



## INTRODUCTION

Having difficult conversations first requires us to have a shared understanding of the terms being used. The Office of Race, Equity, & Inclusion (OREI) has developed this glossary as a tool for us on our collective journey towards race equity and social justice. This is not your normal glossary, as many definitions are the truths of marginalized individuals. Many entries have citations which we encourage you to link to in order to enhance your understanding.

**Disclaimer:** This is not an exhaustive list and language is constantly evolving. No term is one size fits all. Use this as a guide but avoid generalizing and creating presumptions. Self-identity is extremely personal and more than just a preference. So be respectful, be inclusive, and ask for preferences.

If you have questions, suggestions, or feedback, contact us at [OREILetterbox@mass.gov](mailto:OREILetterbox@mass.gov).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Office Of Race, Equity, & Inclusion

*Joy Connell, Director*

*Fritz Gustave, Program Manager*

*Dianelys Nunez, Program Coordinator*

*Angel Estrada, OREI Intern*

### Central Office

*Jay Tallman, Director of Policy*

*Daniela Trammell, Director of Community Engagement*

### Southeast Mass

*Elena Robinson, Clinical Service Authorization Specialist*

### Metro Boston

*Gina Dessources, Assistant Shelter Director - Fenwood Inn*

### Western Mass

*Jackson Cash, Compliance Officer*

*Earl Miller, Director of Recovery*

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## A-

### ❖ **Ableism:**

Discrimination and prejudice of those with different physical, mental, and/or emotional abilities; based on the belief that able-bodied people are superior or “better”. [\[1\]](#)

### ❖ **Accessibility:**

A proactive solution to providing equal access for all, pursuing accessibility means starting the design process with accessibility in mind. [\[2\]](#)

### ❖ **Accommodation:**

An arrangement between two or groups to ensure individual(s) ability to participate fully with equal access. [\[3\]](#)

### ❖ **Acculturation:**

A process of cultural contact and exchange through which a person or group comes to adopt certain values and practices of a culture that is not originally their own, to a greater or lesser extent. The result is that the original culture of the person or group remains, but it is changed by this process. [\[4\]](#)

### ❖ **African American:**

Only refers to members of the African Diaspora with origins in the United States of America. [\[5\]](#)

### ❖ **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):**

A civil rights law that protects individuals with disabilities in all aspects of public life from discrimination; guarantees equal opportunity for those with disabilities in employment, transportation, education, government services, and public accommodations. [\[6\]](#)

### ❖ **Affirmative Action:**

Any program and/or policy that seeks to address removing systemic barriers without disadvantaging any group; helps advance those who have historically been disadvantaged.

❖ **Ageism:**

Discrimination and prejudice of someone based on their age; draws on society's stereotypes regarding what a person of a given age can be or do. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 protects certain applicants and employee 40+ years old from employment discrimination. [\[7\]](#)

❖ **Allyship:**

The practice of advocating for the social justice, inclusion, and human rights of a marginalized group by an individual outside of that group. [\[8\]](#)

❖ **Anti-Racist:**

Any things that actively identify, oppose, and work to dismantle racism. [\[9\]](#)

❖ **Asian:**

A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. [\[5\]](#)

➤ **Central Asian:**

A person having origins in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, or Kyrgyzstan. [\[10\]](#)

➤ **East Asian:**

A person having origins in China, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Macau. [\[10\]](#)

➤ **South Asian:**

A person having origins in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Iran, or the Maldives. [\[10\]](#)

➤ **Southeast Asian:**

A person having origins in Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, or Vietnam. [\[10\]](#)

➤ **West Asian:**

A person having origins in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, or the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt. [\[10\]](#)

❖ **Assimilation:**

A process where an individual or group adjusts themselves socially, politically, and culturally to conform to what is desired by another social group.

❖ **American Sign Language (ASL):**

A visual language that is processed through the eyes by interpreting the shape, placement, and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and body movements with the same linguistic properties as English. Primarily used by individuals in the U.S. who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. [\[11\]](#)

❖ **Audism:**

Discrimination, prejudice, and/or fear of individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. [\[12\]](#)

❖ **Authentic Self:**

The ability to engage with and express all aspects of one's identity without fear of or barriers to doing so.

