People & Identity Style Guide

A Progressive Approach to Inclusive Language

2023 Volume 1

Fenton

Overview

The words we choose are powerful and have impact. They affect not only the people who hear us speak or see our writing, but shape our perceptions of others and our society.

As communication strategists, Fenton believes that language can be a motivator, movement builder and thought generator for advancing progressive ideas for positive and progressive social change. We must be intentional and thoughtful in how we present those ideas to our clients and their key audiences.

As part of **our overall mission to help build a more just, equitable and sustainable world,** we developed this guide to be a culturally competent framework for engaging with different people and communities. In creating it, we consulted trusted progressive resources as well as colleagues who do this work every day and whose own lived experiences as members of different communities dictate the way they see themselves.

For the purposes of this guide, we selected words and phrases that are focused on how people identify; this includes self–identification of race and ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, community affiliation and cultural heritage. We also include a few popular terms that are often connected to one's identity or community to unpack how people are shaped by their environment and circumstances.

Overview

You should use this guide to:

→ Inform how you talk about your work in the progressive communications space, your organization's/client's initiatives/campaigns and the impact we wish to see in the world.

→ Interrogate the language you use when talking about people, communities and systems impacted by historical and current forms of oppression.

→ Stay updated on the evolution of language in social justice work to continue the effort of centering people's humanity and lived experiences through an asset–based framework.

Most importantly, social justice work is constantly changing. As such, language may shift or evolve depending on how the issues are shifting, and personal preferences play a major role in language choice as well. As the first guide of its kind by Fenton, we acknowledge that we are still learning, but we are committed to the learning and the doing. That said, consider this guide just that – a guide – as it will remain a living document to be reviewed and updated over time.

When in doubt, we encourage communicators to take a people–first approach by deferring to the communities' or individuals' preferred language.

As we continue to learn and develop this resource, we invite you to send questions and feedback to **styleguide@fenton.com**. Thank you.

PEOPLE FIRST & IDENTITY FIRST LANGUAGE

Shifts in language may be challenging at first, but embracing new terms that reflect community preferences can help organizations to better connect and engage with those communities. **The National Institute of Health** defines People and Identity First Language as follows:

→ **Person-first language:** "The goal of person-first language—to avoid language that dehumanizes or stigmatizes people—is a worthy one. Person-first language is still best practice when writing about people who have defined diseases, such as "children with epilepsy" or "men with diabetes." It is also best when writing about people with mental health disorders, such as "people with schizophrenia" or "women with bipolar disorder."

→ **Identity-first language:** "Communities that prefer identity-first language tend to be those centered on different ways of perceiving or interacting with the world. These communities have often developed a culture and sense of pride around their identity and don't view it as an impairment." (i.e. Disabled person or Deaf person/culture).

OUR APPROACH TO LANGUAGE

As one of the first communications firms in the country dedicated solely to social justice, Fenton has deep experience in campaigns that jumpstart a conversation, change hearts and minds, and advance policy shifts. We must use language that dignifies people and communities where systemic harm is perpetuated. We must also challenge ourselves to evolve as language evolves, which includes acknowledging and respecting how people and communities prefer to be addressed.
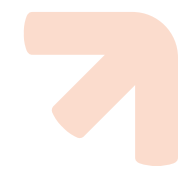
Asset-based Framing

We will use language that defines people by their aspirations and contributions before exploring their deficits.

Inclusive

We will use words and phrases that are inclusive and avoid biases, slang and expressions that discriminate against groups of people based on key aspects of their identity, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status ability and others. We can resonate more with audiences by speaking and writing in ways that everyone understands and make everyone feel welcome.
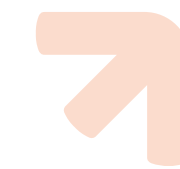
Authentic

We will use language that is culturally competent and takes into account the lived experiences of the communities we are describing and how they talk about themselves.

LANGUAGE FOCUS AREAS

The following pages have numerous descriptions, terms and definitions for inclusive and intentional use of language. Sometimes, we will give clear recommendations, while other circumstances call for flexibility and nuance. In all cases, the following guidelines steer our word choice.

Evolve

Language evolves, and we evolve with it. We encourage you to approach your use of language with curiosity, openness and a willingness to make mistakes, while always trying to understand and do better. Acknowledge that there isn't one term that can accurately represent a large community and educate yourself and those around you about the complexity and history behind each term.

Context Over Labels

Consider who you are targeting and through which medium, then choose the term that is the most appropriate for the audience you want to reach. Speaking and writing at the appropriate reading level and language that your audience best understands will better ensure inclusivity. If you want to include someone's ethnicity, race, gender, civil status or other description when referencing them, first consider if this will enrich your content or if the purpose is simply to help check off a diversity box. Be thoughtful about when and how you use descriptions.

Self-Identification

If it is necessary for you to include a person's or group's race, ethnicity, gender, civil status or other description in your materials, whenever possible, ask how they identify before making a suggestion or assumption. The mere act of giving someone a choice to self–identify can be groundbreaking, especially for groups of people with a history of oppression and erasure.

LANGUAGE FOCUS AREAS

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Sexual Orientation

Socio-Economic & Access to Resources

Ableness, Disability & Health

Introduction

Up to one in four adults in the U.S. have a **mental or physical disability**. In its Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the **United Nations** stated, "Persons with disabilities include those who have long–term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

People with disabilities are often not included in discussions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Yet the language used to communicate with and about people with disabilities indicates an individual's or organization's recognition of the need to include their viewpoints and insights in striving for a more inclusive society.

It's important to remember that disability isn't a hermetically sealed, singular experience. **People of all races, genders, sexual orientations, nationalities, religions, incomes and social classes have disabilities**. It's also crucial to know that the barriers and challenges faced by people with disabilities are different than those faced by people of color, LGBTQIA+ people, or others who face discrimination. While there are some similarities, and for many the experiences overlap and compound each other, ableism is not a parallel to racism or other prejudices, and vice versa. **All forms of discrimination operate and affect people differently.**

Key Terms

➔ **Accessibility / Accessible:** Capable of being used or accessed by as many people as possible. Accessibility of facilities is often determined by Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Accessible is not the same as inclusive. **Accessibility of spaces, physical and digital, is an important first step and is often followed by looking at how to make those spaces more equitable and inclusive**.

Ableness, Disability & Health

"Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, United Nations

Blind / Low-Vision: Blind or Legally Blind is used for people with complete or almost complete vision loss. For others who have a loss of vision, "low vision" or "limited vision" are commonly used. Other terms commonly used to describe vision loss — "partial sight," "partial blindness" and "poor vision" — are no longer in general use. Ask whether the person prefers identity-first or people-first language. **Many prefer** "blind" or "blind person," while others prefer "a person with blindness."

Deaf: Describes a person with profound or complete hearing loss. Many people do not consider being deaf or having hearing loss as a disability. Instead, **deafness is often considered a culture**.

Developmental Disability/Disabilities: A condition or group of conditions that arise due to an impairment in physical, learning, language or behavior areas. These conditions begin during the developmental period of life, may impact day-to-day functioning, and usually last throughout a person's lifetime. A developmental disability can include a long-term physical or cognitive/intellectual disability or both. **It is preferable to use the name of the specific disability** whenever possible.

Ableness, Disability & Health

➔ **Disability:** A general term used for a physical or cognitive condition that interferes with a person's ability to conduct one or more daily life activities. In general, do not describe an individual as disabled unless it is clearly pertinent to what you are writing about. If such a description must be used, make it clear what the disability is and how much the person's physical or mental performance is affected.

➔ **People Living with HIV:** "Living with" is an affirmation of life many advocates prefer. **"People with HIV" is also acceptable**.

➔ **Functional Needs vs. Special Needs:** The term "special needs" was popularized in the U.S. in the early 20th century during a push for education to serve people with all kinds of disabilities. The word "special" in relationship to those with disabilities is considered by some to be offensive because it euphemistically stigmatizes that which is different. It is always more accurate to cite the specific disability or disabilities in question. The term "functional needs" is optional when a term is required and puts the focus on the skills an individual needs to live as independently as possible. **For example**, "addressing the functional needs of people with disabilities" could be used when referring to a facility or program.

➔ **Neurodiversity:** Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning and behaving, and **differences are not viewed as deficits**.

➔ **Neurodivergent:** A term used to describe a person who experiences neurodevelopmental differences, and can include people who have ADHD, autism, dyslexia and other developmental conditions.

➔ **Neurotypical:** A term used to describe a person who is not neurodivergent and who has neurological development or function in ways considered typical by society.

Ableness, Disability & Health

Consider Using ✔	Consider Avoiding ✗
Put people first, not their disability. Say "a woman who is deaf," "a person with blindness," "people with disabilities." This puts the focus on the individual, not their particular functional limitation. Above all, people should be asked how they wish to identify and be described, as some people use identity–first language to de–stigmatize disabilities, impairments and neurodivergent functions.	*Sensationalizing a disability. A person has multiple sclerosis, rather than a person suffers from multiple sclerosis or is a victim of multiple sclerosis. Also, do not say someone is afflicted with a disability.*
Emphasize abilities, not limitations. For example: Say that a person uses a wheelchair, rather than a person is confined to a wheelchair or a person is wheelchair–bound.	*Glamorizing or making heroes of people with disabilities simply because they have adapted to their disabilities.*
"Person with a disability"	*"Differently–abled." This can diminish the experiences of disabled people and can feel condescending.*

Ableness, Disability & Health

Consider Using ✔	*Consider Avoiding* ✗
	Using terms that demean people with disabilities, such as cripple or crippled; invalid, which literally means "not valid"; handicap; or retarded.
"A person with hearing loss" For example: Say that a person uses a wheelchair, rather than a person is confined to a wheelchair or a person is wheelchair–bound.	*Visually impaired / hearing impaired*
"A person living with HIV"	*HIV–infected people or people infected with HIV: Infection carries the stigma of being contagious, a threat or unclean. HIV advocates frequently highlight the damaging consequences of this word choice.*

Civil & Legal Status

Introduction

Immigrants, people impacted by the justice system, formerly enslaved people and survivors of human trafficking should all be described with person–first language and not language that derides their circumstances.

