

TURNING INTENT INTO ACTION

Terms You Need to Know: Definitions to Help Frame the Conversation

Anti-racism

A political practice to address the myriad forms of racisms and the intersections with other forms of oppression. It addresses systemic and institutional elements of racism revealing subtle forms of racism entrenched in individual actions, practices, and values. Also offers both theoretical and practical responses to challenging questions about the nature of race, racism, and the intersections between power and difference, and challenges structures of knowledge production and interlocking systems of social oppression.

Arbitrary Status Hierarchies

Status differences that are not based on actual differences in competence or ability but are based on what somebody happens to be born as (their gender, their race/ethnicity, their disability status, and so on).

Assimilate

To take in (information, ideas or culture) and understand fully. In the context of this course, it is to blend in without diversity of unique traits.

Belonging

A sense of fitting in or feeling like you are an important member of a group.

BIPOC

Acronym which stands for Black, Indigenous and people of color.

Bystander Intervention

The act of stepping in and correcting in the moment when a person of lower status is interrupted, talked over, disregarded, or ignored; it can be an act of speaking up on behalf of another person or insisting that someone be allowed to finish their thought, make their point, to be heard within a meeting, and so on.

Class

Relative social status based on income, wealth, race, power, position, occupation and education.

Colorism

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

Color Blindness (or Race Blind)

Understanding that many institutional settings – politics, schools, neighborhoods and workplaces, are structured on the needs and experiences of dominant groups despite seeming inclusion of diverse racial groups.

Color Consciousness

Ways of talking, thinking and acting that affirm one's belief in individualism without recognizing the many remaining barriers to equality. The end result is that it removes racism, past or present, as explanatory factors for disparities.

Color Line

A legal and or extra-legal category that is used to extend or deny countless resources, rewards and benefits based one's Whiteness.

Disruptor

The forces that change or shake up our old ways of behaving, acting and doing business; they interrupt the status quo; they force us into new ways of behaving.

Diversity

The characteristics that describe differences among people; they include demographic characteristics, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, national origin, religion, disability status and sexual orientation, and deeper level characteristics, such as people's personalities, their values, the things that they're passionate about, their personal interests.

Diversity Value Proposition

The idea that when you've got diverse members in a group, that diversity brings with it a collective of perspectives, experiences, beliefs and values. Dominant culture refers to the established language, religion, values, rituals and social customs on which society was built. It has the most power and is widespread and influential within a social entity such as an organization, in which multiple cultures are present. An organization's dominant culture is heavily influenced by the leadership, management standards, and preferences of those at the top of the hierarchy. Dominant culture refers specifically to the American context in which organizational culture is predominantly defined by white men and white women in positional power.

Egalitarian

Relating to or believing in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities.

External Motivator

Factors that influence behavior; people are influenced to behave a certain way not because of their own belief systems, but because they feel obligated to do so or they want to avoid embarrassment, punishment or other negative consequences.

Implicit Bias

Describes when we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge.

Incivility

Rude or unsociable speech or behavior.

Inclusion

Involves bringing together and harnessing diversity and resources in a way that is beneficial. Inclusion puts the concept and practice of diversity into action by creating an environment of involvement, respect and connection — where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed to create business value.

Internalized Racism

The set of private beliefs, prejudices and ideas about the superiority of whites and the inferiority of people of color. Among people of color, it manifests as internalized oppression. Among whites, it manifests as internalized racial superiority.

Interpersonal Racism

The expression of racism between individuals. It occurs when individuals interact, and their private beliefs affect their interactions.

Institutional Racism

Discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, inequitable opportunities and impacts within organizations and institutions, all based on race, that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people. Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they reinforce racial inequities.

Intersectionality

An analysis of the connections between systems of oppression (e.g., racism and classism, racism and sexism) and how individuals experience those intersecting or compounding systems of oppression. It's not a theory of diversity or multi-dimensional identity.

Micro-aggressions

Commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults. Small, subtle acts that show dominance; specifically, when

members of a higher status group behave in small ways, perhaps obliviously, such that they effectively exert or reinforce dominance over a members of a lower status group; these have negative consequences in the workplace.

