

The Language of Inclusion Guide DEI Glossary

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The Language of Inclusion

As organizations continue to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion, using the right language is foundational towards making a positive effort. I encourage organizations to think about the expressive nature of their website, social media, internal and external communications. In addition to how human resource professionals interact during the recruiting phase, managers during the retention and promotion phase, and leadership addressing the entire organization. Each person plays a vital role when it comes to the language of inclusion.

Although this is a well intended list of 200 words, it is not a comprehensive list. The Language of Inclusion Guide serves as a reference to help teams gain an understanding and to use the words properly in communications and marketing material. I hope this helps and I look forward to following your success.

AAPI - An acronym for Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders.

Ableism - The practices or dominant attitudes by a society that devalue or limit the potential for people with disabilities. Ableism is the act of giving inferior value or worth to people who have different types of disabilities such as physical, emotional, intellectual, or psychiatric.

Accessibility - Accessibility ensures a facility is usable by people with physical disabilities. Examples of accessibility include wheelchair ramp (access), self-opening doors, elevators for multiple levels, raised lettering on signs and entry ramps.

Accountability - Accountability refers to ways individuals and communities hold themselves to their goals and actions, while acknowledging the values and groups to which they are responsible.

Acculturation - A process when members of a cultural group adopt the patterns, beliefs, languages, and behaviors of another group's culture.

ADOS - ADOS means American Descendants of Slavery. ADOS is a group that seeks to reclaim and restore the critical national character of the African American identity and experience in the United States.

Ageism - Discrimination against a persons because of their age.

Agender - A person who does not identify themselves as having a particular gender.

Affinity Groups - Workplace affinity groups promote inclusion, diversity, and other efforts that benefit employees from underrepresented groups. Also known as employee resource groups.

Affirmative Action - The practice of favoring groups of people who have been discriminated against in the past.

Ally - A person from a dominant social group who can support people they know from underrepresented groups by actively working against prejudice and discrimination and working towards equality and/or equity.

Anti-Racism - The work of actively opposing discrimination based on race by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life.

Antisemitism - A prejudice against people of Jewish heritage. This includes physical abuse, slander, economic and social discrimination, vandalism and other crimes.

Appropriation - The action of taking from a cultural group without acknowledgment and/or inappropriate adoption of patterns, language, and behaviors. Also known as cultural appropriation.

Asexual - A person who experiences no or minimum sexual attraction or interest.

Assimilation - When an individual, family, or group gives up certain aspects of their culture to adapt to the beliefs, language, patterns, and behaviors of a new host country.

Belonging - The experience of being accepted and included by those around you; obtaining a social connection and identification with others.

Bias - Having prejudice against groups that are not similar to you or to have a preference for people that are similar to you.

Bicultural - Bicultural is a term that refers to people who possess the values, beliefs, languages, and behaviors of two distinct ethnic or racial groups.

Bigotry - To glorify a person's own group and have prejudices against members of other groups.

Biphobia - To have an irrational fear, hatred, or intolerance for people who identify as bisexual.

BIPOC - An acronym for Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

Biracial - An individual that has parents of two racial groups.

Black - People who have ethnic origins in Africa, or not of white European descent. Black is often used interchangeably with African Americans in the United States.

Black Lives Matter - Black Lives Matter is a movement that addresses systemic racism and violence against African Americans and other groups with ties to Black culture.

CAREN Act - [Caution Against Racially Exploitative Non-Emergencies](#), and it works to criminalize racially motivated emergency calls. This act is illegal in California. Individuals will penalize those who are found to exploit community resources to perpetuate their hate and bigotry.

Though filing a fraudulent police report is illegal in California, there are no consequences for people who make racially biased emergency calls under existing laws. This ordinance, however, will penalize those who are found to exploit community resources to perpetuate their hate and bigotry.

Caucuses - Groups that provide spaces for people to work within their own racial or ethnic groups.

Cisgender - When a person's gender matches their sex assigned at birth.

Classism - To have prejudicial thoughts or to discriminate against a person or group based on differences in socioeconomic status and income level.

