

Racial Justice and Equity Statement of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

Glossary of Terms

Definitions and examples were taken from the Glossary of Terms for Racial Equity Tools and the full glossary can be found at the following URL: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Accountability: In the context of racial equity work, accountability refers to the ways in which individuals and communities hold themselves to their goals and actions, and acknowledge the values and groups to which they are responsible.

To be accountable, one must be visible, with a transparent agenda and process. Invisibility defies examination; it is, in fact, employed in order to avoid detection and examination. Accountability demands commitment. It might be defined as “what kicks in when convenience runs out.”

Accountability requires some sense of urgency and becoming a true stakeholder in the outcome.

Accountability can be externally imposed (legal or organizational requirements), or internally applied (moral, relational, faith-based, or recognized as some combination of the two) on a continuum from the institutional and organizational level to the individual level. From a relational point of view, accountability is not always doing it right. Sometimes it’s really about what happens after it’s done wrong.

SOURCE: Accountability and White Anti-Racist Organizing: Stories from Our Work, Bonnie Berman Cushing with Lila Cabbil, Margery Freeman, Jeff Hitchcock, and Kimberly Richards (2010). See also RacialEquityTools.org, “PLAN / Change Process / Accountability”

Anti-Racist: An anti-racist is someone who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing antiracist ideas. This includes the expression of ideas that racial groups are equals and do not need developing, and supporting policies that reduce racial inequity.

SOURCE: Ibram X. Kendi, How To Be An Antiracist, Random House, 2019.

Culture: A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors and styles of communication.

SOURCE: Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative, A Community Builder's Tool Kit, Appendix I (2000).

Discrimination: 1. The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories. 2. [In the United States] the law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers

reasonably accommodate applicants' and employees' sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.

SOURCES: 1. Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative, A Community Builder's Tool Kit, Appendix I (2000). 2. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "Laws Enforced by EEOC" (accessed 28 June 2013).

Ethnicity: A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base. Examples of different ethnic groups are: Cape Verdean, Haitian, African American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Irish, and Swedish (White).

SOURCE: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook, edited by Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, Routledge, 1997.

Race: 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:

1. Race is a made-up social construct, and not an actual biological fact.
2. 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).
3. 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.

SOURCES: 1–2. PBS, "Race: The Power of an Illusion" (2018–2019 relaunch of 2003 series); 3. Paul Kivel, Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice (Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 2002), page 141.

Racism: race prejudice + social and institutional power; a system of advantage based on race'; a system of oppression based on race; and a white supremacy system. Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

SOURCE: "What Is Racism?" – Dismantling Racism Works (dRworks) web workbook.