Structural Racism and Health Equity Language Guide

The American Heart Association strives to use thoughtful, sensitive and consistent language to help audiences understand important information about health and science. This guide is a reference to help understand and appropriately use language related to health equity, primarily as it pertains to race, ethnicity, structural racism and social determinants of health. You can also find shorter definitions in the glossary, and common usage for names of groups and populations in the quick reference. For further guidance about equity-related language outside this focus, please see the AHA Editorial Style Guide. We developed this guide from leading language guides; civic, community and health organizations; government entities; academic references; research; historical references; expert insights; and media reports. (References are linked, footnoted and/or listed at the end of this document.) Because language evolves, this guide will be continually updated. If you have questions, contact our Office of Health Equity.

Race and Ethnicity

Definitions: *Race* is a social construct not rooted in biology. Official racial designations have changed over time. The U.S. Census Bureau defines *race* as a person's self-identification with one or more social groups, including *white*, *Black* or *African American*, *Asian*, *American Indian and Alaska Native*, *Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander* or another race.

Ethnicity also is a social construct not rooted in biology, referring to the social characteristics people may have in common such as language, religion, regional background, national background, traditions and culture. Examples include *Hispanic*, *Haitian*, *Korean* and *Cherokee*.

Usage: When discussing race and ethnicity, it's always best to be specific. Lumping (or aggregating) different groups of people together can be vague, offensive or dismissive. However, grouping people broadly is sometimes useful when describing health disparities. AHA communication about broad groups of people should:

- Shine a light on inequities.
- Not shame, blame, label or offend.
- Be accurate, specific and in context, to the fullest extent possible.

- Be understandable by the intended audience.

- Be in step with common usage.

- Use consistent language.

- Frame inequities with historical context as often as possible. (Space may be a limiting factor in some cases.)

Issues involving race and ethnicity call for thoughtful consideration, precise language and open discussions with people of diverse backgrounds about how to be sensitive, respectful, appropriate and accurate. Some basics:

- Avoid generalizations and labels; race and ethnicity are one part of a person's identity.

- Strive to accurately represent the world or a community and its diversity. Omissions can render people invisible and cause anguish.

- Consider carefully whether to identify people by race. Include racial or ethnic information only when clearly relevant. Drawing unnecessary attention to race or ethnicity can be interpreted as bigotry.

The terms below for referencing races and ethnicities are based largely on guidelines in The Associated Press Stylebook[1], the most common guidance for consumer and web content. Whenever communicating about race and ethnicity, defer to the sources, authors or audiences for their preferred terms. Often you can find their preferences on their official biographies or social media accounts. If you don't know, ask.

African American: Acceptable for an American Black person of African descent. *Black* also is acceptable, but only as an adjective. (Example: *Black people*, not *Blacks*.) *African American* and *Black* aren't necessarily interchangeable. Follow an individual's preference, if known. This is extremely important because the legacy of discrimination affects some Black people's feelings of connectedness to America. If preference is not known, use *Black*. Specificity is best when known. For example, Americans of Caribbean heritage often prefer *Caribbean American*.

American Indian or Alaska Native, Native American, Indigenous American: These are acceptable in general when referring to two or more people of different tribal affiliations. Use the term preferred by the source, author or audience, as appropriate. Some sources prefer *Native People*. The U.S. Census Bureau defines *American Indian or Alaska Native* as a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America (which includes Mexico and the Caribbean islands) and South America (including Central America) who maintain tribal affiliations. For individuals, use the name of the tribe. If the name isn't known, try to determine it. *He is a Navajo commissioner. She is a member of the Nisqually Indian Tribe.*

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[1] The Associated Press Stylebook. www.apstylebook.com. Published 2020. https://www.apstylebook.com/race-related-coverage

Some tribes and tribal nations use *member*; others use *citizen*. If in doubt, use *citizen*. In Alaska, Indigenous groups are collectively known as *Alaska Natives*. *First Nation* is preferred by some tribes in Canada. Do not use *Indian* as shorthand for *American Indian*. Avoid casual use of words such as *wampum, warpath, powwow, teepee, squaw* and *off the reservation*, which are disparaging and offensive. Also avoid the casual use of *tribe*, such as describing a group of friends this way.

