

COMMON TERMS

The National Conference on Faith-Based Service (*Catholic Volunteer Network*)

As we work together to broaden our vision and impact, it is helpful to utilize these common terms to guide our conversations. This list is not meant to be all encompassing, you may use the blank spots at the end of the list to add additional terms that come up during this conference.

TERM	DEFINITION
Ally	A person (usually from a privileged identity group) who stands up against oppression and stands for the liberation of oppressed communities. Allies support the thinking and direction given by oppressed groups rather than making decisions on behalf of the group (which would represent/reinforce the current system of power and privilege).
Anti-Oppression Organization	An organization that actively recognizes and mitigates the oppressive effects of white dominant culture and power dynamics, striving to equalize that power imbalance internally and for the communities with which they work.
Anti-Racism	The active practice of opposing any and all forms of racism.
Assimilate	The phenomenon that occurs when people belonging to the nondominant group understand dominant culture norms and take on their characteristics either by choice or by force. Many people of color are asked to “check their identities at the door” in professional settings to make their white peers comfortable. By doing so, many people of color find it easier to get promotions and professional opportunities, as well as to gain access to informal networks typically accessible only to whites.
Bias	Prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgement. Often, bias is something that one has without knowing it and individuals can be socialized to have a bias.
BIOPIC/BIWOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color / Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color. This acronym is used to recognize that Black and Indigenous people have unique experiences of White Supremacy.
Cisgender	Individuals whose gender identity and expression line up with their birth-assigned sex.
Discrimination	Treatment or consideration based on perceived category status rather than individual merit; partiality or prejudice. The unequal treatment of persons of various groups, often on the basis of prejudice. The practice of treating people differently on the basis of race and/or ethnicity.
Diversity	Psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among any and all individuals; including but not limited to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, and learning styles.
Dominant/privileged group	The identity group with the most socially given power and privilege. The group that, regardless of numbers, is best represented in decision-making, and has the most opportunities.
Dominant Culture	Dominant culture in a society refers to the established language, religion, values, rituals, and social customs on which the society was built. It has the most power, is widespread, and influential within a social entity, such as an organization, in which multiple cultures are present. An organization’s dominant culture is heavily influenced by the leadership and management standards and preferences of those at the top of the hierarchy. See also “White Dominant Culture.”
Equity	The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations, and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups.
Inclusion	The act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate and bring their full, authentic selves to work. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in the words/actions/ thoughts of all people.
Intersectionality	An examination of how the individual experience is impacted by multiple axes of oppression and privilege. Variables include, but are not limited to: race, gender, gender identity, gender

	expression, ethnicity, religion, ability, education, sexual orientation, sexuality, class, first language, citizenship, age.
Oppression	The long-term injustices and inequalities that a whole identity group experiences to uphold the power and privileges of another identity group. Oppression is based on a history of prejudice that has been acted out and supported through institutionalized power (including laws), beliefs/ideologies, relationships between people, and the ways that people think of themselves as better or worse than people from other identity groups.
People of Color	A collective term for men and women of Asian, African, Latin and Native American backgrounds; as opposed to the collective "White" for those of European ancestry.
Power	Access to resources that enhance one's chances of getting what one needs in order to lead a safe, comfortable, and productive life.
Prejudice	A set of usually negative beliefs about a social group that leads individuals to pre-judge people from that group or the group in general, regardless of individual differences among members of that group. Opinion or feelings formed beforehand, without knowledge, thought, or reason – preconceived notion/opinion or feeling either favorable or unfavorable.
Privilege	A right or benefit that certain people/groups have, and others don't. Privilege usually gives people power and resources they don't recognize they have and did not earn. The more privileges a person has, the higher their social rank, and the more they are treated with value. Privileges are held up by institutions, beliefs/ideologies, and relationships between people. They include things that seem to be basic rights, but when other people are denied these rights, they become privileges.
Racial Microaggressions	Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color. Perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with racial/ethnic minorities.
Racism	Any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of their color. Privilege + Power = Racism
Social Justice	A concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society. This is measured by the explicit and tacit terms for the distribution of power, wealth, education, healthcare, and other opportunities for personal activity and social privileges.
Targeted/oppressed group	The identity group that experiences oppression. This group, regardless of numbers, is usually poorly represented in decision-making, and has fewer opportunities.
Tokenism	Presence without meaningful participation. For example, a superficial invitation for participation without ongoing dialogue and support, handpicked representatives who are expected to speak for the whole (socially oppressed) group (e.g. 'tell us how women experience this issue'). Tokenism is often used as a band aid solution to help the group improve its image.
White Dominant Culture	Culture defined by white people with social and positional power, enacted both broadly in society and within the context of social entities such as organizations. See also "Dominant Culture."
White Privilege	Unearned advantages that white people acquire based on their European-American descent and/or physical appearance including higher expectations, benefit of the doubt, positive stereotyping, and preferential treatment.

NOTE: This is an evolving list that is meant to grow along with our learning. Each time we use it for a meeting or event, we do look at it to see if there are any terms that should be added or definitions that can be clarified.

Catholic Volunteer Network: <https://catholicvolunteernetwork.org/who-we-are/identity/>