living in the U.S. for most of their life, might choose the term African American, as well as the other options listed above. **It is always best to learn how people refer to themselves.**



These definitions have been added to and revised over several decades. Original sources include [The Council on Interracial Books for Children, Guidelines for Selecting Bias-Free Textbooks and Storybooks](#) by Patricia DeRosa, Joyce King, and Margo Okazawa-Rey (1979).