Code Switch - Occurs when an individual alternates between two or more languages, or language varieties, in the context of a single conversation or situation.

Collusion - When a person acts to perpetuate oppression or prevent people from working to eliminate oppression.

Critical Race Theory - A framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalization of People of Color. There are at least five themes that form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of critical race theory in education: The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism. The challenge to dominant ideology. The commitment to social justice. The centrality of experiential knowledge. The interdisciplinary perspective.

Culture Add - Refers to people who value company culture and standards, as well as bringing an aspect of diversity that positively contributes to the organization. Also known as culture fit.

Culture - A social system of customs that are developed by a group of people to ensure its survival and adaptation.

D&I - An acronym for diversity and inclusion.

DEI - An acronym for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Decolonization - The active resistance against colonial powers from indigenous culture groups.

Demisexual - A sexual orientation where people experience sexual attraction only to people they are emotionally close to.

Disability - A person that has mental or physical impairment that has a long-term effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Also stated as "Person with a Disability."

Disablism - Promoting the unequal or differential treatment of people with actual or presumed disabilities; either consciously or unconsciously.

Diaspora - When a group of people are voluntary or forcible have to migrate from their homelands into new regions.

Discrimination - Unfavorable or unfair treatment towards an individual or group based on their race, ethnicity, color, national origin or ancestry, religion, socioeconomic status, education, sex, marital status, parental status, veteran's status, political affiliation, language, age, gender, physical or mental abilities, sexual orientation or gender identity

Diversity - Gathering individuals representing various backgrounds such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and other factors

Dyscalculia - When a person has difficulty with calculations and numbers.

Dyslexia - When a person has difficulty reading and may have difficulty with comprehension, spelling, and writing.

Dyspraxia - A disorder that affects movement and coordination, not intelligence.

Emotional Tax - The effects of being called to advise and protect against bias at work because of gender, race, and/or ethnicity. Emotional Tax has effects on a person's health, well-being, and the ability to be successful at work.

Equal Employment Opportunity - (EEO) Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibit discrimination in any aspect of employment based on an individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Equality - Evenly distributed access to resources and opportunity necessary for a safe and healthy life; uniform distribution of access to ensure fairness.

Equity - The term “equity” (in the context of diversity) refers to proportional representation (by race, class, gender, etc.) in employment opportunities.

Exclusion - When a person or a group leaves someone out based on their differences. These differences can be related to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, class, or other social groups.

Femme - Femme is a gender identity where a person has an awareness of cultural standards of femininity and actively carries out a feminine appearance or role.

FTM - FTM is an acronym for the Female-to-Male Spectrum. FTM is used by people who are assigned female at birth but identify with or express their gender as a male.

Gay - Gay is an umbrella term used to refer to people who experience a same-sex or same-gender attraction. Gay is also an identity term used to describe a male-identified person who is attracted to other male-identified people in a romantic, sexual, and/or emotional sense.

Gender - Gender is a term used to describe socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that society considers “appropriate” for men and women. It is separate from ‘sex’, which is the biological classification of male or female based on physiological and biological features.

Gender Binary - The classification system consisting of two genders, male and female.

Gender Dysphoria - A feeling of discomfort that occurs in people whose gender identity differs from their birth-assigned sex.

Gender Expansive - Someone whose gender expression does not conform to social expectations or stereotypes. Also known as gender non-conforming, gender variant, or gender creative.

Gender Fluid - A person who is gender fluid changes their gender over time or may switch between dressing as male or female.

Gender Identity - A person’s perception of their gender; he/she/they may or may not correspond with their birth-assigned sex.

Gender Neutral/Neutrality - Policies, language, and other social institutions should avoid distinguishing roles based on sex or gender in order to avoid discrimination.

Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) - A person who does not conform to society’s expectations of gender expression.

Gender Policing - The enforcement of normative gender expressions on a person who is perceived as not participating in behavior that aligns with their assigned gender at birth.

Gender Queer - A catch-all term for people who have non-binary gender identities. It is important to ask for the person’s preferred pronoun. Alternative genderqueer

Gender Role - Socially assigned expectation or cultural norm related to behavior, mannerisms, dress, and more based on gender.