Calling a person who has been incarcerated an "inmate," "criminal" or "felon" dehumanizes that person. Approximately one in three adults in the United States has some form of criminal record — similar to the ratio of adults with 4–year college degrees in the U.S. The wide reach of the justice system, including police contacts, arrests, and incarcerations, is heavily concentrated in **under–resourced communities and communities of color**. The U.S. holds **25% of the global prison population**, more a **result of changes in sentencing policies than crime rates**.

Eighty–three percent of all people in local jails (see below for the difference between "jail" and "prison") are unconvicted and therefore presumed not guilty. Jail incarceration rates are **driven largely by local bail policies**.

Referring to an immigrant without permission to live in the U.S. as "illegal" focuses on the circumstances of entering the U.S. rather than a person's humanity; a person by definition cannot be "illegal," which implies that a person does not have a right to exist. Similarly, describing a person in slavery as a "slave" erases that person's humanity and reduces a person to a circumstance of dehumanizing captivity and forced labor.

Key Terms

- **American:** Avoid using the term "Americans" generically for a group (because it limits the group to those who have citizenship status as Americans). There may be moments when it is appropriate to utilize this word, but one must first ask whether it is absolutely necessary. Also consider that in Latin America, the identifier "American" is typically used to refer to everyone who hails from the continent. **Consider using "U.S. residents" or "people in the U.S."**

Civil & Legal Status

Citizens: Avoid referring to "citizens" when possible — every community in the U.S. includes people who are not U.S. citizens. Referring to "residents" or "members" of a community is a more inclusive approach. **The term "citizen" is acceptable when discussing "citizen comment periods" or other legal terms that do specifically refer to citizens of the United States.**

Enslaved Person: Someone who was forced to perform labor or services against their will under threat of physical mistreatment, separation from family or loved ones, or death. In the U.S., the term refers to one of the tens of millions of kidnapped Africans transported to the Americas and their descendants held in bondage through the American Civil War. "Enslaved person" emphasizes the humanity of an individual within a slaveholding society over their condition of involuntary servitude. **While slavery was a defining aspect of this individual's lived experience, this term, in which "enslaved" describes but "person" is central, clarifies that humanity was at the center of identity while also recognizing that this person was forcibly placed into the condition of slavery by another person or group.**

Enslaver vs. Master, Owner or Slaveholder: An enslaver exerted power over those they kept in bondage. They referred to themself as a master or owner — hierarchical language that reinforced a sense of natural authority. Today, the terms "master" or "owner" can **continue to suggest a naturalness to the system** while also distancing us from the fact that enslavers actively enslaved other human beings who were entitled to the same natural rights as themselves.

Human Trafficking: Compelling someone to work for little or no pay through force, fraud or coercion. Human trafficking is often associated with exploitative commercial sex, but **most trafficking victims are in forced labor at farms or factories, in mines, on fishing boats, at construction sites, in private homes as servants or inside prison factories.** Human trafficking can happen to anyone, but it most often happens to people of color and members of groups who suffer systemic

Civil & Legal Status

discrimination and marginalization because of their sex, gender, ethnicity, tribe, caste, religion, sexual orientation and more. **Lack of access to essentials such as education, health care and financial stability are root causes that limit opportunity, exacerbate systemic injustices and create vulnerabilities to trafficking**. Persons exploited by traffickers are called survivors, not victims.

→ **Immigration Status / Refugee:** Never use the term "illegal" to describe a person. If a person lacks permission to live or work in the U.S., refer to them as an **undocumented immigrant** or someone with a complex immigration status. Individuals who are undocumented come from a variety of countries and ethnic groups. Although their status may be illegal, the people themselves are not. Moreover, there may be a mix of documented and undocumented individuals in the same family. **Be specific about which group is being included**.

→ **Incarcerated Person:** A person imprisoned in a jail or prison.

→ **Jail:** Jails are usually local facilities under the jurisdiction of a city, local district or county. Jails are temporary holding facilities for the newly arrested and those awaiting trial or sentencing. **Those sentenced to serve less than a year may be incarcerated in a local jail for the duration of their sentence**. While jails are supposed to be short-term facilities, many people charged with crimes who cannot post bail are incarcerated indefinitely until the resolution of their case.

→ **Justice-Impacted Individuals: Term for people who have been incarcerated or detained** in a prison, immigration detention center, local jail, juvenile detention center or any other carceral setting, those who have been convicted but not incarcerated, those who have been charged but not convicted, and those who have been arrested.

→ **Prison:** Prisons are institutional facilities under the jurisdiction of the state or federal government in which convicted persons serve longer sentences. Some states have jails and prisons that are privately operated. **The state contracts with these private facilities** and does not have as much control or oversight over how the facilities are operated as they would over a state-operated facility.

Civil & Legal Status

> **Restorative Justice:** Restorative justice (RJ) is a powerful approach to discipline that focuses on repairing harm through inclusive processes that engage all stakeholders. Implemented well, RJ shifts the focus of discipline from punishment to consequences and from the individual to the community. **However, it is often misperceived and misapplied.** Historically, in the United States, restorative justice has primarily been used for minor offenses or juveniles. However, research has shown that restorative justice is more effective for crimes that are considered more severe, including felony-level offenses. Therefore, **restorative approaches should be an option for any case in which the responsible and harmed parties feel that a restorative justice process would be helpful** to their own healing journeys and the process can be carried out safely with the support of well-prepared facilitators.

> **Criminal Justice vs. Criminal Legal System:** The **Vera Institute for Justice** notes that: "Lawmakers and media often speak of the 'criminal justice system' or of 'criminal justice reform.' But more people and organizations are using the term 'criminal legal system' to describe policing, prosecution, courts, and corrections in the United States." This shift is due to the lack of justice in the legal system for certain communities.

> **Court Debt or Court-Ordered Debt:** The debt-to-jail pipeline is a real fear for many people living in the U.S. today. Court debt may consist of unpaid traffic tickets, victim compensation, probation, and other court fees. Many charged with misdemeanor offenses are unable to pay these fines, risking suspension of their driver's license, additional fines or even jail time.

Civil & Legal Status

Consider Using ✓	Consider Avoiding ✗
When discussing people confined in correctional facilities, **use language that puts people first,** such as "incarcerated people" or "people in prison."	*Inmate(s), convict(s)*
Apply the same logic to people who have been involved with the legal system. "Jane Doe was convicted of felony robbery," "John Doe was placed on probation in June."	*Felon, offender, parolee*
"Undocumented immigrant," "person seeking citizenship," "refugee," "stateless person."	*Illegal immigrant, illegal alien, illegal asylum seeker*
"Residents" or "members of a community"	*Citizen*
"Enslaved person"	*Slave. Slavery doesn't just happen; it's not a natural condition of human beings. Referring to someone as a "slave" diminishes their humanity and fails to place the agency for their enslavement where it belongs: with the people who enslaved them.*

Education

Introduction

Our public schools are the most important institutions we have to create a thriving nation with equity of opportunity. We must protect our schools' ability to educate our future leaders and allow our children the benefit of learning within safe and inclusive school communities that embrace diversity and truth.

Despite constant efforts to tear down public education, we do know what works. We know that our children must have the tools and guidance to honestly face and understand our past and present in order to create a better future. We know that equitable funding matters, too. We know that students must be affirmed and safe to fully participate in school, and learn best when they see teachers and other role models who look like them and have cultural competency skills.

We are witnessing an escalation of culture-war grievances, likely a rage-driven response to social, cultural and political progress. School districts, boards, classrooms and libraries are being targeted by well-funded and organized alt-right political groups and elected officials. Educational gag orders from K-12 to public universities are being introduced in states around the country.

Attempts to silence teachers for addressing accurate discussions of history and current events, threatening LGBTQIA+ students and their families, and **banning courses** and **books representing diverse voices** and perspectives are alt-right strategies to prey on fear and ignorance and deliver no-cost policy wins to their embittered base. Without constructive policies or vision to improve education, the erasure of Black history education and censoring discussions of racism are overt efforts to politicize public schools' curricula, books and materials, and to stymie their efforts to encourage students to think critically.

We must push back — and that starts with clear language and messaging that is forward-looking, equitable and inclusive.

Education

Key Terms

→ **Equity vs. Equality:** Equity involves trying to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives. Equality, in contrast, aims to ensure that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives. **Like equity, equality aims to promote fairness and justice**, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things.

→ **Restorative Justice:** Restorative justice (RJ) is a powerful approach to discipline that focuses on repairing harm through inclusive processes that engage all stakeholders. Implemented well, RJ shifts the focus of discipline from punishment to consequences and from the individual to the community. **However, it is often misperceived and misapplied**. These practices are gaining traction in schools and communities across the country, among **youth development and youth justice experts** as well as those who have experienced crime.

→ **Affirmative Action:** Race-conscious policies, such as affirmative action, aim to address racial discrimination by recognizing and responding to the structural barriers that have denied underrepresented students access to higher education. Race-conscious admissions practices allow universities to consider a student's race as one factor in the admissions process in order to help create a diverse student body that enriches the educational experiences of all students. In 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down affirmative action in college admissions, declaring race cannot be a factor and forcing institutions of higher education to look for new ways to achieve diverse student bodies. **Several college presidents** vowed to uphold diversity commitments regardless of the ruling, **but it may be too soon to tell if this commitment holds true**.

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→ **Critical Race Theory:** Developed by legal scholars, including Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Richard Delgado, among others, **Critical Race Theory** (CRT) is a theoretical framework, an approach to learning that helps us understand how racial and structural disparities endure despite laws designed to discourage them. It aims to help people learn from the mistakes of the past, demonstrating how racism and prejudice informed the creation of these laws. Its teaching is used in law schools and some universities, and it is not taught in any K–12 schools. However, right–wing advocates are using CRT as a buzzword to scare and motivate their base to support practices and policies that censor diverse voices and schools of thought in school. States like **Florida** and **Texas** have **passed legislation that prevents diversity from being promoted within public schools and universities**.