Asian American: Acceptable for an American of Asian descent. When possible, follow the person's preference or refer to a person's country of origin. For example: *Filipino American* or *Japanese American*. Given Asia's size and diversity, regional references also may be acceptable. *Southeast Asian* is a common term to describe people from the area encompassing regions south of China, east of the Indian subcontinent and northwest of Australia. *South Asian* refers to people from the region defined in geographical and ethno-cultural terms, consisting of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. *East Asian people* are from China, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Macao, South Korea, Tibet and North Korea. Language describing Asian people, communities and populations continues to evolve. *Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI)* can an acceptable term to describe the broad population made up of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

biracial, multiracial: Acceptable when relevant to describe people with more than one racial heritage. Usually more useful when describing large, diverse groups than individuals. *Multiracial* can encompass any combination of races. Don't use mixed race, which can be offensive.

Black: Capitalize when referring to people, communities, populations or culture. Use as an adjective, not a noun: Say *Black people,* but not *Blacks*. Widespread use of capitalized *Black* recognizes the common understanding that the term reflects a shared identity and culture. While *African American* also is acceptable for Black Americans of African descent, the terms are not necessarily interchangeable. Use the preference of the source, author or audience when known. Don't use dated and offensive terms such as *Negro* and *colored*, unless they are part of a formal name of an organization or a quotation in which the term is appropriate and essential.

Chicano, Chicana: A term Mexican American people sometimes use to describe their heritage. Use only if it is a person's preference. The term denotes pride for some but also historically has been used to describe Mexican American people of lower social standing in a derogatory way.

Hispanic: A person from — or whose ancestors were from — a Spanish-speaking land or culture. Use a more specific identification when possible, such as *Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican* or *Mexican American.* It is acceptable to use *Hispanic* interchangeably with *Latino* and *Latina* when generally referencing Hispanic and Latino people as a larger group, as there is no universal convention. Use as an adjective, not as a noun.

Because Hispanic and Latino people <u>can be of any race</u>, comparing health or other issues with white or Black people may require more detail for clarity.
Examples: *Hispanic people had higher blood pressure than white and Black people who are not Hispanic, researchers found.* For general usage: *We're celebrating the accomplishments of Hispanic people this month.*

Indigenous: Capitalize when referring to original inhabitants of a place. *Aboriginal people welcomed a new era of Indigenous relations in Australia. Bolivia's Indigenous people represent 62% of the population.*

Latino, Latina <mark>(REVISED)</mark>: A person from — or whose ancestors are from — Latin America. Use a more specific identification when possible, such as *Cuban, Puerto Rican, Brazilian* or *Mexican American*. *Latino* is the masculine form of the word, and *Latina* is the feminine form; in Spanish, most all nouns are one or the other. For groups of females, use the plural *Latina* people; for groups of males or of mixed gender, use the plural *Latino* people. Use as an adjective rather than a noun. Say *Latino people* or *Latina people*, rather than *Latinos* or *Latinas*.

The terms *<u>Latinx</u>* and *Latine* <u>are not used or preferred on a large scale</u>, so should be avoided in general. Both terms are acceptable, however, if they are used in quotations, are someone's stated preference, or are the official names of organizations. Additionally, the number who prefer and use the term *Latinx* is growing, especially among younger generations and the LGBTQ+ community. So carefully consider your audience when considering *Latinx*. <u>This story</u> offers more interesting background on these terms.

Using the inclusive constructions *Hispanic and Latino* or *Hispanic/Latino* also is acceptable because Hispanic and Latino people <u>can be of any race</u>. Use *Hispanic and Latino people, Hispanic/Latino patients*, etc.

<u>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders</u> <mark>(REVISED)</mark>: People having origins in Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or other Pacific Islands. This population also includes people who reported entries in the census such as Pacific Islander; Polynesian entries, such as Tahitian, Tongan and Tokelauan; Micronesian entries, such as Marshallese, Palauan and Chuukese; and Melanesian entries, such as Fijian, Guinean and Solomon Islander. *Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI)* is a common and acceptable term to describe the broad population made up of Asian American people and Pacific Islanders. Specificity is always preferred when known and if requested.

