



District 7820 Systemic Racism Task Force Anti-Racism Discussion Vocabulary

Words matter. To be part of meaningful change – it is important to expand one’s understanding of the fundamental meaning of key concepts and language used to define a complex situation.

In the case of racism and in light of recent events associated with the multiple deaths of people of colour in the US and Canada, as a Rotarian, familiarizing yourself with key terminology is a positive step forward to being part of the meaningful change. Below is a quick reference list of some words that you may have come across in conversations, media stories and articles about racism. These are not meant to be an exhaustive list nor meant to suggest expertise in fully defining the complexity associated with racism but to act as a starting point.

The definitions of these words and concepts were compiled using a number of sources, including the [Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission](#), the [Department of African Nova Scotian Affairs](#), the [Canadian Human Rights Commission](#), and the most recent report from the Canadian Museum of Human Rights – [Rebuilding the Foundation](#).

- **BIPOC:** An acronym for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour.
- **WOC:** An acronym for Women of Colour.
- **Indigenous:** People and/or things that live or come from a particular region or environment.
 - For example, Indigenous people, Indigenous languages, Indigenous culture, Indigenous plants.
- **Social Justice:** Equal/equitable access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.
- **Microaggression(s):** A comment or action that subtly and perhaps unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group.
- **Prejudice:** An unfair (and potentially) harmful feeling, thought, dislike, or judgement against someone or something based on the group to which they belong.
- **Marginalized:** Someone put in a powerless position.
- **Discrimination:** The action or practice of treating other people unfairly.
- **Conscious/Explicit Bias:** A belief that some people, ideas, etc., are better and treating others unfairly as a result.
- **Unconscious/Implicit Bias:** Attitudes toward people or stereotypes associated with them without our conscious knowledge, arising from our lived experience.
- **White Privilege** – A set of advantages and/or immunities from which white people benefit on a daily basis beyond those common to all others.



District 7820 Systemic Racism Task Force Anti-Racism Discussion Vocabulary

- **White Fragility** - A phrase coined by author Dr. Robin DiAngelo as “a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves.”
- **BLM** - Black Lives Matter is a decentralized political and social movement advocating for non-violent civil disobedience in protest against incidents of police brutality and all racially motivated violence against black people.

Racism is a complex issue with many dimensions, contexts, implications and impacts. Meaningful change is built solidly on the shoulders of acknowledgement and awareness. We are all responsible for that change. To help deepen understanding and awareness, below is a reference to a number of key underlying concepts informing our thinking about race and racism and the importance of activating meaningful change.

Racism

Racism differs from individual racial prejudice (thoughts and feelings) and from racial discrimination (actions, however slight, including microaggressions) in the historical accumulation and use of **institutional power** and authority to support the prejudice and to enforce **systematically** discriminatory behaviours with far-reaching effects.

Systemic Racism

The term “systemic racism” represents the structures of power and oppression built over centuries in Canada (and elsewhere) that enforce the racial hierarchies that confer benefits on certain people at the expense of others. Systemic racism provides a scaffolding that can operate to the disadvantage of and cause harm to BIPOC individuals even without the conscious intent to do so.

Anti-Indigenous Racism and Anti-Black Racism

In Canada, anti-Indigenous racism and anti-Black racism refer to racism that has arisen in the context of the colonization and settlement of Turtle Island; their manifestations are inextricably intertwined with Canada’s history and continue to the present day. Both forms of oppression have provided and continue to provide an economic foundation based on unpaid and underpaid labour. In the case of anti-Indigenous racism, the economic foundation includes the use of land and resources. In order to fully understand the impact of anti-Indigenous racism and anti-Black racism, one must understand their historical importance to the founding of Canada.



District 7820 Systemic Racism Task Force Anti-Racism Discussion Vocabulary

Non-Racist

The term “non-racist” is used by some people who perceive themselves as operating outside of the existing system of racism. They assert that they have no prejudices and thus are incapable of discrimination. This is a false presumption of neutrality. One example of this false presumption of non-racism is “colourblindness”, often expressed as “not seeing colour”. Inherent in a claim of “colourblindness” is an unawareness of any personal role or benefit conferred by race.

Anti-Racism

Anti-racism is the active process of choosing to challenge not only one’s own biases and prejudices, but to engage in the work of actively dismantling racism as a system of oppression.

The term “non-racist” masks racism. Anti-racism represents active engagement in the work of “unmaking” our own prejudices and working to end racism as a structure of oppression.

Everyday Racism

Everyday racism involves elements such as tone, demeanour, language, a gaze, forms of surveillance, hostility and differential treatment. It includes taken-for-granted ways of seeing, thinking and acting that have become so standardized that they are usually not recognized as manifestations of racism.

Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

Diversity, inclusion and equity are related terms, but are not interchangeable.

- **Diversity** is a legal requirement under the federal *Employment Equity Act*, which is intended to protect against the exclusion of four designated groups in the workplace – women, “Aboriginal” persons (this term is the language of the *Act* and is better expressed as Indigenous), persons with a disability, and visible minorities.
- **Inclusion** refers to equal participation and treatment within institutions and, more broadly, within society. In this way inclusion involves more than mere physical presence or representation of members of marginalized groups. An institution which is representationally diverse but not diverse in its practices is not a truly inclusive workplace.
- **Equity** occurs where the “other” is not merely incorporated into existing workplace structures, cultures and practices, but where the “other” also is imbued with *the power to affect* the structure, culture and practices of the organization. The term “equality” refers to formal equality but does not necessarily translate from fairness in



District 7820 Systemic Racism Task Force Anti-Racism Discussion Vocabulary

principle into fairness in actuality. In contrast, “equity” refers to equality in fact and substance, where the effects of oppression have been ameliorated.¹

End Note:

This reference was not designed to be a comprehensive resource or expert source of key words related to race and racism, but a starting point to help spark discussion, dialogue, build awareness and activate action towards meaningful change.