

# Widening the Lens

The Far Brook School Diversity Conference

## Glossary of Terms Useful in Discussions of Anti-Racism

*Excerpts from: Racial Equity Tools.org*

### **ABAR**

Anti-bias, antiracist; ABAR educational pedagogy is teaching against bias and racism.

### **Anti Racism**

Anti-Racism is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach, and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.

### **BIPOC: Black Indigenous People of Color**

See People of Color. “Two letters, for Black and Indigenous, were included in the acronym to account for the erasure of Black people with darker skin and Native American people,” according to Cynthia Frisby, a professor of strategic communication at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, Its use is still evolving and contested by some activists. [View The New York Times article "Where Did BIPOC Come From"](#)

### **Cultural Appropriation**

Theft of cultural elements for one’s own use, commodification, or profit — including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. — often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture. Results from the assumption of a dominant (i.e. white) culture’s right to take other cultural elements.

### **Equity**

The assurance of conditions for optimal access and opportunity for all people, with particular focus on promoting policies, practices and cultural messages that eliminate differential negative outcomes for people from historically subordinated groups.

### **Cultural Racism**

Cultural racism refers to representations, messages and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with white people or “whiteness” are automatically “better” or more “normal” than those associated with other racially defined groups. Cultural racism shows up in advertising, movies, history books, definitions of patriotism, and in policies and laws. It helps justify laws and policies, such as racial profiling (an action by an authority based on the assumption that every person in a particular racial group is sufficiently likely to be a criminal that they can be stopped, searched and/or questioned). The fact of racial profiling thus creates the stereotype that people use to further justify the policy. Cultural racism is also a powerful force in maintaining systems of internalized supremacy and internalized racism. It does that by influencing collective beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behavior, what is seen as beautiful, and the value placed on various kinds of music,

art, poetry, speech and other forms of expression. All of these cultural norms and values in the U.S. have explicitly or implicitly racialized ideals and assumptions (for example, what “nude” means as a color, which facial features and body types are considered beautiful, which child-rearing practices are considered appropriate.)  
RacialEquity Tools.org

## **Implicit Bias**

Also known as unconscious bias is a concept based on an emerging body of cognitive and neural research. It identifies ways in which unconscious patterns people inevitably develop in their brains to organize information actually “affect individuals’ attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves.”

The research confirms what many have known or suspected – that years of exposure to structural and cultural racialization and privilege have embedded stereotypes and biases in our individual psyches and the broader culture. And because of the link among cultural stereotypes and narratives, and systemic policies, practices and behaviors, implicit bias is one part of the system of inequity that serves to justify inequitable policies, practices and behaviors – part of the complex cycle people are trying to disrupt.

## **Individual Racism**

The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways. Examples include telling a racist joke, believing in the inherent superiority of white people over other racial groups, or not hiring a person of color because “something doesn’t feel right.” The U.S. cultural narrative about racism typically focuses on individual racism and fails to recognize systemic racism.

## **Institutional Racism**

Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which policies and practices of organizations or parts of systems (schools, courts, transportation authorities, etc.) create different outcomes for different racial groups...The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create, maintain or fail to remedy accumulated advantages for white people and accumulated disadvantages for people from other racial groups.

## **Internalized Racism**

Internalized racism lies within individuals. This type of racism comprises our private beliefs and biases about race and racism, influenced by our culture. This can take many different forms including: prejudice towards others of a different race; internalized oppression—the negative beliefs about oneself by people of color; or internalized privilege—beliefs about superiority or entitlement by white people.

## **Intersectionality**

Exposing [one’s] multiple identities can help clarify the ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

Per Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Intersectionality is simply a prism to see the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism, many times, interacts with patriarchy, heterosexism, classism, xenophobia — seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities created by these systems actually create specific kinds of challenges. “Intersectionality 102,” then, is to say that these distinct problems create challenges for movements that are only organized around these problems as separate and individual. So when racial justice doesn’t have a critique of patriarchy and homophobia, the particular way that

racism is experienced and exacerbated by heterosexism, classism etc., falls outside of our political organizing. It means that significant numbers of people in our communities aren't being served by social justice frames because they don't address the particular ways that they're experiencing discrimination."

