

Social Justice Terminology

Social Justice encompasses many areas, but it functions as a field to increase awareness and equal rights for minorities and other disadvantaged populations while valuing diversity and inclusivity. Knowing social justice terminology will aid in a better understanding (and allow for you to take an active role) in advocating for a socially just society.

Ableism - prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental, and/or emotional ability; usually that of able-bodied / minded persons against people with illness, disabilities, or less developed skills / talents.

Accessibility - the extent to which a facility is readily approachable and usable by individuals with disabilities, particularly such areas as the personnel office, worksite and public areas.

Advocate - someone who speaks up for her/himself and members of his/her identity groups

Bias - prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

Bigotry - intolerant prejudice that glorifies one's own group, but oppresses members of other groups.

Classism - discrimination based on a person's social class (e.g. education, income, occupation).

Collusion: Thinking and acting in ways that support dominant systems of power, privilege, and oppression. Both privileged and oppressed groups can collude with oppression.

Culture - a learned system of shared meanings, values, beliefs and norms and is expressed in interpersonal interactions, customs, rituals, symbols, art and artifacts and social systems. While most people perceive culture in terms of ethnicity, culture is a concept that is applicable to any social group with commonalities.

Cultural identity - the culture with which individuals choose to identify and live accordingly to.

Denial - refusal to acknowledge the social privileges that are granted or denied based on an individual's privilege. Those who are in a stage of denial tend to believe, "People are people. We are all alike regardless of the color of our skin, gender identity, etc." In this way, the existence of a hierarchical system or privileges can be ignored.

Discrimination - prejudice + power. It occurs when members of a more powerful social group behave unjustly or cruelly to members of a less powerful social group.

Ethnocentrism: judging another culture solely based on the standards and values of one's own culture. Also, a belief in the inherent superiority of one's own nation or ethnic group.

Prejudice - conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members made without adequate evidence.

Stereotype - preconceived or oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences.

Dominant group - a group of individuals who share certain characteristics, that as a result of these characteristics, are afforded specific forms of power and privileges which are at the expense of the exploitation of other groups and individuals.

Exclusion – the feeling and experience of being disempowered, degraded, or marginalized through intentional or systemic discrimination.

Inclusion - creating an environment in which people have both the feeling and reality of belonging and (thus) able to work to their full potential.

Intersectionality - an integrated approach to social justice which begins from the concept that people live and experience multiple, layered identities such as, race, gender, class, sexuality, able-bodiedness, and so forth, that derives from social relations, history, and operating structures of power.

Marginalization - when social structures and social institutions are used to disadvantage those who are not perceived as part of the dominant group. These individuals are often denied equal access to resources and become vulnerable to further exploitation and social exclusion.

Oppression - the systematic domination of a group of people by another group with access to social power, the result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.

Institutional Oppression - arrangements of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of other groups through the use of language, media, education, religion, economics, and so forth.

Internalized Oppression - when a member of an oppressed group accepts and lives out the stereotypes applied to their oppressed group(s).

Privilege - unearned advantage, right, or immunity that gives certain groups economic, social and political advantages in society

Reverse discrimination - term often used to put down efforts to create equity in service and employment for marginalized people, through positive action. It is a misnomer to term such equity efforts as ‘reversing’ discrimination because increasing access for marginalized groups does not produce systemic inequality for privileged groups. It does not ‘reverse’ broad social and historical power imbalances.

Social justice - a basic value and desired goal in democratic societies that includes equal and fair access to social institutions, laws, resources, opportunities, without individual limitations based on observed, or interpretations of, differences in age, color, culture, physical or mental disability, education, gender, income, language, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Social Location - an individual's social locations consists of their ascribed social identities (gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, kinship status, etc.) and social roles and relationships (occupation, political party membership, etc.). Partly in virtue of their different ascribed identities, individuals occupy different social roles that accord them different powers, duties, and role-given goals and interests.

Stereotypes - can be defined as an unvarying form or pattern; a fixed or conventional notion or conception, as of a person, group, idea, etc., held by a number of people, and allowing for no individuality, critical judgment. Stereotyping may happen as a result of our socialization or when the real environment becomes too complex for individuals to deal with, they reconstruct it into a simpler model in order to cope. Because stereotypes are built on specific attributions, individuals tend to pick out a sample that supports their prejudice and generalize it to be representative to the entire group. Stereotypes also help to justify the hostility of some individuals towards their vulnerable targets.