**B-**

❖ **Black:**

Refers to any person having origins from the African Diaspora. [\[5\]](#)

❖ **Black, Indigenous, & People of Color (BIPOC):**

A term that centers the voices and experiences of Black and Indigenous groups, and demonstrates solidarity between communities of color as compared to the term [POC](#). [\[13\]](#)

❖ **Black Lives Matter:**

A decentralized political and social movement advocating for the protection of marginalized groups' civil and human rights, primarily the protection of Black people from police brutality.

❖ **Blind:**

The state of being unable to see due to injury, disease or genetic condition. In the U.S. individuals that cannot be corrected to better than 20/200 in the best eye, or who has 20 degrees (diameter) or less of visual field remaining, is considered legally blind. [\[14\]](#)

❖ **Bias:**

Preferences that influence our judgment, creating a prejudiced and stereotyped view that favors one thing over another. [\[15\]](#)

➤ **Explicit or Conscious Bias:**

The conscious prejudiced and discriminatory bias towards oppressed groups.

➤ **Implicit or Unconscious Bias:**

The unconscious prejudiced and discriminatory bias towards oppressed groups.

❖ **Bigotry:**

Intolerant prejudice that glorifies one's own group and denigrates members of other groups. [\[16\]](#)

❖ **Biphobia**

Discrimination, prejudice, and/or fear of people who identify as being bisexual.

❖ **Braille:**

A system of raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people who are blind or who have low vision. [\[17\]](#)

## C-

### ❖ **Caucasian:**

An outdated term with white supremacist roots used in the U.S. to refer to persons with white European ancestry, whereas globally it typically refers to persons from the Caucasus region (i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and parts of Southern Russia). Please refer to the preferred term [white](#). [18]

### ❖ **Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI):**

A specialist who provides interpreting, translation, and transliteration services, utilizing American Sign Language and other visual and tactual communication forms used by individuals who are Deaf, Hard or Hearing, and Deaf-Blind. [19]

### ❖ **Cissexism:**

The belief or assumption that cis people's gender identities, expressions, and embodiments are more natural and legitimate than those of trans people. [20]

### ❖ **Civil Rights:**

The guaranteed and protected rights of citizens to political & social freedom and equality. [21]

### ❖ **Civil Rights Act:**

The nation's benchmark civil rights and labor law passed in 1964 that prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity. [22]

### ❖ **Classism:**

Discrimination and prejudice against people belonging to lower socioeconomic classes; the systems, policies, and practices that benefit the higher classes often at the expense of the lower classes. [23]

### ❖ **Child Of Deaf Adults (CODA):**

A person who was raised by one or more Deaf parents or guardians; a majority of which are not Deaf themselves. [24]

❖ **Code-Switching:**

The act of alternating between different ways people communicate, present, and/or behave in order to be socially accepted. [\[25\]](#)

❖ **Colonization:**

The historical and current political, social, and economic exploitation by one group who unjustly takes control over a territory or another group.

❖ **Color Blindness:**

The ideology that racial group membership should not be taken into account or noticed as a strategy for addressing or denying the continued impacts of racism, which leads to the continued perpetuation of racial disparities. [\[26\]](#)

❖ **Colorism:**

Discrimination and prejudice against people with darker skin tones; the preference of lighter skin over darker skin. [\[27\]](#)

❖ **Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART):**

Service that enables communication access for deaf and hard of hearing persons who are competent in English, both written and oral, and who either (a) are not able to use ASL interpreters, sign language transliterators and/or oral interpreters in general or (b) do not choose to do so in the particular situation. [\[28\]](#)

❖ **Conversion Therapy / Reparative Therapy:**

The dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity to fit what is socially acceptable. [\[29\]](#)

❖ **Criminalization:**

The act of making a behavior, appearance, or activity illegal; disproportionately affects BIPOC and/or those in poverty.

❖ **Critical Race Theory (CRT):**

An academic framework that examines the impact of systemic racism on U.S. society through broad perspectives including economics, history, principles of constitutional law, and the unconscious. [\[30\]](#)

❖ **Culture:**

A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors, and styles of communication. [\[31\]](#)

❖ **Cultural Appropriation:**

The act of members of oppressive groups claiming ownership of, or the rights to, oppressed groups' cultural and/or religious symbols, dress, and ceremonies. [\[32\]](#)

❖ **Cultural Competence:**

The ability to effectively and empathetically work with, engage with, understand, and appreciate people of different cultural identities and backgrounds than one's own in order to provide safe and accountable spaces for dialogue and discourse. [\[31\]](#)

❖ **Cultural Humility:**

A lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby an individual not only learns about another's culture but also starts with an examination of their own beliefs and cultural identities. [\[31\]](#)

❖ **Cultural Sensitivity:**

Awareness of cultural differences and similarities: [\[33\]](#)

1. without the assumption of positivity or negativity,
2. with understanding that these can affect one's values, learning, and behavior
3. with the ability to understand and learn about people whose cultural background is not the same as your own.