For copy written for local Hawaiians, *Hawaii* should be spelled as *Hawaiʻi* (a reversed apostrophe is acceptable for the okina symbol), as this is the proper way to recognize the state and honor the culture. However, the spelling of *Hawaii* (without the okina symbol) is acceptable elsewhere. The term *Hawaiian* does not use the okina because it is not part of the native Hawaiʻi language.

non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic white: These cumbersome terms have been commonly used in research and data comparing health or outcomes, because Hispanic and Latino people can be of any race, which is why these terms often are appropriate for science and medical professionals. However, for consumers, strive to be specific instead of using these terms. Example: *The study found Hispanic people of all races fared better than white and Black people who aren't Hispanic*. If necessary, for your audience, briefly explain that Latino and Hispanic people can be of any race. If *non-Hispanic* can't be avoided, use as adjectives but not nouns. Say *non-Hispanic Black people* or *non-Hispanic white people*, not *non-Hispanic Blacks* or *non-Hispanic whites*.

White, white: Uppercase *White* to describe people and populations in medical/scientific copy, but lowercase *white* in consumer copy. While this is inconsistent organizationally, it keeps the AHA consistent with industry standards for each audience. American Medical Association style, followed by our journals and other medical writing, uppercases *White*. The AP Stylebook, which the AHA and other consumer content follows, lowercases *white*. There is not universal agreement about whether to capitalize *White*; there is valid support for both lowercasing and uppercasing. Use as an adjective but not a noun. *White people or white people, not Whites or whites.* Don't use *Caucasian*, which originates from pseudoscience race classifications described in this article.

racial equity, racial inequity
Definition: Racial equity is achieved when racial identity no longer predicts how a person fares in many aspects of life. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce different outcomes predicted by race. *Racial inequity* is when racial groups face barriers such as structural racism that result in disparities in care and the ability to be healthy. Because of these barriers, for example, in the U.S., Black, Hispanic, Indigenous and some Asian people are more likely to live in poverty, be imprisoned, not complete high school, be unemployed and experience health problems such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

racial trauma
Definition: Trauma related to racial discrimination or the perception of racial discrimination[2]. This includes threats of harm and injury, humiliating and shaming events and witnessing harm to others. Racial trauma can result in post-traumatic stress disorder and health problems detailed in this article.

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[2]   Comas-Díaz L, Hall GN, Neville HA. Racial trauma: theory, research, and healing: Introduction to the special issue. Am Psychol. 2019; 74:1–5.

racism, racist

Definition: Prejudice or discrimination against individuals or groups based on beliefs of racial superiority or the belief that race reflects inherent differences in attributes and capabilities. Racism is the basis for social stratification and differential treatment that provides advantage to the dominant group[3]. Racism appears in different forms (defined later in this document).

Usage: The AHA should not shy away from these words as appropriate, but we must carefully consider facts and context. Our communications should start with fact-based, sensitive language rooted in this important point: Racism persists throughout society and is detrimental to people's health and well-being. When discussing structural racism, strive to include references to historic policies, practices and systems, and how they continue to harm health and well-being.

Some use the term *racist* to refer to anyone who benefits from *structural racism* and doesn't actively work to dismantle it. Avoid this use unless essential in a direct quotation; if used, explain it.

Avoid *racially charged, racially motivated* or *racially tinged*, euphemisms that convey little meaning. Use *racist* when truly applicable. Example: *Mississippi has a history of racist lynchings*, not *a history of racially motivated lynchings*.

Deciding whether a statement, action, policy, etc., should be described as *racism* or *racist* often is not clear-cut. Such decisions should include discussion with colleagues and/or others from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. In general, avoid using *racist* or any other label for a person. Don't repeat derogatory terms except when it is crucial to the understanding of an event.

Below are general categories of racism. Not all ideologies, concepts, language and actions fit perfectly into these categories.