## Microaggressions

The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

## People of Color

Often the preferred collective term for referring to non-White racial groups. Racial justice advocates have been using the term "people of color" (not to be confused with the pejorative "colored people") since the late 1970s as an inclusive and unifying frame across different racial groups that are not White, to address racial inequities. While "people of color" can be a politically useful term, and describes people with their own attributes (as opposed to what they are not, e.g., "non-White"), it is also important whenever possible to identify people through their own racial/ethnic group, as each has its own distinct experience and meaning and may be more appropriate.

## Race

A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups.

For many people, it comes as a surprise that racial categorization schemes were invented by scientists to support worldviews that viewed some groups of people as superior and some as inferior. There are three important concepts linked to this fact:

- Race is a made-up social construct, and not an actual biological fact
- Race designations have changed over time. Some groups that are considered "white" in the United States today were considered "non-white" in previous eras, in U.S. Census data and in mass media and popular culture (for example, Irish, Italian and Jewish people).
- The way in which racial categorizations are enforced (the shape of racism) has also changed over time. For example, the racial designation of Asian American and Pacific Islander changed four times in the 19th century. That is, they were defined at times as white and at other times as not white. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, as designated groups, have been used by whites at different times in history to compete with African American labor.

## Racism

The most common understanding of racism in our country is limited to the "interpersonal" level of racism—the personal prejudice and intentional bias in our individual interactions across different races. A different and emerging explanation of racism contends that interpersonal racism is actually a symptom of a more fundamental system of racism—an array of cultural norms and institutional policies and practices that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes, often without individual intent or malice.

...Individual, cultural, institutional and systemic ways by which differential consequences are created for different racial groups. The group historically or currently defined as white is being advantaged, and groups historically or currently defined as non-white (African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, etc.) are being disadvantaged.

## Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by crime and conflict. It places decisions in the hands of those who have been most affected by a wrongdoing, and gives equal concern to the victim, the offender, and the surrounding community. Restorative responses are meant to repair harm, heal broken relationships, and address the underlying reasons for the offense. Restorative Justice emphasizes individual and collective accountability. Crime and conflict generate opportunities to build community and increase grassroots power when restorative practices are employed.

## Structural Racism

Structural Racism is racial bias among institutions and across society. This involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors, including the history, culture, ideology and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

The complex system by which racism is developed, maintained and protected is often referred to as structural racism. The term was developed in part to help people working towards racial equity emphasize the idea that racism in society is a system, with a clear structure, and with multiple components. Per the [Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change](#), a group doing important work to help others understand structural racism, *“the term structural racism refers to a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity....the structural racism lens allows us to see that, as a society, we more or less take for granted a context of white leadership, dominance, and privilege. This dominant consensus on race is the frame that shapes our attitudes and judgments about social issues. It has come about as a result of the way that historically accumulated white privilege, national values, and contemporary culture have interacted so as to preserve the gaps between white Americans and Americans of color.”* The term structural racialization has also become popular more recently (See [Dr. John A. Powell's](#) work). The idea of racialization is being used for two reasons. First, to avoid some of the negative response to the term “racism,” and second, to emphasize the processes by which institutions and systems create and maintain racism – not, at this point, the actions of individual people acting out of their own individual, conscious racism.

This section also includes resources on “systems thinking.” Systems thinking can also help people to understand why changes in multiple sectors are likely to be required to make genuinely sustainable progress towards racial equity in a particular sphere, such as education, health or economic security. It can thus help identify both entry points for change and links among those entry points.

The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage Whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of White domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics and entire social fabric. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in a particular institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually reproducing old and producing new forms of racism. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism – all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.

For example, we can see structural racism in the many institutional, cultural and structural factors that contribute to lower life expectancy for African American and Native American men, compared to white men. These include higher exposure to environmental toxins, dangerous jobs and unhealthy housing stock, higher exposure to and more lethal consequences for reacting to violence, stress and racism, lower rates of health care coverage, access and quality of care and systematic refusal by the nation to fix these things.