Cultural Assimilation vs. Acculturation

→ **Acculturation:** Refers to the adaptation process that occurs when two or more cultures come into contact. It most commonly happens when migrants move to a new culture, and involves adopting new beliefs, behaviors and forms of the culture of the dominant group in the new culture. This approach to teaching in a classroom allows students to keep their culture while learning another.

→ **Assimilation:** Refers to a more extreme form of cultural change and involves the complete adoption of the dominant culture as well as the rejection of the previous culture. In schools, this style of teaching often reduces the importance of one's own culture in the "mainstream" or "more dominant culture."

→ **Culturally Responsive Teaching:** A pedagogy that uses students' customs, characteristics, experiences and perspectives as tools for better classroom instruction. **Students of color see themselves and their communities as belonging in academic spaces**.

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➤ **Deadnaming:** Deadnaming occurs when someone, intentionally or not, refers to a person who is transgender by the name they used before they transitioned. You may also hear it described as referring to someone by their "birth name" or their "given name." This may also apply to formal legal documents. **While some high schools and colleges may let students update their names on records, some require records to match their legal name**.

The 'Gap' in Education

➤ A **recent article** by Bettina Love with Education Week called out the overuse of the word "gap" in the education and youth development fields, stating that "Research reports on 'gaps' (i.e. academic gap, income gap, funding gap, learning gap, opportunity gap) typically fail to recognize racism, anti–Blackness, discrimination, or capitalism

as an explanation for these differences," which are often considered the root causes for the word. She continues: "To use 'gap' implies that white students 'outperforming' Black students on standardized tests just somehow happened or is the failure of Black children and their families themselves. Invoking the word 'gap' when discussing racial inequality in our education system makes racism illegible. Calling this nation's failure to adequately and equitably fund Black students' education a 'funding gap' removes the intent of white supremacy to remain in power by underfunding students of color."

If using the term "gap," consider pairing it with clearer language that calls out explicitly why that gap exists because "students of color are not experiencing a 'gap'; they are experiencing harm , racism, and anti–Blackness."

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➤ **English Learner vs. Emergent Bilingual/ Multilingual:** An English learner is a student who is learning English. But learning English should not discount the importance of the student's ability to speak their own native language — whether it be Spanish, Swahili, Mandarin or another of the 7,000 languages spoken around the world. Using the term "emergent bilingual" acknowledges that the student is already fluent in another language, something that should be a powerful asset in any academic or career setting. **Knowing two or more languages** is the norm in **most countries** other than the U.S.

➤ **First- and Second-Generation Students:** The term "first-generation college student" describes a college or university student from a family where no parent or guardian has earned a bachelor's degree. The term "**second-generation student**" refers to students whose parents or guardians earned at least one bachelor's degree.

According to the **Center for First Generation Student Success**, "the term 'first-generation' implies the possibility that a student may lack the critical cultural capital necessary for college success because their parents did not attend college. While first-generation students are often quite academically skilled and contribute in many ways to a campus community, for some navigating the tangled web of college policies, procedures, jargon, and expectations can be a challenge. This pervasive 'hidden curriculum' can damage the confidence of first-generation students, lead to struggles in belonging, and result in departure. This opens an opportunity for institutions to provide additional support for these students so they may be as competitive and successful as their peers."

➤ **Individualized Education Program:** An IEP is the document at the heart of the delivery of special education services; it is a written, legally binding statement of the educational program designed to meet a student's individual needs. The IEP dictates the special education accommodations and services that will be provided to the student to ensure they receive a Free Appropriate Public Education as mandated by the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**. An **IEP** details the student's learning

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needs, their educational goals, how those goals are to be measured, and the accommodations and services that will be provided to support the student.[48]

→ **Indoctrination vs. Education:** Some **right–wing followers and advocates** believe that teaching about race, racism, diversity or accurate depictions of history is not teaching or educating students but instead a form of indoctrination meant to divide the country and/or shame white students about their history.

→ **Racial Colorblindness vs. Race Conscious:** Being "colorblind" implies that race does not matter or factor into one's identity or one's perception of others. We know this not to be true. Instead, there has been a movement to be more race–conscious
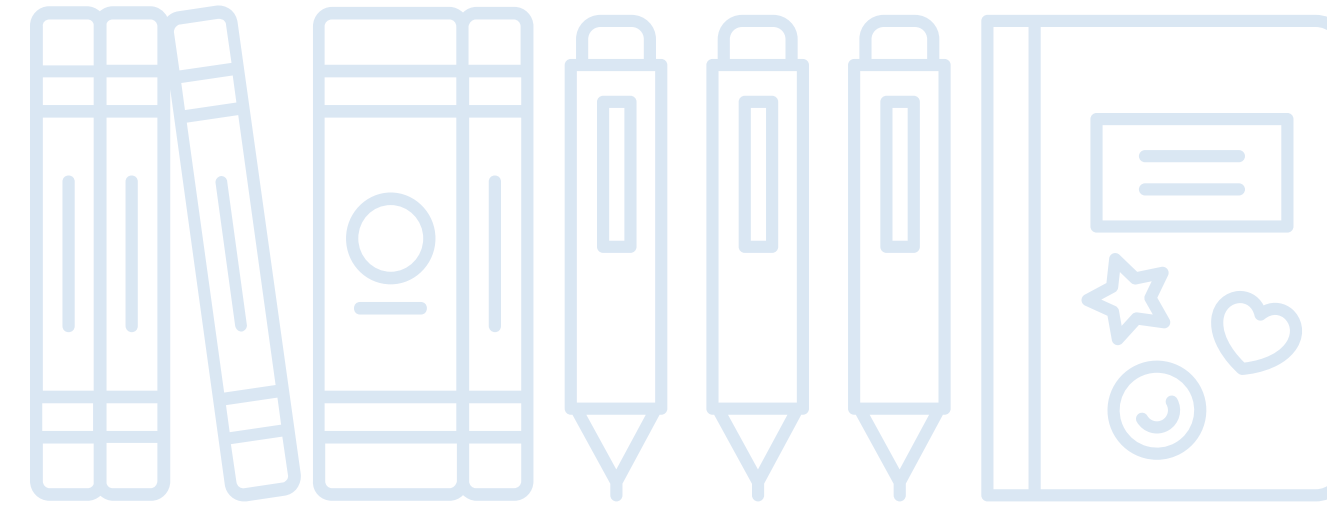
in classrooms and schools by embracing practices and policies that embrace cultural differences as a positive learning opportunity for all students. Beverly Daniel Tatum's New York Times bestseller, *Why are all of the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* is a noteworthy resource for exploring racial identity and how it shows up in schools.

→ **Social Emotional Learning (SEL):** SEL is an integral part of education and human development. **SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions**.

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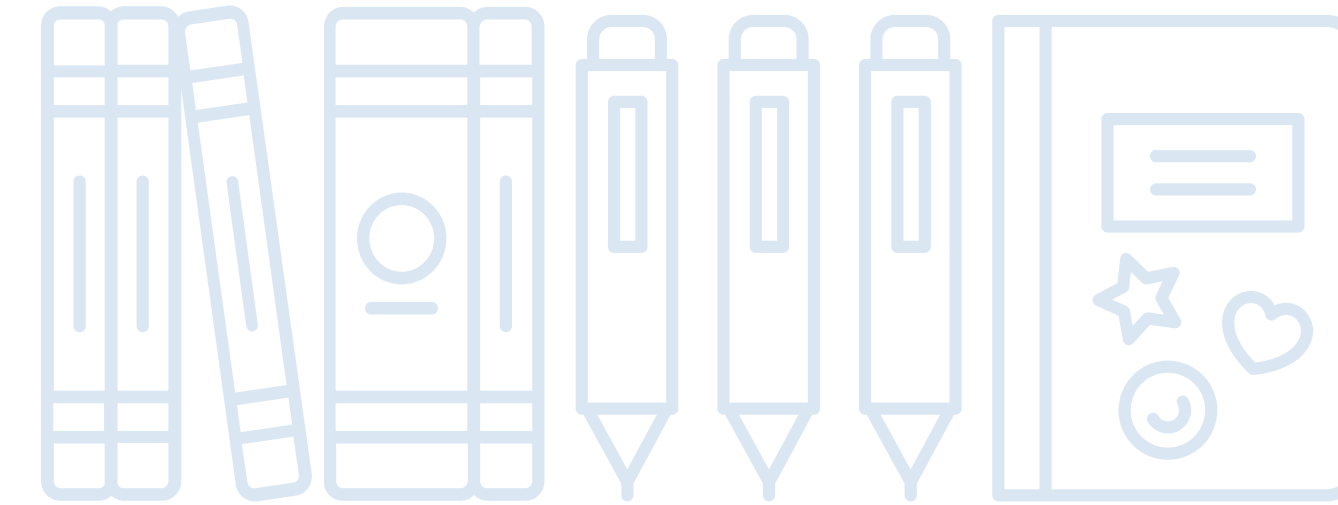
→ **Woke / Wokenism:** Woke was a term **used in Black culture** as a reminder to keep your eyes open and to remain aware of the many forms of racism and discrimination that exists today. Its roots stem back to the 1960s, but it gained popularity again in recent years as the #BlackLivesMatter movement intensified. However, the term was co-opted by ring-wing advocates who have turned it into a negative buzzword synonymous with Blackness or race or racism. There are now "anti-Woke" bills in state legislatures that denounce diversity of any kind or any examination of racism. But **many on the right** don't seem to know what the word means. And there are some in progressive circles who have argued

that liberals have become "too woke," like John McWhorter who says that, "Certain strains of anti-racism and its adherents have effectively created a religion, and a zealous one, that stifles nuance and debate." He continues, "There are people whose devotion is less to changing lives for people who need help than showing that they understand that racism and especially systemic racism exists."

Read more **here**.