- **cultural racism** A set of societal beliefs and customs that deliberately build and maintain a system valuing one race over others. In the U.S., one example is when white people and whiteness are valued over other racial and ethnic groups.

- **individual racism** Actions, beliefs and attitudes of individuals, overtly or covertly, toward a person intentionally expressing prejudice, hate or bias[4] based on race.

- **internalized racism** Acceptance — by people who have suffered the effects of racism — of negative societal beliefs and stereotypes about themselves.

- **interpersonal racism** This occurs in public expressions of racism among individuals, often involving slurs, biases or hateful words or actions[4].

- **institutional racism** This occurs through policies and practices at institutions or

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[3] Friske, Gilbert, Gardner. Position Statement- Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism. NASP- National Association of School Psychologists. Published 2019. https://www.nasponline.org/x26830.xml.

[4] Talking About Race: Being Antiracist. National Museum of African American History and Culture. Published October 1, 2019. https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist

organizations that, intentionally or not, put a racial group at a disadvantage. These discriminatory treatments or biased policies don't necessarily mention any racial group explicitly[4].

- **symbolic racism** A prejudiced and coherent belief system about other people. Historically applied by white people against Black people in the U.S., although it is likely held in some measure among other ethnic groups.

- **structural racism, systemic racism** Often used interchangeably, the AHA prefers the term *structural racism*. It is a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations and other norms perpetuate racial inequity[5]. The policies, practices and other aspects of structural racism work in various, often reinforcing ways.

Structural racism is a principal driver of health disparities, according to the AHA's presidential advisory on the issue. The definition of structural racism in the advisory also is acceptable for medical and scientific audiences:

The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics (historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal) that routinely advantage white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color.

In the U.S., *structural racism* gives privileges to white people resulting in disadvantages to Black, Hispanic, Indigenous and Asian people. This occurs systemically through, among other things, the justice system, the education system, housing, employment and lack of access to care. Such systems have been constructed and reinforced throughout history, guided by a mindset of white supremacy or white superiority.

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[5] Institute Staff. 11 Terms You Should Know to Better Understand Structural Racism. The Aspen Institute. Published August 29, 2017. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/structural-racism-definition/

Other important terms:

adverse childhood experiences
Definition: Potentially traumatic childhood events — such as violence, abuse, neglect and food insecurity — that can undermine a child's sense of safety, stability and bonding. Adverse childhood experiences are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness and substance misuse in adulthood. Women and historically excluded racial and ethnic groups are at greater risk of experiencing four or more types of these experiences, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

affirmative action
Definition: Laws designed to address discrimination based on race, gender and national origin in employment, education, government contracts and more. Affirmative action began in the U.S. under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Rulings expanded to include discrimination based on disability and age. The Civil Rights Act paved the way for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibited literacy tests and other discriminatory voting practices, as well as the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which banned discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of property. Affirmative action is codified into law by the US Department of Labor. Black people in America are the primary beneficiaries of affirmative action. (White women have benefitted most from affirmative action.)
Usage: Be careful because this term often is misused and misunderstood. It has been used in efforts to discredit academic and professional merit of Black and Latino people.

ally, allyship
Definitions: An *ally* is a person who is not a member of a disenfranchised or mistreated group but supports that group. *Allyship* is the proactive practice of working in solidarity and partnership with people enduring structural racism or other systemic discrimination that deprives people of basic rights, equal access and the ability to thrive in society[6]. Allyship can be a difficult practice. It requires trusting relationships, consistency and accountability. Allyship can involve unlearning and re-evaluating systems, practices, policies, norms, traditions, thought processes and language that support structural racism and discrimination. Allyship takes courage. The goal for allies is to better understand structural racism and how it can be dismantled[7].
Usage: Briefly define this term, if necessary, for the audience.
Examples: Actions of allyship include advocating for others, sharing growth opportunities, listening, supporting, self-reflecting and changing. This article breaks down how to practice allyship.