**D-**

❖ **Deadnaming:**

Referring to a transgender individual by their birth/given name, intentionally or unintentionally, rather than their chosen name; a form of transphobia or cissexism that contributes to mental health challenges such as depression and suicidality, as well as putting an individual at risk for physical and verbal abuse. [\[34\]](#)

❖ **Deaf:**

A person who has little to no hearing, regardless whether the person was born as such or not. [\[35\]](#)

❖ **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA):**

A program that provides relief from deportation and work authorization for immigrants brought to America as children but does not provide a pathway to U.S. citizenship or legal permanent residency. Those protected under DACA are known as “Dreamers”. [\[36\]](#)

❖ **Diaspora:**

A scattered population whose origin lies in a separate geographic locale; refers to the voluntary or forcible mass dispersion of a population from its indigenous territories/homelands. [\[37\]](#)

❖ **Disability:**

A physical or mental condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities of a person; a record of having such impairment; or being regarded as having such impairment. [\[38\]](#)

❖ **Discrimination:**

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, culture, or sexual orientation. [\[39\]](#)

❖ **Disenfranchisement:**

Being deprived of power and/or access to rights, opportunities, and services, especially the right to vote. [\[40\]](#)

❖ **Disparity:**

Significant and measurable differences between communities or people; usually as a result of the systematic oppression of marginalized groups.

❖ **Diversity:**

A wide range of different experiences, values, beliefs, and characteristics among people, allowing for richer and broader exploration. These experiences include but are not limited to origin, language, race, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion,

sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures. [\[41\]](#)

❖ **Double Consciousness:**

The inward conflict experienced within oneself – particularly members of the Black community – due to the self-perception of being normal clashing with external perceptions and actions proving otherwise (i.e. I am the same but somehow seen differently).

**E-**

❖ **Elitism:**

The belief that a select group of individuals with a certain ancestry, intrinsic quality, high intellect, wealth, special skill, or experience are more likely to be constructive to society, and therefore deserve influence or authority greater than that of others. [\[31\]](#)

❖ **Equality:**

An aspirational state in which all people have equal rights, opportunities, and access resources; reached by distributing these out evenly but unfair because it does not address the historical inequalities that have created disparities between groups.

❖ **Equity:**

A feasible state in which all people have equal civil rights, opportunities, and access to resources; reached by valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the elimination of disparities. [\[42\]](#)

❖ **Ethnicity:**

The socially constructed classification of groups of people based primarily on shared culture, history, language, and geographical base. Similar to race in that it has no scientific base, but primarily differs with its lessened focus on physical characteristics.

❖ **Ethnocentrism:**

The centering of one's own culture and/or ethnicity, creating a lack of understanding of different cultures and a sense of superiority that ultimately leads to forms of discrimination. [\[43\]](#)

❖ **Exclusion:**

The process of depriving an individual of resources, rights, and the ability to participate in "normal" activities available to the majority of people; may not be deliberate; embedded in work culture as well as in socialization.

**F-**

❖ **Fatphobia:**

Refers to individual bigoted beliefs, both implicit and explicit, as well as institutional policies designed to marginalize fat people. [\[44\]](#)

❖ **Feminism:**

A decentralized political and social movement, founded on the promotion of women's civil and human rights. [\[45\]](#)

❖ **First Generation:**

The first of a generation to become a citizen in a new country, or the first of a generation to be born in a country of parents who had immigrated.

❖ **Foreign Language:**

The spoken, written, oral or signed language that is different from one's native language(s); language that is not widely used by the people of a specific society. [\[46\]](#)

**G-**

❖ **Gaslighting:**

A process that perpetuates and normalizes an oppressor's reality through pathologizing those who resist by minimizing experiences, alters other's perceptions, and instills self-doubt; worsened with authority.

❖ **Gatekeeping:**

The hierarchical structure of formal organizations places certain individuals or groups in crucial positions from which they can control access to goods, services, or information. [\[47\]](#)

❖ **Gender:**

The socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and characteristics that a given society categorizes as “masculine” and “feminine”; not defined by one’s biological sex.