Education

Consider Using ✔	Consider Avoiding ✗
Young people living in under-resourced communities	*Underprivileged youth or at-risk youth*
Children of color or Black children or Native American children	*Minority kids*
Kids living in challenging circumstances	*Vulnerable kids or troubled youth*
Racism, discrimination – name the root cause of the gap when talking about education/social differences	*Question whether "gap" is an appropriate word for what you're describing. If you really mean racism, systemic oppression, discrimination, then the word "gap" shouldn't replace or erase those very real factors that impact children and youth every day.*

Environment & Climate Justice

Introduction

As our changing climate wreaks havoc with ever-more extreme weather worldwide, awareness grows that some communities are more severely affected than others. The climate crisis and pollution disproportionately affect low-income communities, communities of color and Indigenous nations, with starker consequences for their physical, social and economic well-being than are felt by white and more economically secure communities.

An equity lens is important because for decades, the impact of systemic racism, classism and unjust disenfranchisement has left people of color to live with, and fight against, our reliance on dirty energy. As a result, people are left to grapple with its ill effects — from poor health to displaced property values and disinvestment. **This disparate treatment is called environmental racism**.

These impacts are directly linked to historic racism and economic barriers. including a dearth of outdoor spaces, being situated in high-pollution areas and lack of access to or agency over clean energy investments and infrastructure. Yet funders and public attention largely focus on environmental and climate organizations that are not led by those most affected.

Approximately 95% of each year's $60 billion in U.S. foundation funding goes to organizations led by white people, while 70% to 80% goes to organizations led by men. About half of climate funding is concentrated in just 20 organizations, with demographics that match this extreme homogeneity in leadership. Due to insufficient funding, most climate groups led by Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other people of color **lack communications capacity to draw attention to their stories**.

Environment & Climate Justice

Key Terms

→ **Climate Refugees / Climate Migrants:** People who have been **forcibly displaced** due to environmental alterations caused by climate change.

→ **Environmental Justice:** The equitable treatment and inclusion of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, class, ability or income with respect to the **development, implementation, protection and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies**.

→ **Environmental Racism:** The **disproportionate negative impact** of environmental pollutants, dirty energy, lack of clean energy access, fair and equitable policies, regulations and infrastructure on Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other communities of color.

→ **Frontline Communities:** Communities that experience the first and most damaging impacts of the climate crisis. They are most often low-income communities of color, Black communities, Indigenous and Native communities, and neighborhoods that lack access to resources and infrastructure to defend against the toxic and polluting impacts of a dirty energy economy. **They are closest to the problems of pollution, climate change and extraction**.

→ **Native Land / Indigenous Land/ Public Land:** Before state borders, national park designations and the creation of preserves, Native people lived on and cared for the land. Today, however, many Indigenous people no longer live on lands to which they have ancestral ties. Centuries of **displacement and dispossession** have relegated many Native Nations to confined territories throughout the Americas. The lands in which they lived are now sometimes referred to as "our public lands" but Native Nations often maintain connections through their language, oral traditions, ceremonies and other forms of cultural expression. There is a growing movement today to acknowledge the traditional Indigenous inhabitants of that land at gatherings. The **National Environmental Education Foundation** offers some tips and language for use. A Canadian nonprofit also developed a site – **Native Land Digital** – that helps users find which Native lands they are on.

Environment & Climate Justice

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Note

The words we recommend avoiding acknowledge the historical effects of land grabbing and the ways white dominant culture has erased the true histories of Native, indigenous and public land. For many people, America is not the land of the great or free, particularly when we consider the impact of the climate crisis — who is most likely to cause it and who is most likely to experience its effects.

Consider Using ✓	*Consider Avoiding* ✗
Though some Native groups and communities themselves use rhetoric like "protect our public lands," we should be aware of how fraught ownership language is for many Native people. For someone whose family was forcibly removed from the Tribal lands that are now known as Yosemite National Park, for example, the claim that public lands "are the birthright of every American," or that "national parks are America's greatest idea" could be deeply upsetting. **Simply acknowledging specific Native peoples as the original stewards of lands we are writing about can help us to avoid whitewashing history**. Suggested acknowlegement language: "We want to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of [Native Nation Name]."	*"Our" Public Lands*

Family Status

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Introduction

Our ideas about what makes a family have varied considerably. Many Americans think of the "traditional" family as a husband + wife + children living together in a home. But the so–called "nuclear" family is a relatively recent development. **In other cultures**, as well as in the U.S., there have always been other family arrangements, such as multiple generations living together under one roof. And for the increasing number of persons in non–traditional family structures, our vocabulary has expanded to celebrate their choices.

There has been increasing recognition of the need for support and services for young people in and transitioning out of the foster care system, who lack a permanent home and family. And with the overturning of Roe v. Wade, people in states that have limited reproductive rights face the possibility of having to begin or expand a family against their choice.

Key Terms

→ **Birthing People:** Not all people who become pregnant, carry a fetus or give birth identify as women or mothers. Use of the terms "pregnant/birthing person," "pregnant woman," "parent" or "mother" is at the preference of the individual(s).

→ **Family:** Each individual's interpretation of their kin or whatever the individual wants it to be. **The definition of family depends on every feature of an individual's life, including beliefs, culture, ethnicity and even situational experiences**.

→ **Family of Choice / Chosen Family:** For LGBTQIA+ persons, families of origin have not always been welcoming, and traditional avenues for creating family, such as marriage, have until recently been unavailable. So they have long created families of choice. **Surrounding themselves with friends, allies and loved ones,** LGBTQIA+ persons have drawn strength, affirmed their identities and shared the joys and sorrows of life with families of their own making.
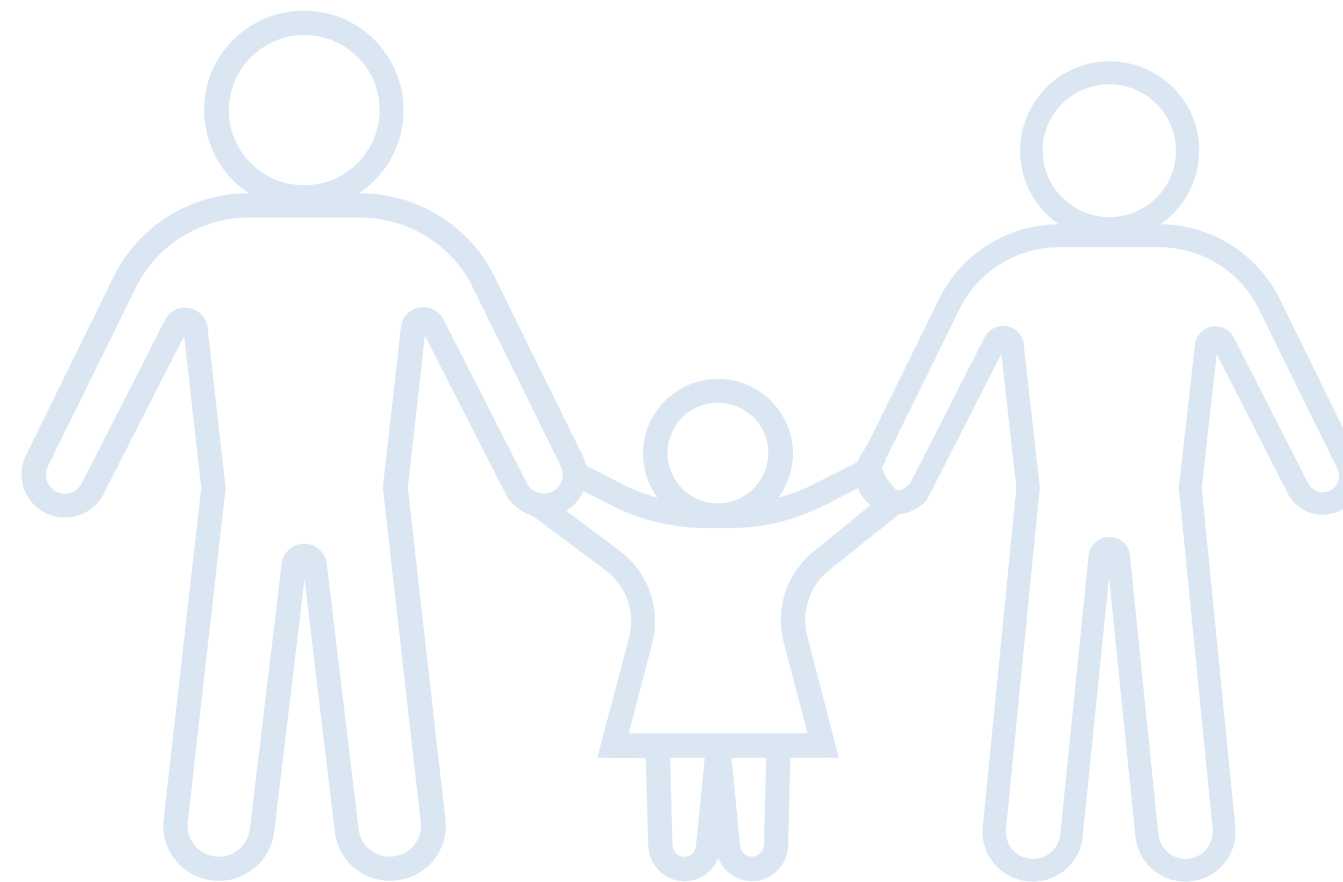
Family Status

People Formerly in Foster Care / Transition Age Youth: Young people in the foster care system transition out of the system between ages 18 and 21. All children — and especially older children in foster care — need and deserve a loving family with no expiration date. Yet, in the United States, about 20,000 youth exit foster care each year without a permanent family placement; left to fend for themselves, this scenario carries lifelong consequences. **Youth who age out of foster care are more likely to engage in risky behaviors and more likely to experience challenges.** When describing young people in foster care or transitioning out of foster care, consider acknowledging their circumstance without ascribing the circumstance as a label i.e., a child in foster care or who has experienced the foster care system versus a "foster care child."

Reproductive Rights: The basic right of all couples and individuals to decide the number, spacing and timing of their children [if any] and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. **It also includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence**.