American Heart Association's 10 Commitments
Definition: The American Heart Association established 10 Commitments to removing barriers

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[6] Rochester Racial Justice Toolkit. Beyond Allyship. Rochester Racial Justice Toolkit. Published 2016. https://thetoolkit.wixsite.com/toolkit/beyond-allyship

[7] Gaines J. Be an Ally/Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. www.edi.nih.gov. Published March 4, 2019. https://www.edi.nih.gov/blog/communities/be-ally

to health equity. These actions cover all areas of the AHA's work, including research, community engagement, advocacy, increasing the diversity of our workforce and more. Though there are many barriers to health, the Commitments focus on removing these three: adverse social determinants of health, threats to rural health and structural racism.

anti-Blackness
Definition: Behaviors, attitudes and practices of people and institutions that systemically dehumanize Black people to maintain white supremacy. Anti-Blackness contributes to policies, systems and social norms that comprise structural racism. Anti-Blackness can be perpetrated by people of any race or ethnicity.

anti-racism, anti-racist
Definitions: *Anti-racism* is actively opposing racism by advocating for political, economic and social change. *Anti-racist* tends to be an individualized approach.
Example: *The manager's reassessing of her vendor selection process is anti-racist.*

apathetic racism
Definition: Allowing racism to persevere through passive tolerance, benign ignorance or neglect. Apathetic racism accepts the current structure that creates health disparities based on race.
Usage: This term is not widely used, so be sure to explain fully if you use it.

asset framing (NEW)
Definition: Asset framing defines people by their aspirations and contributions before exploring their deficits, as opposed to defining people by their problems or challenges. Asset framing prioritizes people-first language. Be specific about who and what you mean; avoid stigmatizing language.
Examples: *He has been diagnosed with diabetes*, not *He is a diabetic*. … *She is dealing with the health implications of obesity*, not *She's obese*.

barriers to health equity
Definition: Numerous barriers prevent equitable health for everyone. The American Heart Association's 2024 Impact Goal aims to improve cardiovascular health for all with work that focuses on removing three barriers to health equity: adverse social determinants of health, threats to rural health and structural racism.

bias, implicit bias, unconscious bias
Definitions: *Bias* is the result of beliefs, ideas and thought processes every person develops. *Implicit biases* and *unconscious biases* are negative associations people unknowingly hold and are expressed without conscious awareness. Bias is generally individualized. Racial and ethnic biases, intentional or not, are harmful to people of any race. Bias has particularly harmed the health and well-being of Black, Hispanic, Asian, Indigenous and other people.
Usage: It's important to consider and question your biases, and whether and how you are communicating them.

Example: A hiring manager may unfairly and even unconsciously overlook a job candidate or an employee for promotion based on the manager's views toward that person's race, ethnicity, education level, geography or even name.

bigotry
Definition: Intolerant opinions and prejudices glorifying one group and denigrating members of another group, often of different races and ethnicities.

black as negative terms
Definition: Many common words and phrases reference *black* as something negative. Though not necessarily referring to race or purposely used to imply race, these terms can continually reinforce the idea that *black* stands for something negative.
Usage: Approach these terms with sensitivity. If you think a term possibly might come across as offensive, there are usually better options.
Examples: Instead of *blackball*, you could use *ban* or *bar*. Instead of *black sheep*, consider *misfit* or a similar term. Instead of *black market*, consider *unauthorized* or *under the table*.

Black, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC)
Definition: The term has been used to emphasize historic and systemic oppression of Black and Indigenous people in the U.S. and Canada[8].
Usage: Avoid as a general term for people of color because Latino people, Asian people and people who are Pacific Islanders may not see themselves in this phrase, and many people are not familiar with the term. It can be used when accurate in specific situations, including names of organizations or in quotes.
Example: *The court ruled that the 1978 law did indeed discriminate against Black, Indigenous and other people of color.*

Black Lives Matter, #BlackLives Matter
Definition: Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc. is a global organization in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black people by the state and vigilantes. Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi founded #BlackLivesMatter in 2013 in response to the acquittal of the man charged with murder for shooting Trayvon Martin. Black Lives Matter and BLM often are used as general statements of support for Black people rather than specifically supporting the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation.
Usage: Either *Black Lives Matter* as a noun or *the Black Lives Matter movement* is acceptable. *BLM* is acceptable on second reference. The American Heart Association supports BLM's advocacy to end police brutality and racially motivated violence against Black people but is not formally involved with the movement. Use of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag is commonly used to show support for Black people rather than specifically expressing support for the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation.

