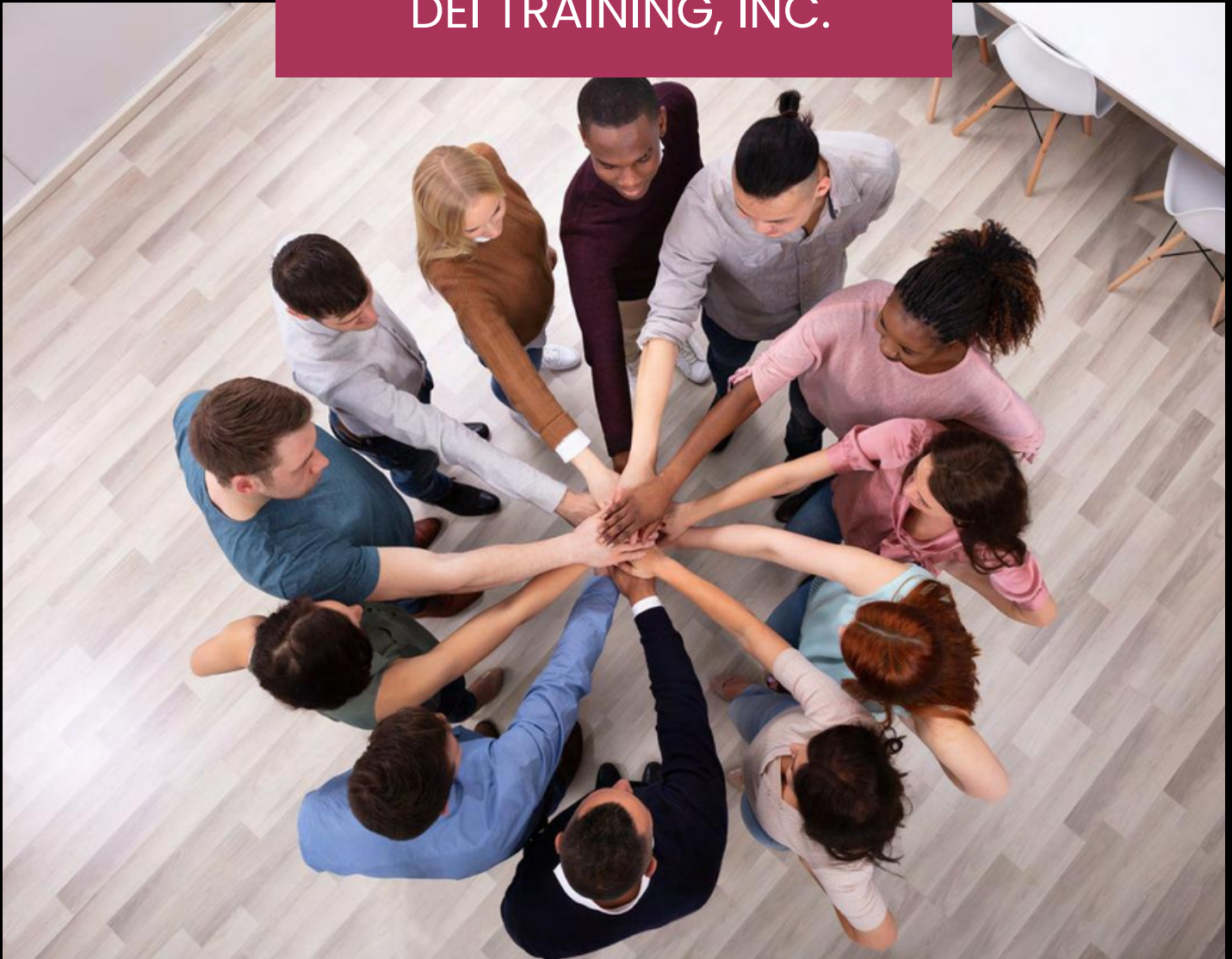


# 56 FOUNDATIONAL DEI WORDS + CONCEPTS THAT EVERY ALLY SHOULD KNOW

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In the journey towards a more inclusive and equitable society, knowledge is power. As allies, it is our responsibility to educate ourselves about the issues and experiences faced by marginalized communities. To be effective advocates for change, we must familiarize ourselves with the key words and concepts that shape conversations around social justice, diversity, and inclusion. In this blog, we have compiled a comprehensive list of 56 essential terms that every ally should know and understand. Whether you're just starting your allyship journey or looking to deepen your understanding, these words and concepts will serve as a valuable resource to help you become a more informed and empathetic ally.

**01** **Age discrimination** – discrimination against a person or group on the basis of age. Age discrimination usually comes in one of two forms: discrimination against youth, and discrimination against the elderly.

**02** **Agender** – describes a person who does not identify as any gender.

03 **Ally** – a person of one social identity group who provides actionable support to members of another group; typically, a member of the dominant group forming an alliance with member(s) of a marginalized member or group being discriminated against or treated unjustly.

04 **American caste system** – an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value.

05 **Backfire effect** – due to this effect, whenever you are confronted with information and facts that contradict something you believe, instead of changing your view or forming a new opinion, your original beliefs will often be strengthened.