Family Status

Consider Using ✓	Consider Avoiding ✗
Family details and marital status are only relevant in stories about families or marriage.	*Automatically describing a woman first as a "mother of three." Describing a woman by her role as a mother could diminish her identity as an autonomous being.*
"Mothers/Women" and "Birthing People" when referring to people who can and choose to give birth. The combination of both references allows for full inclusion across multiple identities.	*Only saying mother/woman in relation to people giving birth.*
A young person experiencing/ transitioning out of foster care	*Foster care child*

Identity & Relational- Orientation

Introduction

Gender is often defined as a social construct of norms, behaviors and roles that varies among societies and over time. In this way, gender is often categorized as male, female or nonbinary.

Often, people make assumptions about the gender of another person based on the person's appearance or name. These assumptions aren't always correct, and **the act of making an assumption (even if correct) sends a potentially harmful message** — that people have to look a certain way to demonstrate the gender that they are or are not. Consider the following definitions and terms for expansive and progressive framing around gender identity and relational orientation.

Key Terms

→ **Cisgender:** A term used to describe a person whose **gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.**

→ **Gender Identity:** One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither — how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. **One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.**

→ **Gender Non-Conforming:** A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. **While many also identify as transgender, not all gender non-conforming people do.**

Identity & Relational-Orientation

Non-Binary: An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. **Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid**.

Pronouns: When a person shares their pronouns, they are naming the pronouns that they want to be referred to by in the singular third person. Using someone's correct personal pronouns is **a way to respect them and create an inclusive environment, just as using a person's name can be a way to respect them.**

Questioning: A term used to describe people who are **in the process of exploring** their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, **transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc**.[74]

Transitioning: A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo in order to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes (1) social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, (2) medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and (3) legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents. **Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all or none of these processes**.

Identity & Relational-Orientation

Consider Using ✔	Consider Avoiding ✗
Self-identifying is crucial to describing a person, as such use the terms preferred by the person being discussed.	*Assuming someone's pronouns based on appearance or their name.*
If you are unsure of a person's preferred pronouns, use "they" in place of an assumed pronoun.	*Using language that suggests "innateness" of characteristics, especially language that implies essentialism of gender or sex.*
When gender-neutral language is available and maintains the meaning of the content, consider using it in place of a gendered term e.g.: "The employee was given time to get back to their office."	*Avoid gender-specific language like "him or her" – gender neutral language is preferred.*

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Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Introduction

To communicate inclusively and effectively about people of different races, ethnicities, religions and Indigenous nations, we must first overcome the historical reluctance — and even fear — about having open and honest conversations about identity and differences. Communicating about diversity begins with communicating openly and honestly about and with different groups of people. Individuals are not "diverse" — they are of different races, ethnicities and religions that, together, comprise a diverse society.

Race & Ethnicity

When the health community declared racism as a public health crisis, it was supposed to mark a shift in the treatment of patients. But it also was an acknowledgement of the trauma (mental, physical and emotional) that many people of color face as a result of experiencing racism – sometimes on a daily basis. Reclaiming power from racist and colonial systems takes a willingness to come to the conversation with curiosity, openness and a willingness to get it wrong without letting that stop us from continuing to try to understand and do better. Language that suggests a capacity to step outside default roles to hear and support people who have been hurt and limited by racism is needed. **Stories and terms that are meaningful to people in developing their identities and building power will change what is possible in fights to end racism, and they will help us win**.

There is often **a disconnect** between the way an organization communicates around racial equity and its own internal policies and practices.

Key Terms

→ **American Indians, Native Americans, Native:** The consensus is that whenever possible, Native people prefer to be called by their specific tribal name. In the United States, **Native American has been widely used but is falling out of favor with some groups, and the terms American Indian or Indigenous American are preferred by many Native people**.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Indian: A term used to describe the peoples and cultures of the South Asian nation of India. **It should not be used as a replacement for American Indians**.

Indigenous: An adjective and refers to the original inhabitants of a place and is not specific to the United States. Indigenous people is another term that can be used to describe the original inhabitants of a place.

First Nation: A term that came into use in the 1970s in Canada to replace the word "Indian." However, as with other Native peoples, **it is always preferable to be as specific as possible** when describing someone's cultural affiliation.

Native Nation: A preferred term over Tribe. Native nations are independent nations within a nation. **The term nation shows respect for sovereignty and the fact that Native nations each have their own systems of government**. When referring to a Tribal nation, we

should refer to the specific nation (Dine, Cheyenne, Nooksack, etc.), not "Tribes" generally. Though Native nations are often generalized in collective terminology (Native, Indigenous nations, Indigenous peoples, Native American, American Indian), **it is best to refer specifically to the nation**.

- In Central and South America, the direct translations for Indian and tribe have negative connotations. As a result, Spanish speakers use indígenas and comunidad respectively. However, as with Native peoples elsewhere, it is always preferable to **be as specific as possible** when describing someone's cultural affiliation.

Anti-Racism: The work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach, **set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts**.

Asian American: Asian American is the proper term for people living in America or Americans who come from Asia or descend from people who lived in Asia. Do not hyphenate. **When possible, ask people how they identify** (Asian American or Chinese American, Japanese American, etc.).

- AAPI is an acronym for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Avoid using the acronym as a

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

blanket term when a more specific one is available. It is OK to use in direct quotes and in reference to organizations, such as Stop AAPI Hate.

Black and/or African American: The term "Black" reflects a shared identity and culture rather than a descriptor of skin color. **African American (no hyphen) is a term used for people who share a lineage that can be traced directly or indirectly to Africa**.

- Black is a more inclusive term used today to describe all people of African descent – no matter where they may currently reside within the larger African diaspora.

- **African American is not necessarily interchangeable with Black. For example, people of Caribbean heritage living in the U.S. may prefer Caribbean American. Always follow a person's preference**.

- **Black can be used as an adjective** in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense: Black people, Black culture, Black literature, Black studies, Black colleges.

- Black should **not be used as a singular noun**.

Ethnicity: A socially constructed grouping of people based on culture, tribe, language, national heritage and/or religion. It is often used interchangeably with race and/or national origin, but **should be instead considered as an overlapping, rather than identical, category**.

Implicit Bias / Unconscious Bias: Attitudes that unconsciously affect our decisions and actions. People often think of bias as intentional, i.e. someone wanted to say something racist. However, brain science has shown that people are often unaware of their bias, and the concept of implicit bias helps describe a lot of contemporary racist acts that may not be overt or intentional. Implicit bias is just as harmful, so it is important to talk about race explicitly and to take steps to address it. Institutions are composed of individuals whose biases are replicated and then produce systemic inequities. **It is possible to interrupt implicit bias by adding steps to decision–making processes that thoughtfully consider and address racial impacts**.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

→ **Intersectionality:** describes the way people's social identities can overlap. The term was coined by Kimberly Crenshaw **in a paper she wrote in 1989**. In a 2020 interview with Time magazine, Crenshaw was asked about the definition of the term in today's context, and **she described it as** "how certain aspects of who you are will increase your access to the good things or your exposure to the bad things in life. Like many other social–justice ideas, it stands because it resonates with people's lives; but because it resonates with people's lives, it's under attack. There's nothing new about defenders of the status quo criticizing those who are demanding that injustices be addressed. It's all a crisis over a sense that things might actually have to change for equality to be real."

→ **People of Color / Communities of Color:** Often the preferred collective term for referring to racialized groups, rather than "minorities." Racial justice advocates have been using the term "people of color" (not to be confused with the pejorative "colored people") since the late 1970s as an inclusive and unifying frame across different racial groups that are not white to address racial inequities. While "people of color" can be a politically useful term, and it describes people with their own attributes (as opposed to what they are not, eg: "non–white"), it is also important whenever possible to **identify people through their own racial/ethnic group, as each has its own distinct experience and meaning and may be more appropriate**. It is also important to address different racial and ethnic groups as plural to underscore the importance of not thinking of one group as monolithic with the same beliefs and practices. (i.e. "Latino communities" instead of "Latino community.")

→ **People of the Global Majority vs. Minority and BIPOC:** This phrase is gaining some popularity in American culture as an alternative to using more derogatory or misguided terms like "minority" and "BIPOC." Based on Western standards of race, the majority of the people in the world are people of color. But among people of color are hundreds or even thousands of different languages and cultures, so acronyms like BIPOC do not account for the diversity among "people of color" around the world and within nationalities.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Race: While often assumed to be a biological classification, based on physical and genetic variation, racial categories do not have a scientific basis. However, the consequences of racial categorization are real, as the ideology of race has become embedded in our identities, institutions, and culture, and is used as a basis for discrimination and racial profiling. **How one is racialized can be a major determinant of one's socioeconomic status and life opportunities**.

Racism: Racism is racial prejudice — **an unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude based on someone's race — plus the power to carry out discrimination through social and institutional power**. Racism is different from bias, 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.

Racist: One who supports a racist policy or ideology **through their actions** or interaction or expressing a racist idea.

Racial Equity vs. Racial Justice: Often used interchangeably, there are differences between the two terms. According to **Race Forward**, racial equity is the process for moving towards the vision of racial justice by seeking measurable milestones and outcomes that can be achieved on the road to racial justice.

- "**Racial Justice** is a vision and transformation of society to eliminate racial hierarchies and advance collective liberation, where Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, in particular, have the dignity, resources, power, and self–determination to fully thrive."

- "**Racial Equity** is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color."

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

↱ **Racial Profiling:** The discriminatory practice of targeting people of color for suspicion of crime without evidence of criminal activity, based on their perceived race, ethnicity, national origin or religion (e.g.,"stop and frisk"). Racial profiling is ineffective, damages community relationships, and is being litigated around the country as a violation of constitutional rights. However, **racial profiling continues to be used by law enforcement authorities at the federal, state and local levels**.

↱ **Structural Racism:** The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics — historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal — that **routinely advantage white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color**.