Gender Spectrum - The idea that there are many different genders, besides male and female.

Groupthink - Groupthink is when people discourage a person from thinking a certain way or making decisions using individual creativity.

HBCU - An acronym that stands for “Historically Black Colleges and Universities”. HBCUs were established, post-American Civil War, in the United States to primarily serve the Black community, although they allow admission to students of all races.

Hepeating - When a man repeats a woman’s comments to take them as his own to gain credit or praise for the idea.

Heterosexism - The belief that heterosexuality is superior or “normal” compared to other forms of sexuality or sexual orientation.

Heterosexual - A term used to identify a female-identified person who is attracted to a male-identified person or a male-identified person who is attracted to a female-identified person.

Hidden Bias - Hidden bias, or implicit bias, refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect a person’s understanding, actions, or decisions unconsciously as it relates to people from different groups. Also known as unconscious bias.

Hispanic - Hispanic is a term used to describe people who speak Spanish and/or are descended from Spanish-speaking populations.

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) - Colleges, universities, or systems/districts where total Hispanic enrollment constitutes a minimum of 25% of the total enrollment.

Homophobia - An irrational fear or intolerance of people who are homosexual or have feelings of homosexuality.

Homosexual - A person who is romantically or sexually attracted to the same sex.

Human Rights - The basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, often held to include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law.

Hypersensitivity - When a neurodivergent person has a very high or intense response to a certain stimulus. (e.g., colors, smells, textures, or sounds)

Hyposensitivity - When a neurodivergent person has a very low response to a certain stimulus. (e.g., light, sound, pain)

Implicit Bias - Implicit Bias, or hidden bias, refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect a person’s understanding, actions, or decisions unconsciously as it relates to people from different groups. Also known as unconscious bias.

Imposter Syndrome - Imposter Syndrome is present when high-achieving individuals are in constant fear of being exposed as fraud and are unable to internalize their accomplishments.

Inclusion - The process of bringing people that are traditionally excluded into decision-making processes, activities, or positions of power. Inclusion is sometimes called Inclusiveness and allows individuals or groups to feel safe, respected, motivated, and engaged.

Inclusive Language - The use of nondiscriminatory or gender non-specific language to avoid assumptions around race, culture, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Indigenous People - Ethnic groups who are the earliest known inhabitants of an area, also known as First People in some regions.

Individual Racism - When a person acts to perpetuate or support racism without knowing that is what they are doing. For example, racist jokes, avoiding people of color, or accepting racist acts.

Institutional Racism - Institutional practices and policies create different outcomes for different racial groups. These policies may not specifically target any racial group, but their effect creates advantages for white people and oppression or disadvantages for people of color. Often used interchangeably with Structural Racism.

Integration - When an individual maintains their own cultural identity while also becoming a participant in a host culture.

Intersectionality - Intersectionality means to intertwine social identities like gender, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity which causes unique opportunities, barriers, experiences, or social inequality. Concept developed by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989.

Intersex - A person born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the boxes of male or female. Intersex often involves a discrepancy between the external and internal genitals (the testes and ovaries). The older term for Intersex is hermaphroditism.

Latinx - A gender-neutral term used to replace Latino or Latina when referring to a person of Latin-American descent.

Lesbian - A female-identified person who is attracted emotionally, physically, or sexually to other female-identified people.

LGBTQ/QIA - The acronym for "Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (Questioning Intersex Allies)." The description of the movement expanded from gay and lesbian to LGBTQ and some include questioning, intersex, allies, same-gender-loving, asexual, pansexual, and polyamorous.

Mansplain - A situation when men explain something to a person in a condescending or patronizing manner, typically a woman.

Marginalization - When a group or society exclude, ignore, or relegate a group of people to an unimportant or powerless position in society.

Melting Pot - Melting Pot is a metaphor people use to describe a society where various types of people blend together as one.

Metrosexual - A well-groomed style for non-queer men that is a mix of the words "heterosexual" and "metropolitan".

Mexican American - A group of Americans of full or partial Mexican descent in the United States.

