

Anti-Oppression Terminology

This is a resource is a clear language glossary of terms related to anti-oppression and does not describe each term in detail.

Key Terms

Anti-Oppression - Recognizing when systems, policies, or attitudes harm certain groups and taking action to change them.

Oppression - When a group of people with similar characteristics (like race, gender, or income level) are treated unfairly by those who have more power and privilege. *This unfair treatment is built into systems and happens repeatedly over time.*

Systemic Barriers - Rules, policies, or ways of doing things that make it harder for certain groups of people to succeed or get what they need. *These barriers are built into systems like healthcare, education, or government programs.*

Root Causes - The deep, underlying reasons why problems like poverty exist. *Instead of looking at what individuals do "wrong," root causes look at how systems and policies create problems.*

Colonization - The historical and ongoing process where one group takes control of another group's land, culture, and way of life. *This created many of the inequalities we see today, especially affecting Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world.*

Power and Privilege

Power - The ability to make decisions, control resources, or influence what happens to yourself and others. *Power can come from money, position, social connections, or belonging to certain groups.*

Privilege - Advantages or benefits that some people get simply because of who they are (their race, gender, income, etc.). *People with privilege often don't realize they have these advantages because they seem "normal" to them.*

Sources of Power - The different ways people can have influence or control, such as:

- Economic power (money, property)
- Political power (voting, holding office)
- Social power (connections, reputation)
- Institutional power (position in organizations)

Remember: These concepts can be complex and personal. It's okay to ask questions and take time to understand how they apply to your own life and community.

The Four I's of Oppression

Ideological Oppression - The beliefs, ideas, and attitudes that say some groups of people are better or more deserving than others. These beliefs justify treating people unfairly.

Example: Believing that people in poverty are "lazy" or "made bad choices."

Institutional Oppression - When laws, policies, organizations, and systems are set up in ways that treat some groups unfairly. This includes government, schools, healthcare, legal system, and media. *Example: Welfare policies that are humiliating or job applications that discriminate.*

Interpersonal Oppression - How oppression shows up between people in daily life. This includes discrimination, prejudice, and treating some people as less important than others. *Example: A store clerk following someone around because of their race or making assumptions about someone based on how they dress.*

Internalized Oppression - When people from oppressed groups start to believe negative things about themselves or their community. They begin to treat themselves or others in their group in negative ways. *Example: Someone in poverty thinking "maybe I am lazy" or "I don't deserve better."*

Identity and Intersectionality

Identity - All the different parts of who you are, including your race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability status, income level, and more.

Intersectionality - The way that having multiple identities creates unique experiences. Someone's experience of discrimination or advantage is shaped by ALL parts of their identity, not just one. *Example: A Black woman experiences both racism and sexism in ways that are different from what a Black man or white woman experiences.*

Lived Experience - Knowledge and understanding that comes from actually living through something, rather than just reading or hearing about it.

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Types of Discrimination and Prejudice

Racism - Prejudice and discrimination based on race, supported by systems of power. It's not just individual attitudes, but policies and practices that advantage some racial groups over others.

Xenophobia - Fear, hatred, or prejudice against people from other countries or cultures. This includes discrimination against immigrants, refugees, or anyone perceived as "foreign."

Sexism - Prejudice and discrimination based on gender, supported by systems of power. It includes both individual attitudes and policies that treat people unfairly because of their gender.

Homophobia - Fear, hatred, or prejudice against people who are gay, lesbian, or attracted to people outside of recognized gender norms. This can include refusing services, verbal harassment, or violence.

Transphobia - Fear, hatred, or prejudice against transgender people or anyone whose gender identity doesn't match traditional expectations. This includes refusing to use correct pronouns, denying healthcare, or excluding people from spaces.

Ableism - Discrimination against people with disabilities. This includes assuming disabled people can't do things, designing spaces that exclude them, or treating disability as something that needs to be "fixed."

Ageism - Discrimination based on age. This can affect both young people (seen as inexperienced) and older people (seen as outdated or incapable).

Fatphobia/Weight Bias - Prejudice and discrimination against people in larger bodies. This includes assumptions about health, character, or worth based on body size.

Classism - Prejudice and discrimination based on social class or economic status. It includes attitudes that blame poor people for poverty and systems that make it hard to move out of poverty.

Religious Discrimination - Prejudice against people because of their religion or spiritual beliefs. This can include Islamophobia (against Muslims), anti-Semitism (against Jewish people), or discrimination against any religious group.

Colorism Discrimination - based on skin color, where lighter-skinned people are treated better than those with darker skin, even if they are within the same racial group.

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Microaggressions - Small, everyday actions or comments that communicate prejudice or discrimination, often without the person realizing it. *Example: Asking someone "Where are you really from?" or touching someone's hair without permission.*

Advocacy Principles

"Nothing About Us, Without Us" - The principle that people who are affected by an issue should be included in making decisions about that issue. You can't advocate for a group without including their voices and leadership.

Community Advocacy - Working together as a community to create change on issues that affect everyone. It's about collective action along side individual solutions.

Root Cause Solutions - Addressing the deep, underlying reasons for problems in conjunction to dealing with the symptoms. This means changing systems and policies.

Accountability - Taking responsibility for your actions, especially when you make mistakes or cause harm. It includes being willing to learn and change your behavior.

Allyship - When someone with privilege uses their advantages to support and advocate for people from oppressed groups. True allyship means following the leadership of affected communities.

Social Justice - The idea that all people deserve equal rights, opportunities, and treatment. It's about creating fair systems where everyone can thrive.

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