06 **Bias** – a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone.

07 **Cisgender** – describes a person whose gender identity is the same as their sex assigned at birth. The word cisgender is the antonym of transgender. The prefix cis- is not an acronym or abbreviation of another word; it is derived from Latin meaning on this side of.



08 **Colonialism** – the political, social, economic, and cultural domination of a territory and its people by a foreign power for an extended time.

09 **Colorism** – prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group.

10 **Critical Race Theory (CRT)** – an academic concept that is more than 40 years old. The core idea is that race is a social construct, and that racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies.

11 **Cross-cultural competence** – the final stage of cross-cultural learning and signals the individual's ability to work effectively across cultures. Cross-cultural competency necessitates more than knowledge.

12 **Culture** – the shared values, norms, traditions, customs, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people.

13 **DEI** - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. A term used to describe policies and programs that promote the representation and participation of different groups of individuals, including people of different ages, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, genders, religions, cultures, and sexual orientations.

14 **Disparate impact** – occurs when policies, practices, rules, or other systems that appear to be neutral result in a disproportionate impact on a protected group. For example, testing all applicants and using results from that test that will unintentionally eliminate certain minority applicants disproportionately is disparate impact.





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**Dominant culture** – there is usually one "dominant" culture in each area that forms the basis for defining that culture. This is determined by power and control in cultural institutions (church, government, education, mass media, monetary systems, and economics). Often, those in the dominant culture do not see the privilege that accrues to them by being the "norm" and do not identify themselves as being the dominant culture. Rather, they believe that they're cultural norm.

16

**Equity vs Equality** – equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

17

**Ethnocentrism** – belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic group. Seeing the world through the lenses of one's own people or culture so that own culture always looks best and becomes the pattern everyone else should fit into.

18

**Fluid** – refers to the fact that sexuality, sexual attraction, and sexual behavior can change over time and be dependent on the situation.

19

**Gay** – describes any homosexual; however, gay typically refers to men.

20

**Gender binary vs Gender identity** – the gender binary is the Western concept that there are only two gender options: male or female. Gender identity is one's own internal experience and perception of self. In simple terms, a non-binary person is someone who does not identify as exclusively a man or a woman. Someone who is non-binary might feel like a mix of genders, or like they have no gender at all.



21

**Gender stereotypes** – oversimplified but strongly held ideas about the characteristics, roles and behavior models of males and females.

22

**Gender transition** – a process a person may take to bring themselves and/or their bodies into alignment with their gender identity.

23

**Heterosexual** – people who are heterosexual are romantically and physically attracted to members of the opposite sex; Heterosexuals are sometimes called "straight."

24

**Injustice** – unfair treatment a situation in which the rights of a person or a group of people are ignored.



- 25 **Institutional power** – the ability or official authority to decide what is best for others, who will have access to resources, or the capacity to exercise control over others.
- 26 **Intersectionality** – a theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of one’s social and political identities might combine to create unique modes of discrimination. Example: A poor, Black, lesbian woman would have the combined oppression of 4 identities.
- 27 **Islamophobia** – fear and dread of Islam, which has been increasing particularly since September 11, 2001.
- 28 **LGBTQIA+** - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual and/or Ally.
- 29 **Mentorship vs Sponsorship** – mentors help us grow our individual skills, they listen to our challenges and offer their perspective. But sponsors help you get the next opportunity. They are individuals who will talk about you when you aren't in the room and argue your case.



30

**Microaggression** – a term used for commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental slights, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward stigmatized or culturally marginalized groups.

31

**Nonviolent communication** – an approach to communication based on principles of nonviolence. It is not a technique to end disagreements, but rather a method designed to increase empathy and improve the quality of life of those who utilize the method and the people around them.

32

**Oppression** – prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control; mental pressure or distress. Black people are the most historically oppressed group in the United States.

33

**Pansexual** – a term that describes individuals who can experience sexual, romantic, or emotional attraction to any person, regardless of that person's gender, sex, or sexuality.





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**Performative allyship** – true allyship is an authentic support system, in which someone from outside a marginalized group advocates for those who are victims of discriminatory behavior, whether that is at an individual level, or systemically and process driven. With authentic allyship there is an obvious, and genuine attempt, to transfer the benefits of privilege to those who lack it, to advocate on the marginalized groups behalf, and support them to achieve change.

35

**Prejudice** – over-generalized, oversimplified, or exaggerated beliefs associated with a category or group of people. These beliefs are not easily changed, even in the fact of contrary evidence. Example: A French woman is in an elevator alone. She grabs her purse tight when an African young man enters. Prejudice can also be devaluing (looking down on) a group because of its assumed behavior, values, capabilities, attitudes, or other attributes.

36

**Privilege** – privilege operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives advantages, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of target groups. In the United States, privilege is granted to people who have membership in one or more of these social identity groups: • White people; • Able-bodied people; • Heterosexuals; • Males; • Christians; • Middle or owning class people; • Middle-aged people; • English-speaking people.