↱ **Systemic Racism:** An interlocking and reciprocal relationship between the individual, institutional

and structural levels which function as a system of racism. These various levels of racism operate together in a lockstep model and function together as a whole system. These levels are:

- Individual (within interactions between people)
- Institutional (within institutions and systems of power)
- **Structural or societal** (among institutions and across society)

↱ **Tokenism:** In short, tokenism is the practice of diversity without real inclusion. It is defined more fully as the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by **recruiting a small number of people from diverse communities in order to give the appearance of gender or racial equality within a workforce**.

↱ **White Supremacy:** The belief that white people are superior to people of other racial backgrounds and that white people should politically, economically, and socially dominate communities of color. While often associated with violence perpetrated by the KKK and other white supremacist groups, it also describes a **political ideology and systemic oppression** that perpetuates and maintains the social, political, historical and/or industrial white domination.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Black with a Capital "B"

The murder of unarmed Black men and women at the hands of police sworn to "serve and protect" — Trayvon Martin, George Floyd, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland and more — sparked a global #BlackLivesMatter movement that intensified in 2020. Stemming from these protests, there were calls to dismantle practices and policies embedded in systemic racism and white supremacy, **such as police brutality.** This included language as well. While the **American Psychological Association** style guide has for generations considered all races to be a pronoun and therefore should be capitalized, this was not the case for many style guides in newsrooms across the U.S. until recently. In a **New York Amsterdam News** op-ed, Sarah Glover, a veteran journalist and former president of the National Association of Black Journalists, called for the Associated Press to capitalize the "B" in "Black" in its stylebook, which guides the writing practices of journalists and others around the world. Eventually, the Associated Press and **The New York Times** changed their stylebooks to reflect this update in reporting, acknowledging it as an important moment as well as an act of solidarity to emphasize the unique struggle of Black people living in America today. The **Columbia Journalism Review** published an article that helps to explain this shift. Furthermore, due to the enslavement of Black people for generations in this country and throughout the Caribbean, many Black people are still unable to trace their heritage to a specific place. From "negro" to "African American" to "Black," this latest use stems from the popularity of the Black Power Movement of the 1960s and 70s. Capitalizing the B in Black represents a reclaiming of the Black diaspora in its fullness, remembrance of the inhumane treatment that Black people have experienced in this country and resistance to that treatment as the fight for racial justice continues.

Fenton supports the capitalization of the letter "B" in Black.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community- Focused Language

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Terms In Use

Federal agencies like the U.S. Census and U.S. Department of Education tend to capitalize all races, including white. And there have been other arguments made to capitalize both words.

- **Time to Capitalize 'Black'—And 'White' [The Atlantic]**
- **Capitalizing Black and White: Grammatical Justice and Equity [MacArthur Foundation]**
- **Opinion | Why 'White' should be capitalized, too [The Washington Post]**

But news organizations like the Associated Press and New York Times still do not capitalize the "w" in white.

See links above for their explanation as to why.

Does that mean capitalize White and Brown?

While the word "Black" has become a universal term to describe people of African descent, it is also generally used by Black people who choose to identify themselves in this way, particularly those living in the U.S. who cannot trace their heritage to a specific place.

The use of the word "Brown" stems in part from the **Chicano Movement of the 1960s**, AKA El Movimiento, a social and political movement in the United States led specifically by people of Mexican descent. The Brown Berets, supposedly **modeled** after the Black Panther Party, were one of the leading social justice organizations that gave way to the Chicano Movement. And "Brown Power" was a slogan sometimes used to show unity for this movement. Today, "Brown" is sometimes used as a more informal or shorthand way to describe the diverse Latino communities within the U.S. However, in some Latino communities, the term may not be widely accepted or used by those who identify with that culture, and some may take offense at it. It has also been used to describe people of South Asian descent.

Rather than grouping distinct ethnic and cultural groups, we recommend acknowledging the specific ethnicities and people you wish to address in your communication (Mexican, Pakistani, etc). If referring to distinct nationalities is not feasible — as when discussing environmental racism or police violence against certain communities, for example — we recommend using "Latino," as in, "Black and Latino communities are disproportionately situated near sources of pollution." *See next page for discussion of "Latino" and other terms to describe people from Latin America*.

Of course, preference plays a role here. But for the time being, Fenton recommends lowercasing the "w" in white, as an act of resistance against white supremacist movements.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Chicano/Chicana:
Someone who is native of, or descends from, Mexico and who lives in the United States. Chicano or Chicana is a chosen identity of some Mexican Americans in the United States. The term was popularized by the **Chicano Movement** of the 1960s.

People from Mexico, Central America & South America

The recent end of Title 42 — a COVID-19 health rule that allowed U.S. border patrol to quickly expel migrants at the U.S./Mexico border — and ongoing shifts in immigration issues and policy continue to place people of color and immigrants of many nationalities at the forefront of the news.

For years, terms like Hispanic, Latino, Latinx and others have been used interchangeably when referring to this community as a way to group people from Mexico, Central America, South America and certain countries in the Caribbean under one label, creating confusion and contention.

So how should we communicate and identify the millions of migrants currently at the border or the immigrants from Latin America and their descendants living in the United States? There is no consensus, so we developed the following guidelines based on our research, multicultural work and lived experiences to support your communication efforts. The purpose of this guide is to equip you with the knowledge to speak and write in a way that respects people's identities and uplifts diversity in an equitable way.

Different Terms and Why They Matter

Hispanic: Refers to people from or descendants of Spanish-speaking countries, like Spain, Mexico, and others in Central America, South America and the Caribbean. This term groups people based on the language spoken, not by geography. According to the U.S. Federal policy, Hispanic is defined as an ethnicity, not as a race.

> **Opinions:** Many believe that the addition of the term to the U.S. Census form gave visibility to the community by collecting data that helped them advocate for their needs. Many strongly oppose the term because they believe it was imposed on the community by the U.S. government to create a national identity. Many also find it problematic because the term grounds its definition in Spanish, a language forced upon Latin America throughout centuries of colonialism, imperialism and institutional racism.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Pay Attention to Context

Consider who you are targeting and through which medium, then choose the term that is the most appropriate for the audience you want to reach. You can base this decision on the available research or by **asking your audiences directly**. For example, Latina(s) can be an appropriate way to refer to a person or group of people who identify as women and part of this community. Some may identify with more than one or prefer terms considered to be more gender inclusive like Latinx or Latine. People of indigenous descent may also prefer a different term that honors their place of origin and language such as Oaxaqueño/a/x, Zapotec or Mayan.

People from Mexico, Central America & South America (cont.)

Latino/a: Refers to people from or descendants of anywhere in Latin America. Unlike Hispanic, this term focuses on the location of birth or origin, so a Latino or Latina can include a person from Brazil but not Spain.

> **Opinions:** This term is popularly used by the majority of Spanish media outlets in the U.S., prominent community organizations nationwide and local and federal government entities. Some believe this term was imposed by the U.S. government as another example of imperialism. Members of the LGBTQIA+ community and allies also argue that the terms Latino or Latina are discriminatory because they exclude people who don't fit into the gender binary as male or female. The grammatical gender system of the Spanish language is often seen as a barrier to gender-inclusive terms.

Afro-Latino/a/x: Refers to a person who identifies as of African origin or descent who is located or has origins anywhere in Latin America.

> **Opinions:** Many believe this term celebrates cultural diversity and the "multiple dimensions of Latino identity" by highlighting African descent directly in the name. Critics believe that this term still has deep roots in colonial Latin America because it includes "Latin" in the name.

Latinx: This is a gender-neutral or nonbinary alternative for people of Latin American heritage. Some trace it back to the early 2000s, but the term picked up momentum in 2016 after the mass shooting at Pulse Nightclub during a "Latin" night. The term was **added to the Merriam-Webster dictionary in 2018**, but the Royal Spanish Academy has rejected it in Spanish.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

People from Mexico, Central America & South America (cont.)

Latine: This is another gender-neutral or nonbinary alternative for people of Latin American heritage that became popular in the late 2010s. Unlike Latinx, Latine has origins in Spanish-speaking countries and **can be used in Spanish** as another way to advocate for the evolution of the language.

> **Opinions:** This word is easier to pronounce in Spanish and can also help neutralize other gendered words in Spanish by replacing the letters "a" and "o" with the letter "e." This term has not become as mainstream in the U.S. as its predecessors, so its use is more limited. Older generations may also feel less familiar with it and more resistant to using it, as with Latinx, or may consider it a typo in written communications if they're unfamiliar with it.

Latin@: This is a gender-neutral shorthand used to refer to people of Latin American heritage. The term is meant to give equal weight to both the "a" and "o" endings, replacing them with @.

> **Opinions:** Academic institutions are using it in publications, podcasts and other ways like the University of Wisconsin, which has included it in the official name of its **Department of Latin@ and Chican@ Studies**. Due to its ambiguous pronunciation, this is mainly used in writing. The pronunciation when reading the "@" can be challenging and many may insert the "o" and "a," which dismantles the purpose of the term. Some suggest making an "ow" sound, like "cow" when using it but there's no real consensus on this.

Fenton's Guidelines

When developing content that addresses or refers to a person or community with origins from Mexico, Central America, South America and certain areas in the Caribbean, there is no one term that accurately captures a consensus of a large and diverse community. Educate yourself and those around you about the complexity and history of each term.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Religion

The following information on certain religions is by no means intended to be exhaustive or definitive, but rather a broad overview of three religions. For the purposes of this guide, we are focused on groups that affect policy related to the work of our clients. Within each of the religions listed below are numerous sects and within those sects lie further distinctions. We understand that religion is complex, sensitive and above all, deeply personal.

Christianity: A religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus as described in the New Testament. Believers, called Christians, consider Jesus the Son of God. The original Christians were Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Hebrew Bible; other Jews disagreed, however, and eventually Christianity became distinct from Judaism as the Apostle Paul and others spread the faith. Christian houses of worship are churches, which primarily hold services on Sunday.

Catholicism: The branch of Christianity headed by the pope, the Roman Catholic Church. Most Roman Catholics are Western or Latin Catholics, meaning they follow church practice as it was formulated in Rome. But the Roman Catholic Church also includes 22 Eastern Catholic churches, whose practices closely resemble those of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the oldest branch of Christianity that emerged out of what is now Ethiopia, Egypt, Turkey and Greece.