❖ **Gender Affirmation:**

The process by which individuals are affirmed in their gender identity through social interactions, behaviors, or interventions. [\[48\]](#)

❖ **Gender Binary:**

The disproven concept that there are only two (binary) genders, male and female, and that everyone must be one or the other; often misused to assert that gender is biologically determined. [\[49\]](#)

❖ **Gender Dysphoria:**

An intense feeling of discomfort or unease someone experiences when their sex assigned at birth misaligns with their gender identity.

❖ **Gender Expression:**

The manner in which a person expresses gender through clothing, appearance, behavior, speech, etc.; may vary from the norms traditionally associated with the person’s sex assigned at birth; a separate concept from Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, and may look different throughout time and in different cultures.

➤ **Femme:**

An individual who expresses and/or identifies with femininity of any gender or sex. [\[50\]](#)

➤ **Masc:**

An individual who expresses and/or identifies with masculinity of any gender or sex. [\[50\]](#)

## ❖ Gender Identity:

An individual's internal view of their own gender; one's innermost sense of being male, female, both, or neither; may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

### ➤ Non-Binary:

Individuals who do not identify their gender identity and/or expression as a man or a woman; instead might identify as both, in between, or completely outside of the spectrum man and woman. Examples of non-binary identities may include, but are not limited to:

#### ■ Genderqueer:

Individuals who blur preconceived boundaries of gender in relation to the gender binary. Please refer to [Gender Binary](#). [49]

#### ■ Gender Fluid:

Individuals whose gender identity is not fixed and may move among genders. [49]

#### ■ Agender:

Individuals that do not identify with having any specific gender.

### ➤ Transgender:

Individuals whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their assigned sex at birth; may or may not choose to alter their bodies through the use of hormones and/or gender affirmation surgery.

### ➤ Cisgender:

Individuals whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.

### ➤ Questioning (Gender):

Individuals who are in a process of discovery and exploration about their gender identity, gender expression, or both. [49]

## ❖ Gender Neutral/Inclusive:

Spaces, language, and things that are subtle or acceptable to any individual or group regardless of gender identity and expression by not specifying gender.

❖ **Gender Non-Conforming:**

A person who does not follow culturally dominant ideas/or stereotypes about how the person should look or act based on the male or female sex they were assigned at birth.

❖ **Gender Pronouns:**

The pronouns that a person chooses to use for themselves and that are used to refer to people in sentences and conversation. Pronouns may include, but are not limited to, any combination of the following:

<b>Tense</b>	Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive
<b>Pronoun</b>	<i>She</i>	<i>Her</i>	<i>Hers</i>	<i>Herself</i>
	<i>He</i>	<i>Him</i>	<i>His</i>	<i>Himself</i>
	<i>They</i>	<i>Them</i>	<i>Thiers</i>	<i>Themselves</i>
	<i>Ze</i>	<i>Zir</i>	<i>Zirs</i>	<i>Zirself</i>

❖ **Gentrification:**

Demographic shifts — usually occur in urban areas — in which upper-middle-class and/or racially privileged individuals and businesses move into historically working-class, poor, and/or racially oppressed communities, which leads to the displacement of these area’s original occupants. [\[51\]](#)

**H-**

❖ **Hard of Hearing (HoH):**

A person who does not hear well but does hear better than those who are Deaf, regardless if they were born as such or not.

❖ **Hate Crime:**

A crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of the victim. [\[52\]](#)

### ❖ **Hate Speech:**

Any form of communication in speech, writing or behavior, through which speakers intend to vilify, humiliate, or incite hatred against an individual or group of people on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual identity, gender identity, age, disability, or national origin via discriminatory language. [\[52\]](#)

### ❖ **Health Literacy:**

An emphasis on people's ability to use health information rather than just understand it so they can make "well-informed" decisions rather than "appropriate" ones; acknowledgement that organizations have a responsibility to address health literacy by incorporating a public health perspective. [\[53\]](#)

#### ➤ **Personal Health Literacy:**

The degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

#### ➤ **Organizational Health Literacy:**

The degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

### ❖ **Heteronormativity:**

A socially constructed assumption that heterosexuality is the natural norm from which all other sexual preferences deviate; the assumption that everyone identifies as heterosexual until shown or proven otherwise. [\[54\]](#)

### ❖ **Hispanic:**

Having origin and/or descent from Spanish speaking regions such as Mexico, parts of the Caribbean, Latin America, and other Spanish-speaking countries, regardless of race. [\[55\]](#)

#### ➤ **Non-Hispanic White:**

A descendant of a non-Spanish speaking region of Europe.