37

**Pronouns** – a pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (“I” or “you”) or someone or something that is being talked about (like “she”, “it”, “them”, and “this”). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc.) specifically refer to the person you are referring to. Pronouns are part of someone’s gender expression, and people can have multiple sets of pronouns for themselves (such as using move he/him/his and they/them/theirs). Pronouns are not “preferred” but instead are required for respectful communication. Not only transgender or nonbinary communities use pronouns, as it is something we all use and have since we were little.

38

**Race** – someone has said that “race is a pigment of our imagination”. That is a clever way of saying that race is an invention. It is a way of arbitrarily dividing humankind into different groups for the purpose of keeping some on top and some at the bottom; some in and some out. Its invention has very clear historical roots; namely, colonialism. “Race is an arbitrary socio-biological classification created by Europeans during the time of worldwide colonial expansion, to assign human worth and social status, using themselves as the model of humanity, for the purpose of legitimizing white power and white skin privilege” (Crossroads-Interfaith Ministry for Social Justice). To acknowledge that race is a historical arbitrary invention does not mean that it can be, thereby, easily dispensed with as a reality in people’s lives. To acknowledge race as an invention of colonialism is not the same as pretending to be color blind or declaring, “I don’t notice people’s race!” Our world has been ordered and structured based on skin color and that oppressive ordering and structuring is racism.

39

**Racism** – the combination of racial bias and systemic power; the action of people or systems with personal or group power over another person or group with less power;

a fixed ranking of human value determined by inherited physical characteristics and enforced by politics, policies, and personal interactions. Racism is a system in which one race maintains supremacy over another race through a set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures, and institutional power. Racism is a “system of structured dis-equality where the goods, services, rewards, privileges, and benefits of the society are available to individuals according to their presumed membership in” racial groups (Barbara Love, 1994. Understanding Internalized Oppression). A person of any race can have prejudices about people of other races, but only members of the dominant social group can exhibit racism because racism is prejudice plus the institutional power to enforce it.



40 **Redlining** – a discriminatory practice that consists of the systematic denial of services such as mortgages, insurance loans, and other financial services to residents of certain areas, based on their race or ethnicity.

41 **Scapegoating** – the directing of hostility towards less powerful groups when the actual source of frustration or anger cannot be attacked or is unavailable.



42

**Sexual assault** – any type of sexual conduct, or sexual contact that is nonconsensual, forced, or coerced when the victim is incapable of giving consent because of her or his temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity or because of her or his youth.



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**Sexual orientation** – this is about who you're attracted to and who you feel drawn to romantically, emotionally, and sexually. It's different than gender identity.

44

**Slavery** – the most extreme, coercive, abusive, and inhumane

form of legalized inequality where people are treated as things or

someone's property; The conversion of human beings into currency – human machines who existed solely for the profit of their owners; a living death passed down for 12 generations doomed to toil that others may reap the fruits.

45

**Social class** – system of hierarchical organization based on power, privilege, and wealth.

46

**Socioeconomic status** – measure used to compare people or groups based on social and economic data (income, education, employment, residential location).

47

**Stereotypes** – generalizations or assumptions that people make about the characteristics of all members of a group, based on an inaccurate image about what people in that group are like. For example, Americans are generally friendly, generous, and tolerant, but also arrogant, impatient, and domineering.

Asians are humble, shrewd, and alert, but reserved. Stereotyping is common and causes most of the problems in cross-cultural conflicts.

48 **Stigma** – a term describing the condition of possessing an identity which has been branded 'spoiled' or discredited identity by others. Examples of negative social stigmas are physical or mental handicaps and disorders, as well as homosexuality or affiliation with a specific nationality, religion, or ethnicity.

49 **Targeted universalism** – a strategy that is inclusive of the needs of both dominant and marginal groups but pays particular attention to the situation of the marginal group. We devote significant attention to people who have endured a debased status, the least valued and even declared sub-human by law.



50 **Transgender** – denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.

51 **Uncertain avoidance** – the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations.

52 **Universal** – something that exists in every culture.

53 **Values** – basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions.

They help us to determine what is important to us. Values describe the personal qualities we choose to embody to guide our actions; the sort of person we want to be; the way we treat ourselves and others, and our interaction with the world around us. They provide the general guidelines for conduct.

**54** **Vertical mobility** – upward or downward change in a person's social status.

**55** **Wealth** – all a person's material assets, including income, land, and other types of property. It is the basis of economic and often social status.

**56** **Xenophobia** – the belief that people and things from other countries are dangerous and always have ulterior motives; an irrational fear or hatred of anything foreign or unfamiliar.







As we wrap up this exploration of 56 key words and concepts every ally should know and understand, remember that allyship is an ongoing commitment. Educating yourself is just the first step. It's essential to engage in meaningful conversations, listen to the experiences of marginalized individuals, and actively work towards dismantling systems of oppression. By continuously expanding your knowledge and putting it into action, you can make a significant difference in the fight for a more just and inclusive world. So, let these words and concepts be your guide, and let your allyship be a beacon of hope and progress in the pursuit of a better tomorrow.