Micro-insult

An unconscious insult demeaning a marginalized person's background, make-up, heritage.

Microinvalidation

Communications that exclude, negate or nullify a marginalized person's thoughts, feelings or experiential reality.

Micro-assault

Verbal attacks, name calling, avoidant behavior or purposeful discriminatory actions

Micro-affirmations

Small, brief acts that affirm other people's competence and value; in the workplace, they serve to acknowledge those who don't enjoy the same privilege as all of their counterparts; examples include nodding your head in response to what someone is saying, backing someone up publicly when they offer an opinion or suggestion, or giving someone your complete attention while they are speaking.

Organizational Climate

Refers to the shared meaning that employees attach to the events, policies, practices, and procedures that they experience and what that communicates to them about the behaviors that they see as being rewarded, valued, supported and expected within their organization.

Organizational Inclusion

Inclusion is a call to action within the workforce that means actively involving every employee's ideas, knowledge, perspectives, approaches and styles to maximize organization success.

Perpetuate

Make (something, typically an undesirable situation or an unfounded belief) continue indefinitely.

Prejudice

Preconceived opinion; bias, either unconscious or conscious, allowed to influence decision making.

Privilege

An invisible package of unearned assets which one can count on cashing in each and every day, but about which one is largely oblivious.

Racial Justice

The systemic, fair treatment of people of all races resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. All people are able to achieve their full potential in life,

regardless of race, ethnicity, or the community in which they live. A racial justice framework can move us from a reactive posture to a more powerful, proactive and even preventative approach.

Racial Oppression

Race-based disadvantages, discrimination and exploitation based on skin color.

Racial Privilege

Race-based advantages and preferential treatment based on skin color (often experienced without any conscious effort or awareness).

Racism

A system of oppression based on the socially constructed concept of race exercised by the dominant racial group (whites) over non-dominant racial groups (Black, Indigenous and other people of color); a system of oppression created to justify social, political and economic hierarchy. The hierarchy was initially constructed with white people at the top and Black and Indigenous people at the bottom, with other people of color groups slotted in between. Racism can be understood as what happens at the intersection of race, prejudice and power.

Role Congruence

The types of characteristics assumed to be necessary for a job overlap with the attributes often associated with a demographic group.

Role Incongruence

The types of characteristics that are assumed to be necessary assumed to be necessary for a job are at odds with the attributes often associated with a particular demographic group; the attributes assumed to be necessary to be a leader, in particular, don't overlap with the attributes that are often associated with women and members of other minority groups.

Social Equity

Social equity is a concept that applies concerns of justice and fairness to social policy. (Definition can vary but all focus on the ideals of justice and fairness.)

Stereotype

A standardized mental picture that is held in common about members of a group that represents an oversimplified opinion, attitude, or unexamined judgment, without regard to individual difference.

Stretch Assignments

Assigned tasks and duties within the workplace that are meant for an employee's growth and development; they are beyond the employee's current level of performance; they are considered critical for accelerating advancement within an organization.

Structural Racism

A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequality. It is racial bias among institutions and across society. It involves the cumulative and compounding effects of societal factors including the history, culture, ideology and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

Systemic Equity

A complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice. It is a robust system and dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits and outcomes.

Systemic Racism

A form of racism that is embedded as normal practice within society or an organization. It can lead to such issues as discrimination in criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, political power and education, among other issues.

Unconscious Bias/Implicit Association

The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. They are activated involuntarily, without conscious awareness or intentional control. They can be either positive or negative. Everyone is susceptible.

Whiteness

Refers to the way that the customs, culture, beliefs and legal system operate to make white people the standard by which all other groups of are compared.

White Fragility

Discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice.

White Privilege

Inherent advantages possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice.

White Supremacy

Refers to a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources. Conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are therefore widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.

*These definitions are adapted from the Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation's Virtual Voices series. For more resources for future learning, visit the Virtual Voices site [**here**](#).