➤ **White Hispanic:**

A descendant of a Spanish speaking region within Europe.

❖ **Homophobia:**

Discrimination, prejudice, and/or fear of people who identify as being gay or queer.

❖ **Human Rights (basic definition and DMH definition)**

1. Rights inherent to all human beings without discrimination, regardless of membership to any social group. These include but are not limited to the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education. [\[56\]](#)
2. Specific to DMH, these are values and fundamental principles intended to support and promote the worth, full respect and dignity of each individual. In addition to constitutional and statutory rights, Human Rights include the standards and rights set forth in DMH regulations. The DMH Human Rights include: [\[57\]](#)
  - Mail
  - Telephone
  - General Visitors
  - Fresh Air
  - Visits or Phone Calls with Attorney, Legal Advocate, Physician, Social Worker, Psychologist or Clergy
  - Humane Psychological and Physical Environment

I-

❖ **Imposter Syndrome:**

Occurs when one's internal sense of self doesn't match with others' perception of their identity and gives rise to feelings of self-doubt; usually experienced by individuals who are a part of marginalized groups. [\[58\]](#)

❖ **Inclusion:**

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policymaking in a way that shares power.

### ❖ **Indigenous People:**

Ethnic groups who are the original inhabitants of a given region, in contrast to groups that have settled, occupied, or colonized the area more recently. In the United States, this can refer to groups traditionally termed Native Americans (American Indians), Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. [\[31\]](#)

### ❖ **Integration:**

A process where an individual or group combines their own social, political, and cultural beliefs with that of another social group.

### ❖ **Intersectionality:**

A term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw describing how the overlapping of various oppressed social identities — particularly being Black and a woman — contribute to the compounded oppression and discrimination experienced by an individual; refusal to consider the intersectional experience does not sufficiently address inequities or the way in which those with intersectional identities are subordinated. [\[59\]](#)

## L-

### ❖ **Latino/a/x/e:**

A person of Latin-American origin or descent. Latino or Latina serve as binary terms, while Latinx or Latine is a more inclusive gender-neutral term.

#### ➤ **Afro-Latino/a/x/e:**

A descendant of a Latin country with African ancestry.

### ❖ **LGBTQ+:**

An acronym standing for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and more; the "plus" represents diverse range of other sexualities and gender identities.

## M-

### ❖ **Marginalize:**

The systematic disempowerment of a person or community by denying access to necessary resources, enforcing prejudice through society's institutions, and/or not allowing for that individual's or community's voice, history, and perspective to be heard.

[\[31\]](#)

### ❖ **Microaggressions:**

Statements, actions, or incidents that indirectly or unintentionally discriminate against members of a marginalized group, such as those in protected classes; based on stereotypes.

### ❖ **Minority:**

A group of people that differ in some way from the majority of the population. When used to refer to non-white individuals or communities, it is an outdated term that some perceive as inaccurate and offensive. Please refer to the preferred term [BIPOC](#).

### ❖ **Minority Stress:**

The way that individuals from underrepresented or stigmatized groups experience a number of stressors that are directly related to a minority identity. Individuals who are members of multiple minority groups experience compounded effects as a result of intersectionality.

### ❖ **Misgender:**

To refer to a person as a gender that they do not identify with; includes addressing someone by a pronoun or honorific they don't use. [\[60\]](#)

### ❖ **Misogyny:**

Hatred of, aversion to, or prejudice against women. [\[31\]](#)

### ❖ **Model Minority Myth:**

A false ideology that the Asian community is particularly successful, especially in a way that contrasts with other oppressed groups; used by white supremacy to pit BIPOC

against each other to protect the status quo; rooted in stereotypes, colorism, and racism. [\[16\]](#)

❖ **Multiculturalism:**

The coexistence of diverse cultures within a society, organization, or institution; manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles. [\[61\]](#)

**N-**

❖ **Nationality:**

Belonging to or hailing from a particular country or nation-state; typically thought of in relation to citizenship but is that limited to that.

❖ **Native Language:**

The language that a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the region where they live. Also known as a mother tongue, first language, or arterial language. [\[62\]](#)

**O-**

❖ **Oppression:**

The systematic subjugation of one social group by another oppressive social group for their own social, economic, and political benefit through the expression of their power.

