

DEFINITIONS FOR “WAGON WHEEL” DISCUSSION

ANTI- OPPRESSION

Anti-oppression is an adjective used to describe the adoption of an active approach toward dismantling systems of oppression in our society. Below is a list and description of various terms used to build an understanding of this concept and approach.

OPPRESSION

The systemic mistreatment of a defined group of people, with that mistreatment reinforced and supported by society.

INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

Destructive patterns of feelings and behaviors experienced by victims of oppression who in turn “rehearse” the oppression upon themselves, other members of their group and other groups and communities.

RACISM

A complex system of beliefs and behaviors, which are both conscious and unconscious; personal and institutional. They result in the oppression of people of color and benefit the dominant group. It is a system grounded in presumptions around the superiority of the white race. A simpler definition is: prejudice + power = racism.

INTERNALIZED RACISM

Destructive patterns of feelings and behaviors experienced by victims of racism, turned inward upon themselves (the victims) and directed at each other.

ANTI-SEMITISM

“Semitic” originally referred to a family of languages that included Hebrew. Anti-Semitism came to be applied directly to hatred of Jews. Anti-Semitism is the systematic discrimination against, denigration, or oppression of Jews, Judaism, and the cultural, intellectual, and religious heritage of the Jewish people.

INTERNALIZED ANTI-SEMITISM

Destructive patterns of feelings and behaviors experienced by victims of anti-Semitism, turned inward upon themselves (the victims) and directed at each other.

HOMOPHOBIA

Homophobia is the fear or hatred of gays, lesbians, or queer-identified people in general. This can be manifested as an intense dislike or rejection of such people, or violent actions against them.

INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA

Internalized Homophobia is the fear or hatred of, or discomfort with one's own queer sexuality. Internalized homophobia is linked to low self-esteem and is presumed to be a contributing factor in the high rates of suicide among queer teens.

SEXISM

Sexism is both discrimination based on gender and the attitudes, stereotypes, and the cultural elements that promote this discrimination. Given the historical and continued imbalance of power, where men as a class are privileged over women as a class, an important, but often overlooked, part of the term is that sexism is prejudice *plus* power.

INTERNALIZED SEXISM

Internalized sexism is the involuntary internalization by women of the sexist messages that are present in their societies and culture. It also the way in which women reinforce sexism by utilizing and relaying sexist messages that they've internalized.

GENDERISM

Genderism is the systematic oppression of individuals whose actions, and other mannerisms, do not fulfill a society's prescribed gender roles. Embedded in individual, cultural/societal, and institutional beliefs that there are, and should be, only two genders, genderism targets any individual who does not conform to "acting like a boy" or "acting like a girl."

CLASSISM

Classism is prejudice and/or discrimination, either personally or institutionally, against people because of their real or perceived economic status or background.

ABLEISM

Ableism is a pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people who have mental, emotional, and physical disabilities.

AGEISM

Ageism is the pervasive oppression of people based on their age. Discrimination comes from the societal myth that older and younger people cannot perform certain cognitive or affective standards in the same way simply because they are younger or older. Therefore, based on people's ages, they have unfairly prescribed roles.

PREJUDICE

Prejudice is an attitude, opinion, or feeling formed without adequate prior knowledge, thought, or reason.

PRIVILEGE

Privilege is a system of "unearned advantages" that work to "to systematically over-empower certain groups" in our society. Privilege assigns dominance simply based on race, sexuality, or gender, among other factors of identity. Privilege is "an invisible package of unearned assets" that members of privileged groups "can count on cashing in every day," but about which they "are meant to remain oblivious." (Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.")

POWER

The measure of a person's or group's ability to control the environment around itself, including the behavior of other persons and groups.

COLLUSION

When a person perpetuates a system of oppression by action, inaction or silence because he/she internalizes the false belief that the oppressive system is correct, fears repercussions, chooses to stay unaware, or refuses to take action.

ALLY

Someone who supports and stands up for the rights and dignity of individuals and identity groups other than their own, especially when that individual or identity group is not present or otherwise able to represent themselves.

RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY

Prejudice or discrimination against one or all members of a particular religious group based on negative perceptions of their religious beliefs and practices or on negative group stereotypes.

SCAPEGOATING

The deliberate policy of blaming an individual or group when the fault actually lies elsewhere.

ETHNICITY

Belonging to a group that shares the same characteristics, such as country of origin, language, religion, ancestry and culture. Ethnicity is a matter of biological and historical fact and is not changed by the culture in which a person grows up.

CULTURE

Describes behaviors and practices that groups develop to enable them to adapt to their world. This may include language, gestures, tools to facilitate group survival and prosperity, customs and traditions that define values and organize social interactions, religious beliefs and rituals, dress, art, music, and symbolic and aesthetic expressions. Culture determines the practices and beliefs that become associated with an ethnic group and provides its distinctive identity.

IDENTITY

Can be understood as an individual's personal identity, social identity or ethnic identity:

Personal identity is the way in which a person defines themselves in terms of their individuality and difference to others. This might include factors such as age, gender, nationality, culture, religious affiliation, disability, sexuality, interests, talents, personality traits, and family and friendship networks. The way in which a person sees their self in relation to those around them, and the aspects that make them unique, are all aspects of personal identity.

Part of our personal identity is given to us at birth, such as gender, nationality and genetic history. Other aspects of our personal identity are formed during our early years of development and continue to develop during our life as we grow, mature, make choices, forge relationships and build an evolving identity for ourselves.

Social identity is how we function within many different social situations and relate to a range of other people. Social groups may involve family, ethnic communities, cultural connections, nationality, friends and work. They are an important and valued part of our daily life. How we see ourselves in relation to our social groupings defines our social identity.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a sociological theory suggesting that—and seeking to examine how—various socially and culturally constructed categories of discrimination interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality. Intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, or disability do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination.