

Social Justice Glossary

Words & Definitions from:

This Book is Antiracist by Tiffany Jewell

ABC's of Social Justice: A Glossary of Working Language for Socially Conscious Conversation by the Department of Inclusion & Multicultural Engagement at Lewis & Clark College

Our Shared Language: Social Justice Glossary from YWCA Boston

Agency - your power to make effective change; your ability to make choices and decisions

Ally - 1. one who is not (most) directly impacted by an issue but works in solidarity with those who are most directly impacted by the issue. 2. one who understands that their primary role is to: a) educate themselves, b) educate their community, and c) lend their support to the leadership of those most directly impacted by the issue

Anti-racism - actively working against racism; making a commitment to resisting unjust laws, policies, and racist attitudes; the way to get free from centuries of living in a racialized society that keeps up separate and oppressed

Anti-racist - someone who is opposed to and actively working against racism; making a commitment to resisting unjust laws, unjust policies, and racist ideas

Assimilate - to take on the custom, mannerisms, and ideas of a dominant group in order to fit in

Bias - your personal preference for, or against, an individual or group; it can interfere with your judgment

BIPoC - Black, Indigenous, People of Color

Cisgender - when your personal identity and gender expression correspond with the sex you were assigned at birth

Complicity - when you go along with a harmful act or injustice

Culture - a shared way of life among a social group; this shared way of life includes commonalities in geography, language, history, traditions, rituals, belief systems, etc.

Discrimination - favoring one group over another in your thoughts and actions (both conscious and unconscious biases)

Dominant culture - a group of people in society who hold the most power and are often (but not always) in the majority

Equality - the condition of being equal, or the same in quality, measure, esteem, or value

Equity - being fair and impartial

Ethnicity - your cultural heritage (language, traditions, ancestral history); not the same as your race

Folx - includes people of color, queer people, and other marginalized groups that tend to be excluded or ignored; a gender-neutral way to refer to members of or signal identity in the LGBTQ community

Folx of the Global Majority - an empowering people-centered term that reminds folx that BIPOC are the majority of the people in the world

Gender - the social construction, or performance, of your role in society based on the dominant culture's creation of what is masculine or feminine; not defined by the sex you were assigned at birth

Gender identity - your personal sense of who you are; may be different or the same as the sex you were assigned at birth

Gender neutral pronouns - pronouns that do not adhere to the he/she and his/her binary, and can refer to a number of different gender identities

Hate crimes - 1. a form of community violence that targets the most vulnerable populations. 2. committed when a perpetrator intentionally selects and commits a crime toward someone based on actual or perceived membership in a particular group, usually defined by race, religion, ability, ethnic origin, gender identity or sexual orientation (Hate crimes not only cause direct harm to the victim, but have an intimidating and isolating impact on the larger community than targeted originally; current federal laws make it a crime to commit bias-motivated acts against individuals or property)

Implicit bias - attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner; these bias encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments; activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or control

Inclusion - an intentional effort to transform the status quo by creating opportunity for those who have been historically marginalized; the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure

Institutions - established laws, policies, customs, and procedures that are part of our culture and way of being

Intersectionality - the intersection of race, class, gender, and ability identities within each individual that informs how one views, discusses, and navigates through the world

Justice - being morally correct or fair

Latinx - a general, gender-neutral term for folx who are from Latin America or from Latin American descent

LGBTQQIA - the umbrella community of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirited, queer, questioning, intersex, and/or asexual

Marginalized - on the outside of the imaginary box of dominant culture and treated as if you are insignificant or inferior; purposeful disempowerment of folx that denies access to resources and power; the systematic disempowerment of a person or community by denying access to necessary resources, enforcing prejudice through society's institutions, and/or not allowing for that individual or community's voice, history, and perspective to be heard

Microaggression - an intentional or unintentional insult, slight, or hostile, negative message to folx who do not fit in the imaginary box of dominant culture; can be spoken or acted out

Nationality - your membership in a country where you were born and/or where your citizenship lies

Neurodiverse - term used to describe neurological differences (like ADHD, autism, Tourette's syndrome, dyslexia); a term that acknowledges these differences are from genetic variation, are often not visible, and that folx who are neurodiverse are not sick, badly behaved, or damaged

Neurotypical - people with typical development and intellectual ability

Nonbinary - folx that identify as having no gender or a gender in between (or beyond) a man or a woman; diverse category; not everyone feels the same way

Oppression - the systemic and systematic suppression of a group, or groups, by a group in power

Privilege - the benefits, advantages, and power give to the societal identities shared with the dominant culture

Race - a socially constructed term that divides folx up based on their skin color and physical characteristics; not based on scientific fact and not grounded in genetics

Racial profiling - the systemic targeting, surveillance, policing, and harassment of people of color that begins with the assumption that people of color are more likely to be criminals

Racism - personal prejudice and bias AND the systemic misuse and abuse of power by institutions

Queer - anyone outside of society's gender and sexuality norms; those who fall outside of cisgender or heterosexual identities (note: this is a word that has been reclaimed but it's still a controversial term due to its historically derogatory use; its definition is ever-changing and means different things to different people)

Sexual orientation - a societal identity that corresponds to the gender you are attracted to

Slur - an insulting or derogatory comment, reference, or label

Social construction - an idea that has been created by society

Social identity - identities that have been created, framed, and defined by society for a long time (includes race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, age, language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, nationality, abilities, family structure); relates you to other people in society (examples: your neighborhood, city, and country)

Social Justice

- the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities
- the practice of allyship and coalition work in order to promote equality, equity, respect, and the assurance of rights within and between communities and social groups
- a vision of the world where all groups of people can live (and be perceived) as fully human on all levels (personal, social, institutional, and structural); a vision of the world not rooted in the dominance of any one group over all others, and such a vision would include recognizing the inherent worth and connectedness of all people, animals, plants, and all other resources of our planet and universe

Society - community

Socioeconomic class - the social constructed hierarchy based on economic wealth and mobility; typically, the higher one's class, the more power and greater influence one has

Solidarity - unity or agreement based on shared interests and objectives; long-term mutual support within and between groups

Stereotype - a common, oversimplified, and/or distorted view of a person, thing, group, etc. that is not based on any fact

Systematic - something methodical and planned

Systemic - something that happens throughout a whole system (or institution) over the course of time

Transgender - someone who's gender identity differs from the gender they were assigned at birth

Unconscious bias - negative stereotypes regarding a person or group of people; these biases influence individuals' thoughts and actions without their conscious knowledge (we all have unconscious biases)

Upstander - a person who chooses to take positive action in the face of injustice in society or in situations in which individuals need personal assistance; the opposite of a bystander

White supremacy - the belief that white people are superior to BIPOC and other Folx of the Global Majority because they are white

Xenophobia - fear and/or loathing of people who have social group identities or memberships that are different from your own; the "other" or "those people"