➤ **Covert Oppression:**

Oppression that is exhibited in subtle or disguised manners, which leads it to be unfortunately socially acceptable.

➤ **Overt Oppression:**

Oppression that is exhibited in direct and obvious manners, which leads it to be fortunately socially unacceptable.

❖ **Othering:**

The viewing and treatment of an individual(s) or group(s) as different from the norms of a social group; often accompanied by negative characteristics, and ultimately dehumanization through prejudices. [\[63\]](#)

**P-**

❖ **Pacific Islander:**

A person of Indigenous Oceania/Pacific origins or descent. [\[64\]](#)

❖ **Patriarchy:**

A system in which men have primary power in the social institutions (e.g. political, economic, and cultural) by having their thoughts favored, narratives centralized, and bodies deemed more valuable. [\[31\]](#)

❖ **Person of Color (POC):**

An umbrella term for any person or people that is considered to be non-white.

❖ **Person/Peoples with Disabilities:**

An individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a history or record of such an impairment, or who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. [\[64\]](#)

❖ **Power:**

The ability as a collective or within oneself to influence other individuals or groups; currently unequally distributed globally amongst social groups.

❖ **Prejudice:**

An opinion, pre-judgment, or attitude towards an individual(s) based on their membership into a perceived group. These are often derived from negative stereotypes and always result in denial of an individual's right to be recognized and treated as an individual. [\[66\]](#)

### ❖ Protected Class:

Groups of people who are protected by either U.S. federal or state law from being harmed or harassed by laws, practices, and policies that discriminate against them due to a shared characteristic. In Massachusetts this is the following groups:

- Sex and/or Gender
- Race
- Religion or Creed
- Color
- National Origin or Ancestry
- Age (over 40 years)
- Physical or Mental Disability Status
- Veteran Status
- Citizenship
- Genetic Information
- Gender Identity and/or Expression
- Sexual Orientation
- Criminal Record(s)

## Q-

### ❖ Queer & Transgender Black, Indigeneous, & People of Color (QTBIPOC):

An acronym that intended to acknowledge the intersectionality of members of LGBTQ+ community that are also BIPOC, specifically how membership in both these groups compound experiences of oppression. [\[67\]](#)

## R-

### ❖ Race:

The socially constructed classification of groups of people based on arbitrary socio-biological characteristics - largely skin color - by Europeans during the time of international colonial expansion. While it may have no scientific base, race has had and continues to have major societal significance. [\[16\]](#)

#### ➤ Biracial:

Individuals that identify as belonging to two racial categories.

➤ **Multiracial:**

Individuals that identify as belonging to two or more racial categories.

❖ **Racism:**

The systematic marginalization and/or oppression of BIPOC based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people; which is perpetuated throughout all societal levels.

➤ **Reverse Racism:**

The false belief that BIPOC can perpetuate racism towards white people. Since racism exists due to a racial hierarchy that privileges white people, they inherently cannot experience it.

❖ **Racialization:**

Historical processes used to justify white supremacy in which a group of people is defined by their “race”; begins by attributing racial meaning to people's identity and, in particular, as they relate to social structures and institutional systems. [\[68\]](#)

❖ **Refugee:**

A foreign-born resident who is not a U.S. citizen and who cannot return to his or her country because of persecution or the well-founded fear of persecution on the account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. [\[69\]](#)

S-

❖ **Sankofa:**

The metaphor from the Akan people of Ghana that is depicted as a bird with its feet firmly forward and head reaching back; represents the importance of gaining knowledge from the past and bringing it into the present to make positive progress. [\[70\]](#)

❖ **Segregation:**

The separation of groups of people with differing characteristics, which inherently creates inequality; often thought of in the form of racial segregation. [\[71\]](#)

## ❖ Sex:

The biological classification of male or female based on physiological and biological features. A person's sex may differ from their gender identity.

### ➤ Intersex:

A spectrum of conditions involving natural variations of the sex chromosomes, reproductive systems, and/or genitalia, outside what is typically considered male or female, also referred to as Differences of Sex Development. [\[49\]](#)

## ❖ Sexuality/Sexual Orientation:

A person's emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to others.

