



Racial Equity Working Definitions

While there are many definitions for these concepts, we are offering these as working definitions of key racial equity terms to help us put a racial equity lens on housing and homelessness.

Racial equity

Racial equity means “closing the gaps” so that race does not predict one’s success, while also improving outcomes for all. Equity is distinct from equality in that it aspires to achieve fair outcomes and considers history and implicit bias, rather than simply providing “equal opportunity” for everyone. Racial equity is not just the absence of overt racial discrimination; it is also the presence of deliberate policies and practices that provide everyone with the support they need to improve the quality of their lives.

Source: Maguire, 2016

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.

Source: Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.

Racism operates on four levels:

1. **Internalized racism:** the set of private beliefs, prejudices, and ideas that individuals have about the superiority of whites and the inferiority of people of color. Among people of color, it manifests as internalized oppression. Among white, it manifests as internalized racial superiority.
2. **Interpersonal racism:** the expression of racism between individuals
3. **Institutional racism:** the discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, inequitable opportunities and impacts within organizations and institutions, based on race.
4. **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.

(Source: Applied Research Center)

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 inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist.

Source: <https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf>

Institutional racism

Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as non-white.

Examples:

- Government policies that explicitly restricted the ability of people to get loans to buy or improve their homes in neighborhoods with high concentrations of African Americans (also known as "red-lining").
- City sanitation department policies that concentrate trash transfer stations and other environmental hazards disproportionately in communities of color.

Source: <http://www.racialequityresourceguide.org/about/glossary>

Interpersonal racism

The beliefs, attitudes and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can occur at both a conscious and unconscious level and can be both active and passive. Examples include telling a racist joke, using a racial epithet or believing in the inherent superiority of whites.

Source: Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell and Pat Griffin, editors. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.

Implicit bias

Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals' attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals' stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess.

Source: *Interaction Institute for Social Change*

Diversity

Diversity has come to refer to the various backgrounds and races that comprise a community, nation or other grouping. In many cases the term diversity does not just acknowledge the existence of diversity of background, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and so on, but implies an appreciation of these differences. The structural racism perspective can be distinguished from a diversity perspective in that structural racism takes direct account of the striking disparities in well-being and opportunity areas that come along with being a member of a particular group and works to identify ways in which these disparities can be eliminated.

Source: <https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf>

Inclusion

A value and practice of ensuring that people feel they belong and that their input is valued by the whole (group, organization, society, system, etc.), particularly regarding decisions that affect their lives.

Source: Interaction Institute for Social Change, adapted from Equity and Inclusion Campaign

White privilege

White privilege, or “historically accumulated white privilege,” as we have come to call it, refers to whites’ historical and contemporary advantages in access to quality education, decent jobs and liveable wages, homeownership, retirement benefits, wealth and so on. The following quotation from a publication by Peggy Macintosh can be helpful in understanding what is meant by white privilege: “As a white person I had been taught about racism that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage. . . . White privilege is an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in every day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious.”

Source: Peggy Macintosh, “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” excerpted from Working Paper #189 White Privilege and Male Privilege a Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women’s Studies. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Center for the Study of Women (1989).

White fragility

White Fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, 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.

Source: White Fragility, by Robin DiAngelo

Targeted universalism

Targeted Universalism means setting universal goals that can be achieved through targeted approaches. This approach targets the varying needs of each group while reminding us that we are all part of the same social fabric. Targeted Universalism rejects a blanket universal, which may

be indifferent to the reality that different groups are situated differently relative to the institution's and resources of society by aspiring toward shared universal goals. Targeted Universalism empowers targeted strategies capable of achieving those goals while moving us beyond concerns over disparities alone and toward our highest aspirations for all.

Source: Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society