## Whiteness

The term white, referring to people, was created by Virginia slave owners and colonial rules in the 17th century. It replaced terms like Christian and Englishman to distinguish European colonists from Africans and indigenous peoples. European colonial powers established whiteness as a legal concept after Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, during which indentured servants of European and African descent had united against the colonial elite. The legal distinction of white separated the servant class on the basis of skin color and continental origin. The creation of 'whiteness' meant giving privileges to some, while denying them to others with the justification of biological and social inferiority.

Whiteness itself refers to the specific dimensions of racism that serve to elevate white people over people of color. This definition counters the dominant representation of racism in mainstream education as isolated in discrete behaviors that some individuals may or may not demonstrate, and goes beyond naming specific privileges (McIntosh, 1988). Whites are theorized as actively shaped, affected, defined, and elevated through their racialization and the individual and collective consciousness' formed within it (Whiteness is thus conceptualized as a constellation of processes and practices rather than as a discrete entity (i.e. skin color alone). Whiteness is dynamic, relational, and operating at all times and on myriad levels. These processes and practices include basic rights, values, beliefs, perspectives and experiences purported to be commonly shared by all but which are actually only consistently afforded to white people.

## White Fragility

Per author Robin DiAngelo, white fragility is "a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable [for white people], 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."

## White Privilege

Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. Generally white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.

- **Structural White Privilege**

A system of white domination that creates and maintains belief systems that make current racial advantages and disadvantages seem normal. The system includes powerful incentives for maintaining white privilege and its consequences, and powerful negative consequences for trying to interrupt white privilege or reduce its consequences in meaningful ways. The system includes internal and external manifestations at the individual, interpersonal, cultural and institutional levels.

The accumulated and interrelated advantages and disadvantages of white privilege that are reflected in racial/ethnic inequities in life-expectancy and other health outcomes, income and wealth and other outcomes, in part through different access to opportunities and resources. These differences are maintained in part by denying that these advantages and disadvantages exist at the structural, institutional, cultural, interpersonal and individual levels and by refusing to redress them or eliminate the systems, policies, practices, cultural norms and other behaviors and assumptions that maintain them.

- **Interpersonal White Privilege**

Behavior between people that consciously or unconsciously reflects white superiority or entitlement.

- **Cultural White Privilege**  
A set of dominant cultural assumptions about what is good, normal or appropriate that reflects Western European white world views and dismisses or demonizes other world views.
- **Institutional White Privilege**  
Policies, practices and behaviors of institutions -- such as schools, banks, non-profits or the Supreme Court -- that have the effect of maintaining or increasing accumulated advantages for those groups currently defined as white, and maintaining or increasing disadvantages for those racial or ethnic groups not defined as white. The ability of institutions to survive and thrive even when their policies, practices and behaviors maintain, expand or fail to redress accumulated disadvantages and/or inequitable outcomes for people of color.

## **White Supremacy**

The idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group while casting people and communities of color as worthless (worth less), immoral, bad, and inhuman and "undeserving." Drawing from critical race theory, the term "white supremacy" also refers to a political or socio-economic system where white people enjoy structural advantage and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and an individual level.

## **White Supremacy Culture**

White Supremacy Culture refers to the dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States. These standards may be seen as mainstream, dominant cultural practices; they have evolved from the United States' history of white supremacy. Because it is so normalized it can be hard to see, which only adds to its powerful hold. In many ways, it is indistinguishable from what we might call U.S. culture or norms – a focus on individuals over groups, for example, or an emphasis on the written word as a form of professional communication. But it operates in even more subtle ways, by actually defining what “normal” is – and likewise, what “professional,” “effective,” or even “good” is. In turn, white culture also defines what is not good, “at risk,” or “unsustainable.” White culture values some ways – ways that are more familiar and come more naturally to those from a white, western tradition – of thinking, behaving, deciding, and knowing, while devaluing or rendering invisible other ways. And it does this without ever having to explicitly say so...

White supremacy culture is an artificial, historically constructed culture which expresses, justifies and binds together the United States white supremacy system. It is the glue that binds together white-controlled institutions into systems and white-controlled systems into the global white supremacy system.