Microaggression - Verbal or nonverbal behavior that communicates hostile or negative insults towards a person or group, either intentionally or unintentionally, particularly culturally marginalized groups.

Minority - Racially, ethnically, or culturally distinct groups that are usually subordinate to more dominant groups. However, a minority in one setting is not always a minority in another. For example, Black students typically make up the bulk of the campus population at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Multiracial - A person who has parents from more than one race. Similar to multiethnic.

Neurodiverse/Neurodivergent - People who experience, interact, and interpret the world in unique ways. Refers to developmental disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity (ADHD), Autism Spectrum, dyslexia, and other learning disorders.

Neurodiversity Movement - The Neurodiversity Movement is a social justice movement that is seeking equality, respect, inclusion, and civil rights for people with Neurodiversity.

Neuroatypical - A person who does not have a neurological difference, like autism.

Neurotypical - Neurotypical is often abbreviated as NT and it means to have a style of neurocognitive functioning that falls within the dominant societal standards of "normal." Neurotypical can be used as either an adjective ("They're neurotypical") or a noun ("They are a neurotypical").

Neurominority - An underrepresented group of Neurodiverse people who may face challenges or bias from society.

Non-Binary - People who identify with a gender that is not exclusively male or female or is in between both genders.

Oppression - Systemic and institutional abuse of power by a dominant or privileged group at the expense of a minority group.

Pansexual - A person who has an attraction to a person regardless of where they fall on the gender or sexuality spectrum.

Passing - When a transgender person is perceived as the gender they identify as and not as a trans person.

Patriarchy - A social system where power and authority are held by men.

People-First Language (PFL) - People-first language puts a person before a diagnosis or way of being. It describes what a person "has" rather than saying what a person "is". (e.g., "person with a disability" vs. "disabled")

People of Color - People of Color, or Person of Color, is a phrase to describe people who are not white and is meant to be inclusive of non-white groups, with emphasis on common experiences of racism.

Performative Allyship - When someone from a nonmarginalized group (white, able-bodied, etc.) professes support and solidarity with a marginalized group in a way that either isn't helpful or that actively harms that group. Performative allyship is surface based without working towards change that leads to diversity, equity, or inclusion.

Pronouns - Used when replacing a noun, such as a name. Pronouns are important part of being inclusive and affirming to individuals that identify as transgender and nonbinary. Pronouns include she/her/hers/herself, he/him/his/himself, they/them/their/theirs/themself.

Queer - Refers to people or culture of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community.

Race - A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the political needs of a society at a given period of time.

Racial Justice - To reinforce policies, practices, actions, and attitudes that produce equal treatment and opportunities for all groups of people.

Racism - Individual and institutional practices and policies based on the belief that a particular race is superior to others. This often results in depriving certain individuals and groups of civil liberties, rights, and other resources, hindering opportunities for social, educational, and political advancement.

Rainbow Washing - When a business publicly shows support for the LGBTQ+ community but also engages in practices that are harmful to the LGBTQ+ community.

Restorative Justice - An effort to repair the harm caused by crime and conflict related to bias or racism.

Reverse Racism - Perceived discrimination against a dominant group or majority of people.

Safe Space - A place people can be comfortable expressing themselves without fear as it relates to their cultural background, biological sex, religion, race, gender identity or expression, age, physical or mental ability.

Same-gender-loving (SGL) - Someone who may not identify with the terms gay or lesbian but engage in same-sex behavior. A term coined by Cleo Manago.

Scoliosesexual (aka Scoliosesexuality) - A person who is attracted to people who are transgender or nonbinary.

Segregation - A systemic separation of people into racial or ethnic groups during the activities of daily life.

Self-stimulating/stimming - Behaviors used by people on the autism spectrum to assist with concentration or calming. (e.g., rocking back and forth, making noises, spinning, moving hands, or skipping)

Separation - When an individual or group rejects a host culture and maintains their cultural identity.

Sex - The biological classification of male or female based on the physical and biological features of a person. A person's sex may vary from their gender identity.