Evangelicalism: The word evangelical is derived from the Greek evangelion, which means "good news" or "gospel." The term "evangelical" has generally come to mean Protestants who emphasize personal conversion; evangelism; the authority and primacy of the Bible; and the belief that Jesus' death reconciled God and humans. This term has gained certain political connotations, leading to contentious discussion among Christians about its growing non–spiritual definitions and whether it remains useful.

Protestantism: In the 16th century, church thinkers and leaders such as Martin Luther and John Calvin demanded changes in Roman Catholic Church doctrine and practice, such as more democratized governance, the decrease of total papal authority, and abolition of certain church profits. That led to the development of denominations made up of the protesters or "protestants" who declared themselves independent of papal authority. Protestant churches include Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Quaker churches.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Religion

Islam / Muslims: Islam is a religion founded in seventh-century Mecca by the Prophet Muhammad, who said Allah (God), through the Angel Gabriel, revealed the Quran to him between 610 and 632, the year of his death. Followers of Islam are called Muslims. Islamic houses of worship are mosques, and the holy day is on Friday. After Muhammad's death, Islam split into two distinct branches — Sunni and Shiite — in an argument over who would succeed him. Sunnis make up an estimated 85% of all Muslims. Shiites are the majority in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain, while Sunnis are the majority in other Islamic countries. In Sunni and Shiite Islam, there are various madhhabs, or schools of thought, and other theological traditions. Because the Quran is in Arabic, it is a common misconception that all Arabs are Muslim and all Muslims are Arab; neither is true.

- Shiites and Sunnis use a few of the same religious titles but differ on others. Shiites have a more defined hierarchy than Sunnis. For example, Sunnis call people who lead congregational prayers imams, while Shiites almost exclusively reserve imam to refer to any of the 12 descendants of the Prophet Muhammad who Shiites believe were his rightful successors. Sheikh, on the other hand, is used in both communities. Among Sufi Muslims, sheik holds a more exclusive status that is reserved for highly trained scholars and heads of Sufi orders.

- Some Muslims adhere to a "Halal" – which means "permissible" — diet under Islamic law. In order for meat to be certified halal it needs to be slaughtered in a certain way and have a dedication recited over it, known as tasmiya or shahada. Food prohibited under Islamic law include pork, alcohol, most reptiles and carnivorous animals.

- Some Muslims practice Hijab, which widely refers to the head covering worn by some Muslim women. Hijab encompasses rules of modesty and piety and includes physical and spiritual aspects such as dress and grooming as well as interactions with other people.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Religion

Judaism / Jews: Jews identify both as a religious group and an ethnicity. With its 4,000–year history, Judaism is one of the first recorded monotheistic faiths and one of the oldest religious traditions still practiced today. The Bible describes a covenant between the Jewish people and God that began with Abraham and continued through Jacob, Moses, David and others to today's Jews. Its beliefs and history are a foundation for other Abrahamic religions, including Christianity and Islam. Jewish houses of worship are synagogues, and the Sabbath is Friday at sundown through Saturday night.

Conservative Judaism: Conservative Jews follow a middle path between Reform and Orthodox Judaism. Congregations and individuals vary in their observance of kosher dietary laws, the Sabbath and other guidelines of traditional Jewish life.

Jew: Follower of the Jewish faith and/or a person of Jewish ethnicity. Many Jews consider their connection to Judaism cultural or ethnic rather than spiritual or religious. Others practice Judaism in different ways.

Orthodox Judaism: Orthodox Jews practice strict adherence to traditional Jewish laws, including daily prayer, kosher dietary guidelines and Sabbath observance and prohibitions.

Reform Judaism: Reform Jews believe that the spirit of Jewish law can be adapted to time and place, so their observance revolves around elements other than dietary laws, Sabbath rules and other particulars of traditional Jewish life.

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Consider Using ✓	Consider Avoiding ✗
Capitalizing the "B" in Black draws attention to the struggles and unique challenges that Black people face in our society. The capitalization also signifies people's identities.	*Adding an "s" to the end of terms describing racial and ethnic groups, such as "the Blacks." This is perceived as an "othering" tactic and can be offensive.*
Refer to religious groups by denomination rather than the broader religious group (e.g., Lutheran rather than Christian) to acknowledge the cultural and doctrinal differences within the broader religious affiliations.	
Black (rather than African American)	*Assuming someone's race or ethnicity based on their name or appearance, or assuming members of the same ethnic and racial group are monolithic and referring to them as such. As an example, Afro-Caribbean people have different cultural contexts and orientations than Black Americans, Afro-Latinx people and Black ethnic groups on the continent of Africa.*

Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language

Consider Using ✔	Consider Avoiding ✗
People of the Global Majority. This term affirms people of color's inherent power as the majority of the world's population.	*BIPOC: People are not an acronym. While well-meaning, "BIPOC" actually removes the cultural differences and unique lived experiences of each of these groups by relegating them to an acronym.*
Racist / Racism	*Using terms like "racially charged" or "racially motivated." Instead, be specific about the type of discrimination. If the term "racist" or "racism" is appropriate, use it. Don't try to gloss it over.*
Latino/a, Latinx, Latine	*Hispanic*
People of color, communities of color, People of the Global Majority	*Minority, BIPOC*

Sexual Orientation

Introduction

Our definitions and understandings of relationships have expanded far beyond historic constraints of heterosexual partnerships and nuclear families.

People need not have had specific sexual experiences to know their own sexual orientation; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all. Using sexual orientation rather than sexual preference indicates an understanding of human attraction to others. "Preference" suggests that sexuality is a choice, a concept often used to discriminate against LGBTQIA+ people and cast their sexuality in relation to historic heterosexuality. **"Preference" also suggests a selection from two or more choices, excluding bisexual people and pansexual people, among others**.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. For example, a transgender woman who is attracted exclusively to women may or may not describe herself as lesbian; if she were exclusively attracted to men, she may or may not describe herself as a straight woman. A transgender person who is attracted to more than one gender could identify as bisexual or pansexual. Similarly, sexual orientations differ among people who identify as cisgender.

Key Terms

→ **Ally:** A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQIA+ people. **It encompasses straight and cisgender allies, as well as those within the LGBTQIA+ community who support each other** (e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the bisexual community).

→ **Bisexual, Bi, Bi+:** An adjective used to describe **a person who has the potential to be physically, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to people of more than one gender**, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree.

→ **Gay:** An adjective used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., gay man, gay people). Sometimes lesbian (n. or adj.) is the preferred term for women. **Avoid identifying gay people as "homosexuals,"** an outdated term considered derogatory and offensive to many lesbian and gay people.

Sexual Orientation

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Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women. **Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves**.[117]

LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual. The plus sign includes other members of the community, such as **genderfluid, nonbinary or two-spirit, among others**.

Pansexual: Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people regardless of gender. **Sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual**.

Queer: A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or

folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. **This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQIA+ movement**.

Questioning: A term used to describe people who are **in the process of exploring** their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Same-Gender Loving: Also known as SGL, this is a term used by some Black people as an Afrocentric alternative to what are considered Eurocentric, or white, identities like gay and lesbian. Coined by activist **Cleo Manago** in the 1990s, the term and its usage explicitly recognizes the histories and cultures of people of African descent.

Two-Spirit (or 2 Spirit or 2S): An adjective used by some Indigenous and First Nations people as an umbrella term to describe people who are not straight and/or cisgender. Many Indigenous communities have specific words in their language to describe these experiences, but some do not. This term should not be used to describe people who are not Indigenous. **Only use it for an Indigenous person if they use it to describe themselves**.

Sexual Orientation

Consider Using ✓	Consider Avoiding ✗
Use of "sexual orientation" rather than "sexual preference" indicates an understanding of human attraction to others.	*"Preference" suggests that sexuality is a choice, a concept often used to discriminate against LGBTQIA+ people and cast their sexuality in relation to historic heterosexuality. "Preference" also suggests a selection from two or more choices, excluding bisexual people and pansexual people, among others.* *Assuming someone's sexual orientation based on their appearance or romantic/sexual partner.*
Gay	*Homosexual*

Socio-Economic and Access to Resources

Introduction

Classism is a system of beliefs, attitudes and actions — fueled by institutional power — that advantages and strengthens the dominant class groups through differential treatment and the assignment of worth and ability based on economic status or perceived social class. Economic justice activists have long advocated that **class underpins many other social injustices and that classism is already deeply ingrained in the primacy of a few language systems — including English — over the rest**.

Classism goes hand-in-hand with the commonly-held myths that the U.S. is a meritocracy, that people are successful because they have worked hard, and those who are not successful are lazy or haven't worked hard enough. In other words, classism assumes personal responsibility and ignores historical

and systemic inequity. Wherever possible, avoid framing and phrasing that ties a person's worth to their economic contributions or accomplishments. **Classism also ignores the reality of generational wealth accumulation and structural barriers in our society that keep people in their stratified social "class."**

Avoid using broad, pejorative and generalizing terms to discuss socioeconomic status. Specifically, negative connotations are associated with terms such as "the homeless," "inner-city," "ghetto," "the projects," "poverty stricken," and "welfare reliant." Instead, use specific, person-first language such as "mothers who receive TANF benefits" rather than "welfare mothers" ("TANF" stands for "Temporary Assistance for Needy Families" and is the proper term for the current welfare program in the United States). When discussing people without a fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime residence, use specific language that addresses the quality or lack of housing or length of time without housing, not whether the people consider their residence a home. That is, use language like "people experiencing homelessness," "people who are homeless," "people in emergency shelter," or "people in transitional housing," rather than calling people "the homeless."

Socio-Economic and Access to Resources

Deficit–based language also focuses on what people lack rather than on what they possess. Instead of labeling people as "high school dropouts," "being poorly educated," or "having little education," provide more sensitive and specific descriptors such as "people who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent." Alternatively, by adopting a strengths–based perspective, authors can write about "people who have a grade school education." Likewise, instead of writing about an "achievement gap," write about an "opportunity gap" to emphasize how **the context in which people live affects their outcomes or opportunities.**

Key Terms

→ **American Dream / Land of the Free:** These idealistic terms are based on the premise of equality, freedom and access to opportunity – ideals from the establishment of the U.S. that

many people today may not believe hold true due to various injustices that continue to persist, from wealth inequality to environmental injustice. Some advocates have started using "their" American Dream instead of "the" American Dream to reflect how people today differently define the term based on their own preferences and experiences.