### ➤ Asexuality:

The lack of or varying degrees of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to others. [\[72\]](#)

### ➤ Bisexuality (Bi):

The capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/ or emotional attractions to those of the same gender or to those of another gender. [\[72\]](#)

### ➤ Gay:

The capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/ or emotional attractions to people of the same sex; some women may prefer the term lesbian to describe themselves. [\[72\]](#)

### ➤ Heterosexuality:

The capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/ or emotional attractions to those of the opposite sex. [\[72\]](#)

### ➤ Homosexuality:

An outdated clinical term considered derogatory and offensive. Please refer to the preferred term [Gay](#).

➤ **Lesbian:**

Women that have the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay or as gay women. [\[72\]](#)

➤ **Pansexuality:**

The capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions with people regardless of their gender, gender identity, or sexuality. [\[72\]](#)

➤ **Queer:**

Those whose sexual orientation is not exclusively heterosexual and perceive other terms like gay, lesbian, bisexual as to be too limiting. [\[72\]](#)

➤ **Sexual Fluidity:**

Those whose sexuality or sexual identity are not fixed.

➤ **Questioning (Sexuality):**

Individuals who are in a process of discovery and exploration about their sexual orientation. [\[49\]](#)

❖ **Sexism:**

Discrimination, prejudice, and/or fear of individuals based on their sex or gender; typically expressed towards women.

❖ **Social Justice:**

Actions that promote equity, respect, and the assurance of rights between social groups by acknowledging and addressing injustices between them; primarily done through equitable distribution of economic, political, and social rights and opportunities.

❖ **Social Norms:**

The unwritten and socially constructed rules for beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that determine what is normal or should be avoided within a particular society.

❖ **Socioeconomic Status:**

The social standing or class of an individual or group; often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation.

### ❖ **Stereotype:**

An attitude, belief, feeling, or assumption about a person or group of people that are widespread and socially sanctioned; automatically disproven due to their generalization.

[\[32\]](#)

### ❖ **Stigmatization:**

The labeling or marking of an identity, associating people with unfavorable behavior and characteristics, which leads to ostracism, marginalization, discrimination, and abuse.

[\[31\]](#)

### ❖ **Systemic Oppression:**

The cyclical process in which oppressive ideologies (e.g. racism, sexism, audism, homophobia) are internalized by individuals, expressed interpersonally, institutionally adopted, and structurally upheld. The stages of systemic oppression include:

#### ➤ **Internalized Oppression:**

Beliefs and attitudes an individual absorbs from external sources (e.g. family, media, religion) that support oppressive ideologies; typically so inherent to individuals that they are accepted as uncontested facts or go unrecognized.

#### ➤ **Interpersonal Oppression:**

The expression of oppressive ideologies from one person onto another, regardless if it is intentional, direct, or conscious.

#### ➤ **Institutionalized Oppression:**

The collective perpetuation of oppressive institutional norms by multiple establishments within that specific institution; often masked under the pretext of “Best Practices”.

#### ➤ **Structural Oppression:**

Forms of oppression that are so reinforced and woven into institutional, societal, and cultural norms that they are integral to their structures.

## T-

### ❖ **Title IX:**

A U.S. Civil Rights law aimed at ensuring no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance based on their sex. [\[73\]](#)

### ❖ **Tokenism:**

Valuing the representation and contributions of an individual solely or primarily because of their membership into a specific marginalized group – not for their skills and abilities.

### ❖ **Transphobia:**

Discrimination, prejudice, and/or fear of persons perceived to be transgender.

### ❖ **Tribalism:**

A social system where human society is divided into small, autonomous subgroups, called 'tribes'. While tribalism may not be bad in theory, it can be taken to extremes when a tribe's claim of identity has less to do with its indigeneity and more with its cultural distinctiveness for gaining material or political advantages.

## W-

### ❖ **White:**

Any person having origins to Europe. [\[5\]](#)

### ❖ **White Fragility:**

Discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice, including when their white privilege is made apparent.

### ❖ **White Privilege:**

The unearned rights, benefits, and advantages provided to white people as a result of white supremacy; including the freedom to remain ignorant to racial inequities.

### ❖ **White Supremacy:**

1. The ideology that white people and their ideas, thoughts, and beliefs are superior to those of BIPOC.
2. The systematic domination, normalization, and standardization of white people along with their values and behaviors; due to the historical and current presumption of white superiority.

### ❖ **Womanism:**

A decentralized political and social movement derived from feminism that advocates for women's civil and human rights; with a focus on the experiences, condition, and concerns of BIPOC women, especially Black women.

X-

### ❖ **Xenophobia:**

Discrimination, prejudice, and/or fear of immigrants and/or people from other countries with different cultures.

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