Sexual Orientation - The direction of one's sexual attraction toward the same gender, opposite gender, or other genders.

Social Justice - A vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. A sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole.

Stereotype - A positive or negative set of beliefs held by an individual about the characteristics of a certain group.

Supplier Diversity - A corporate program that provides contracts to minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, LGBT-owned, and other historically underutilized businesses. Developed by the Small Business Administration (SBA).

Tokenism - The practice of including one or a few members of an underrepresented group in a team or company.

Trans*/Trans+ - An umbrella term for a person whose gender identity is not the same as their assigned sex. Avoid the outdated phrases: transvestite and transsexual.

Transexual - A medical term used to refer to people who lived as their gender identity. It is not widely accepted by transgender people.

Transfeminine - A person who identifies as “trans” but identifies their gender expression as feminine.

Transgender - An umbrella term for people whose gender expression or identity is different from their assigned sex at birth.

Transmasculine - A person who identifies as “trans” but identifies their gender expression as masculine.

Transition/Transitioning - Transition, in terms of diversity, is a process that people go through to change their physical appearance or gender expression through surgery or using hormones to align with their gender identity.

Transphobia - Transphobia (or transphobic) means fear, hatred, or discrimination towards people who identify as Transgender.

Unconscious Bias - Refers to attitudes or stereotypes about certain groups which are often based on mistaken or inaccurate information. Also known as hidden bias or implicit bias.

Underrepresented Group - A subset of a population with a smaller percentage than the general population. For example, women, people of color, or indigenous people.

Veteran - A person who served in the Armed Forces of the United States. Armed Forces is defined as the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard, including all components thereof, and the National Guard.

White Centering - Putting the feelings as a White person above BIPOC when you're supposed to be supportive.

White Fragility - Discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice.

White Privilege - Represents the unearned set of advantages, privileges, or benefits given to people based solely on being white.

White Supremacy - The exploitation or oppression of nations or people of color by white people for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, privilege, and power.

(WLW) Women-Loving-Women - An umbrella term for lesbians, bisexual and pansexual women.

Womxn - Womxn is a term sometimes used to replace the word women in an attempt to get away from patriarchal language. Womxn is also meant to be inclusive of trans women, and some non-binary people, but it not always accepted. Some say the word has evolved over time and is divisive, and “women” is more inclusive in the LGBTQ+ community.

Workforce Diversity - Workforce Diversity means having a group of employees with similarities and differences like age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation.

Xenophobia - Xenophobia is prejudice or a dislike for people from other countries.

Diversity Higher Education Terminology

Alaskan Native & Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions (ANNH)

Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI)

Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU)

Primarily Black Institutions (PBI)

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU)

Resources

- [California State University Long Beach](#)
- [Diversity Is](#)
- [Indiana State University Southeast](#)
- [Ongig Blog](#)
- [Seramount](#)
- [Southern Utah University](#)
- [Transgender Training Institute](#)
- [UCLA Equity, Diversity & Inclusion](#)
- [University of Connecticut](#)

About Michelle Ngome

Michelle Ngome is the founder of [Line 25 Consulting](#), helps cause-based organizations with diversity and inclusive marketing strategies. She has presented to AIG, Capital One, Content Marketing World, and the YMCA to name a few.

In 2019, Michelle founded the [African-American Marketing Association](#) (AAMA), a nonprofit that empowers Black marketers all over the United States. In 2020, Michelle received the Courageous Marketing Leader Award. She is a member of Forbes The Culture and the National Black MBA Association. Michelle is an alumni of Leadership Houston Class XXXIX and the Houston Black Leadership Institute Class II.

Michelle has completed DEI programs at Cornell University and the University of South Florida. In addition to becoming a Certified Diversity Sourcing Professional. She is the recipient of the Diversity in Business by the Houston Business Journal.

Michelle has written white papers on The 6 Methods For Your Organization to Become Inclusive, The 4 Part Framework to Inclusive Marketing, and The Language of Inclusion Guide. She hosts the podcast Marketing For The Culture and her work has been featured in The Wall Street Journal, Forbes, Entrepreneur, and USA Today.

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