

Terms for New Conversations and What They Mean

Race

Race is a group of people who share similar and distinct physical traits such as skin and hair color, and facial features: eyes, nose, etc. The use of the term “race” is merely social/cultural, because there is no biological basis for race distinction.

Racism

Racism is a system that allows the dominant racial group in a society to retain power. White people are the only racial group to have ever established and retained power in the U.S. Reverse racism has never existed in America. So a member of a non-dominant race in U.S. can be prejudiced, but not racist.

Prejudice

Prejudice is any preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience regarding an ethnic, racial, social, or religious group. Members of all races within a society can have prejudice.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a group of people who are affiliated by the same national or cultural tradition.

Culture

Culture is the knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other habits acquired by a human being as a member of a group or society – or – way of thinking, believing, behaving that orders our lives.

Implicit/unconscious bias

Implicit/unconscious bias is based on association or stereotype that results from subtle cognitive processes that operate at a level below conscious awareness and without intentional control.

Racial Equity

Racial equity is the condition that is achieved when a person’s racial and ethnic identity is not the primary predictor (statistically) of how a person thrives or succeeds. The goal of racial equity is to dismantle the systems, structure and processes that make race a factor in the assessment of merit, worth, or in the distribution of opportunity (adapted from The Aspen Institute, September 2009). United Methodist Christians affirm the sacred worth and value of all people of all races, cultures, colors, languages and tribe and affirm that we are all created in the image of God.

Equity Impact Assessments

A Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) is a systematic examination of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. REIAs are used to minimize adverse

consequences in a variety of contexts, including the analysis of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans and budgetary decisions. The REIA can be a vital tool for preventing institutional racism and for identifying new options to remedy long-standing inequities (The Applied Research Center, 2012).

GCORR offers tools, including equity impact assessments to measure the impact of legislation, proposals and key initiatives of the Church at the conference and general church level. These assessments help leaders to consider the impact of major decision on marginalized groups in the Church and ensure that justice and inclusion are key considerations in the decision-making process.

Cultural Identity and Intersectionality

New approaches to advocacy are needed that shift the focus from singular issue-based responses defined in mutually exclusive ways to organizing and interventions that are multi-layered, no longer framing group interests in exclusionary terms.

Intersectionality seeks to examine the complex ways in which various socially and culturally constructed categories interact on multiple levels to manifest themselves as inequality in society. Intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, or ability do not act independently of one another. Instead, these forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the “intersection” of multiple forms of discrimination.

Culture

Culture is defined by attitudes and beliefs and what a person from each culture believes is normal for that group. Often cultural identity includes shared language, history, and geography. However, cultural identity is a broader term, beyond racial and ethnic identity and formation. People from multiple ethnic backgrounds may identify as belonging to the same culture.

GCORR continues to bring together other General Agencies, racial ethnic caucuses and plans, and community groups to respond to oppression of all kinds. In addition, our agency is helping to engage the Church in new conversations on the intersectionality of oppression/discrimination and to invite into the conversation the emerging voices of biracial/multiracial people and people from beyond the United States whose cultures also include complexities of language and tribe.

Cultural Competency

“Cultural Competency is a process of developing proficiency in effectively responding in a cross-cultural context. It is the process by which individuals, agencies, and systems integrate and transform awareness of assumptions, values, biases, and knowledge about themselves and others to respond respectfully and effectively across diverse cultures, language, socioeconomic status, race, ethnic background, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Cultural competence recognizes, affirms, fosters and values the strengths of individuals, families and communities and protects and preserves the worth and dignity of each” (State of Wisconsin Mental and Physical Health Services, 2011).

Cultural competency is a leadership skill that can be learned. It is useful to everyone, not only those within the dominant culture. By committing ourselves to becoming more culturally competent, we transform our local churches and denominational initiatives into vital and effective inclusive communities in which the sacred worth and gifts of all persons are affirmed.

Inclusive

Inclusiveness often relates to abstracts (numbers, groups, quotas), not persons and relationships. When using the term inclusive, it is imperative to move beyond assumptions or the expectation that those being “included” must assimilate or take on the characteristics, values, language and norms of the dominant group or culture.

Racial Justice and Diversity

Racial justice addresses the causes of inequality and the solutions and strategies for producing equity. Racial justice is the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all (adapted from Rinku Sen, in “Fund Racial Justice Strategies, Not Just Diversity”). Racial justice is distinct from *diversity* and from *multiculturalism*. There can be diversity without equity. A diversity focus primarily addresses the symptoms of racism—with the goal of minimizing racial tensions and maximizing people’s ability to tolerate difference and get along. A focus on justice gets at the systemic issues of inequality and seeks to reframe the work and move people to equality.

Racial Ethnic(s)

Every person has an ethnicity and a race—not only people of color. The term racial ethnic is an abbreviation of the term racial-ethnic minority, which is seen by many as more pejorative and inaccurate than descriptive, since people who are not of North European ancestry actually make up the majority of the world’s citizens.

White Privilege

White privilege is produced by white power. White privilege are specific and identifiable individual rewards that are delivered exclusively to white people simply because they are white. They get a better education, better jobs, better housing, better healthcare, better police protection (no harassment), better almost everything than people of color. Most white people are more accepted, trusted, welcomed, and given more respect in our society than most people of color.