

Glossary/Key Terms

This list is designed to offer diversity, equity, and inclusion practitioners and learners access to a set of common terms reflective of social justice work. *It is not meant to be exhaustive.* Visceral Change acknowledges that language evolves, and encourages you to continue learning, growing, and listening to the beauty of differences.

Ableism: The oppressive set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities; often referred to as “visible” or “invisible” disabilities.

Cisgender: Denoting a person whose gender expression and identity corresponds with the social expectations of their biological sex.

Conscious: Demonstrating a political commitment to deep, intentional engagement with and understanding of history, social and cultural issues and events; can relate to mindfulness and morality; may take the form of activism and intellect.

Diversity: The active appreciation of difference and differences often related to marginalized identities.

Dominant (Identity): Identities that receive major social privilege, power, or capital; generally reinforced through normalization.

Equity: Quality of being fair/fair-minded and justice oriented.

Gender Expression: The ways in which an individual presents their gender through cultural or social identifiers such as hair styles, clothing, and body language.

Gender Identity: The way in which a person identifies as it relates to their gender; often indicated through pronouns.

Genderqueer/Genderfluid: A term used to acknowledge a person who does not identify as a man or woman in order to reject gender as a binary and recognize it as a fluid blend of sexually assigned traditions and customs.

Heteronormativity: The systemic construct that advantages heterosexual norms and behaviors and disadvantages non-heterosexual norms and behaviors by assuming heterosexuality as standard, correct, or acceptable.

Inclusion: The active incorporation and meaningful involvement of all identities, often related to marginalized identities.

Inclusive Excellence: Best practices for maximizing the intersection of diversity and inclusion as a means to operate an organization in the most equitable way possible.

Intersectionality: The recognition that people are made up of multiple identities and that their marginal or privileged status is often a result of the “both/and” not the “either/or.” Original term coined by feminist, legal scholar, Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) to address race and gender.

Marginalized: A term used to describe individuals or groups whose (subordinated) identities have granted them less privileges and opportunities in a given context; i.e. those ‘on the margins’ or sidelines of society.

Native Language Learner: Individuals, generally through nationalization or birth-right, who fluently speak the dominant language of their culture, environment, or society.



Native Language Speaker: Individuals who learn the dominant language of their or culture, environment, or society.

People of Color: Racial designation for any persons who identify with a race other than White or Caucasian.

Privilege: A term recognizing the systemic construct that grants or rescinds benefits and advantages to certain social identities based on their dominant or subordinated status.

Racism: A belief or doctrine that inherent differences among various human racial groups determine cultural or individual achievement; usually fostered by policies, systems of government, etc.

Social Identity: One's sense of self as a member of a social group or groups.

Subordinated (Identity): Identities that receive little to no social privilege, power, or capital.

Systemic Oppression: A series of discriminatory practices, policies, or procedures systemically designed to oppress a specific sect of people or persons.

Transgender: Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.

Transracial: The placing of a child from one racial or ethnic group with adoptive parents of another racial or ethnic group.