→ **Food Apartheid:** Lack of access to healthy food is systematic and results from the whole system of food access, along with race, geography, faith and economics. It impacts people from all backgrounds, although Black and brown people are affected disproportionately. **"Food desert" is not an accurate term**, because communities might have access to food while lacking healthy options.

→ **Food Insecurity:** Food insecurity is defined by the **United States Department of Agriculture** as "a household–level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food." Food insecurity is associated with numerous adverse social and health outcomes and is increasingly considered a critical public health issue. Key drivers of food insecurity include unemployment, poverty and income shocks, all of which can prevent adequate access to food.

Socio-Economic and Access to Resources

Health Equity: Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. **This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination and their consequences, including lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.**

Hunger: An individual–level **physiological condition** that may result from food insecurity.

- Hunger and its variants are preferred by some advocates to food insecurity because the latter is not a commonly used term by the general public. Some phrases to consider in place of food insecurity include: **"experiencing hunger," "facing hunger," "at risk of hunger."**

- It is **not accurate** to say that the total food insecure population "face hunger every day," or "goes to bed hungry every night." It is, however, accurate to say "More than 658,000 people in Virginia are hungry or at risk of hunger each year," or "Millions of people face hunger every year."[132]

Income Inequality: The **extent to which income is evenly distributed** within a population.

Inequality of Opportunity: Impact on income of circumstances over which individuals have no control, **such as family socioeconomic status, gender or ethnic background**.

Low–Income: This term is defined as 80% of the median family income for the area, subject to adjustments for areas with unusually high or low incomes or housing. "Very low–income" is defined as 50% of the median family income for the area, subject to specified adjustments for areas with unusually high or low incomes. **Per guidance from the CDC**, this term should only be used in materials when socioeconomic status is defined and when income is used as a measure of socioeconomic status.

Socio-Economic and Access to Resources

Low-Income Neighborhood: Acknowledge the historical roots of these areas' economic circumstances, including public and private disinvestment, racist urban planning and housing policies, and racial inequity and income inequality. Acknowledge the many neighborhood resources, such as culture, arts, history and social ties, that aren't always reflected in data but are both incredibly important to communities and a result of residents' leadership and agency. **Per guidance from the CDC**, this term should only be used in materials when socioeconomic status is defined and when income is used as a measure of socioeconomic status.

Racial Wealth Gap or Disparity: Large disparities in wealth (defined as the value of assets minus the amount of debt) by race.

Under-Resourced: A geographic region, neighborhood or institution that lacks resources sufficient to meet needs, including but not limited to funds, opportunity, quality education, affordable housing, infrastructure, health care, employment training, financial services and support systems. Frequently this lack of resources stems from a history of systemic racism and intentional wealth extraction, resulting in harmful policies as well as a lack of public and private sector investment and services.

Unhoused vs. Homeless: As **SchoolHouse Connection** notes, people without permanent homes can be a complex issue to unpack with many contributing factors. The term "unhoused" has grown in popularity to represent an individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. However, some advocates prefer "experiencing homelessness" to newer terms like "houseless," "unhoused" or "housing insecurity" which may "put an emphasis on housing as the sole condition to be addressed." (i.e., People who house-hop, couch-surf and live in motels may have a roof over their head but these situations are often temporary, and there may be many factors why they do not have a permanent roof over their heads, such as abuse at home, income inequality or lack of documentation.)

Socio-Economic and Access to Resources

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Consider Using ✓	Consider Avoiding ✗
Youth living in challenging circumstances	*At-risk youth, vulnerable youth*
Experiencing homelessness or unhoused	*Housing insecurity*
A family with low-income or people living in low-income communities	*Low-income people or poor people*
Precise descriptions of jobs, including local context, information about pay, and working conditions.	*Blue Collar / White Collar / Working Class: Do not use these terms to describe types of jobs. These terms are outdated, imprecise and force readers to make assumptions. Precise descriptions of jobs and working conditions promote reader clarity and source dignity.*
"Food apartheid," which takes into account the effect of systemic racism has had on communities which is part of the reason why food deserts exist.	*Food Desert*
Terms that acknowledge the factors that contribute to a person's circumstances, such as **"historically under-resourced / oppressed / marginalized communities."**	*Adjectives that define a person by their socioeconomic circumstances, such as "poor people." Negative connotations are associated with terms such as "the homeless," "inner-city," "ghetto," "the projects," "poverty-stricken," and "welfare reliant." These terms imply that the condition is inherent to the group rather than a result of causal factors.*

OUR LANGUAGE MAP INDEX

Consider Using ✔	Consider Avoiding ✗	Consider Using ✔	Consider Avoiding ✗
Ableness, Disability & Health		**Education**	
When possible, name the specific disability: A person with multiple sclerosis	*Avoid sensationalizing descriptions: A person who suffers with multiple sclerosis*	Equity in schools	*Equality in schools*
Disability, disabled or a person with a disability	*Differently-abled, afflicted with a disability*	Acculturation	*Assimilation*
A person who is blind, a deaf person, a person with hearing loss	*Visually or hearing impaired*	Emergent Bilingual/Multilingual Learner	*English language learner/English learner*
A person who uses a wheelchair or wheelchair users	*Wheelchair-bound or confined to a wheelchair, crippled, invalid*	Race-conscious school systems/classrooms/curriculum	*Racially color-blind curriculum*
Functional needs	*Special needs*	Systemic racism, discrimination, anti-Blackness	*Use of the word to "gap" without context about why that gap exists – name the root cause*
Person living with HIV	*HIV-infected people*		
Civil & Legal Status		**Environment & Climate Justice**	
Criminal legal system	*Criminal justice system*	Climate crisis or emergency	*Climate change*
Incarcerated person or people in prison	*Inmates, convicts*	Native lands (acknowledge specific nation when you can)	*"Our" public lands, land of the free*
A person was convicted of felony robbery; placed on probation	*Felon, offender, parolee*	**Family Status**	
Undocumented immigrant, person seeking citizenship, refugee, stateless person	*Illegal immigrant, illegal alien, Illegal asylum seeker*	Mothers / women and birthing people / pregnant people	*Only using the term mothers or pregnant women to describe people who give birth*
Enslaved person / enslaver	*Slave / master or owner*	Young person in the foster care system or a person who has experienced the child welfare system	*Foster child / Foster care child*
U.S. residents, members of the community, people in the U.S.	*Citizens or Americans (if used generally)*	Parents and caregivers (when possible you may want to use both to be inclusive of multi-generational families and cultures)	*Only using "parent" or "parents" when describing children's caretakers*

OUR LANGUAGE MAP INDEX

Consider Using ✔	Consider Avoiding ✗	Consider Using ✔	Consider Avoiding ✗
Identity & Relational Orientation		**Socio-Economic and Access to Resources**	
Nonbinary / Gender Fluid / Transgender / Gender Non-Conforming	*Transsexual, Transvestite*	Under-resourced, historically marginalized communities, historically oppressed, underserved neighborhoods	*Vulnerable, underrepresented, at-risk communities, poor communities*
Asking for a person's preferred pronoun	*Automatically assuming someone's gender identity*	Food apartheid	*Food desert*
Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Community-Focused Language		Facing hunger, experiencing hunger	*Food insecurity or food insecure*
People of the Global Majority	*BIPOC*	Experiencing homelessness or a person who is homeless, unhoused	*Houseless, housing insecurity, unsheltered*
People of Color / Communities of Color	*Minority*		
Black people, Black communities (same for other cultures)	*black people, the Blacks or African American (unless speaking specifically about Americans of African descent), Black or Latino community (not a monolith)*	Precise job descriptions are preferred	*Blue collar, white collar, working class*
Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine/Chicano	*Hispanic*	People who live in low-income communities or a person who has low income	*Low-income people or poor people*
Native American / Indigenous or [Native] Nation	*Indian*	Mothers who receive TANF benefits	*Welfare mothers*
Racist act or person, or racism	*Racially charged or racially motivated (ambiguous terms)*		
Sexual Orientation			
Gay	*Homosexual*		
Sexual Orientation	*Sexual Preference*		

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

The following are additional trusted sources Fenton has used or referred to in this guide that helped us with framing and definition of certain key terms. They may also serve as helpful resources to you as you continue to do social justice work.

ComNet DEI site

ComNet Change Agent: The Racism Issue

Trabian Shorters on Asset Framing

The Global Press Journal Style Guide

SumOfUs Progressive Style Guide

National Center on Disability and Journalism

National Recreation and Park Association

Pronouns Matter

Sierra Club's Equity Language Guide

National Institutes of Health

The Solutions Project

Race Forward Reporting Guide

Stanford SPARQ Tools: RaceWorks

McKinsey Race in the Workplace Report

Lean In

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FENTON'S DEI STATEMENT

Fenton is an anti-racist and intersectional organization that prioritizes the needs of those who have been historically oppressed.

We do the work of creating positive social change as an act of repairing the harm done to those who have been and are currently disenfranchised and to build a workforce that more accurately reflects the vast diversity of our world.

We believe to truly create change that dismantles white supremacy, racism, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, religious discrimination and other forms of oppression, we must learn from the wisdom of those whose identities and experiences closely align with the problems we see today. And we honor the value of their lived experiences — domestically and globally — by continually building and sustaining a workplace that is inclusive and rooted in justice and equity.

We make this statement not as a concluding point of our collective journey. Rather, we have much to learn and are committed to the learning — and more importantly, the doing. This statement enshrines Fenton's accountability to these words and this work.

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Last, but not least, thank you to the readers of this guide for your commitment to telling authentic, people–first stories. In a world full of storytellers, language is important. And truth and respect must lead the way.