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[8] Garcia SE. Where Did BIPOC Come From? *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-bipoc.html. Published June 17, 2020.

Black Lives Matter peaceful protests
Definition: The murder of George Floyd in 2020 and other racially motivated violence against Black people prompted thousands of nationwide, overwhelmingly peaceful protests. Yet, some public figures frame these protests as purely violent or destructive events. According to [Princeton University and the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project](#), 93% of the 7,760 demonstrations linked to the Black Lives Matter Movement in 2020 were peaceful.
Usage: Specificity and accuracy is important. Beware of any language that overemphasizes looting, rioting or violence. The AHA denounces violence and supports the constitutional right to protest peacefully.

blaming language
Definition: Language that, usually unintentionally, appears to place blame on people, communities or populations for issues or health problems.
Usage: Avoid. Keep a sharp eye out for this type of language, which can appear inadvertently based on longtime language practices. Instead, strive to make clear inequity is the reason health disparities exist; these health problems don't "just exist." One simple tip to retain context: When possible, explain *how it happens* before talking about *who it happens to more often*.
Examples: Avoid constructions such as: *Black people have higher blood pressure compared to white people* without further context. Instead, say something like this: *Because of societal barriers and systems that have harmed their health for decades, many Black people have disproportionately high blood pressure*. Sometimes space is limited and the context has to be shortened, such as: *Because of societal and historical inequities, many Black people have disproportionately high blood pressure*.

boy, girl
Usage: While technically accurate for anyone under age 18, exercise caution with these words. Referring to Black males of any age and in any context as *boys* can be demeaning and offensive. Referring to young adult females in any context as *girls* can be demeaning and offensive.
Example: Don't say this: *Michael, a 15-year-old boy, is the team's all-star player.* Say this: *Michael, 15, is the team's all-star player.*

brown, brown people
Usage: These terms can be broad and imprecise racial, ethnic or cultural references. They're often best avoided in writing but are sometimes used by Hispanic, South Asian and other people in speeches, presentations and discussions. These terms can be appropriate based on context, messenger and audience. The terms also are appropriate as part of a formal name or direct quotation.
Examples: This usage frequently appears in references to *Black and brown people*, often in quotes: "*We have to stop these discriminatory practices that are hurting the health of Black and brown people,*" *the AHA volunteer said*. In this instance, the context and messenger are appropriate. But don't do this: *The study results indicated a lack of access for brown people, the researchers said.*

colorism

Definition: When someone with lighter skin is favored over someone with darker skin to favor Westernized standards of beauty, privilege, etc. Colorism occurs within all races and in many countries and geographic areas.

communities of color <mark>(REVISED)</mark>

Definition: A broad term for Black and/or Hispanic, Asian and Indigenous communities.
Usage: This term should generally be avoided because it's very vague and it can imply that there is some homogenous community of people when every community is different. However, it's a common term that may be necessary and appropriate. Specificity is always best. This term can be appropriate based on context, messenger and audience. Avoid using this term when referencing only Black people. Other terms that may work instead, if the context is accurate:

- specific terms for the communities discussed, such as Iraqi or Chilean (ideal)
- partial listings if known: Black and Hispanic people, and other people
- underrepresented racial and ethnic groups
- excluded or historically excluded people

Example: *The survey was sent to Black, Hispanic and other people who could be at risk for high blood pressure.* The writer used the known facts in this example. But don't do this: *Communities of color are advocating for this measure.* This usage assumes too much about who comprises communities of color.

COVID-19 and anti-Asian racism

Definition: Asian American people endured a significant increase in racist attacks, both physical and verbal, throughout the pandemic while prominent public figures have described the coronavirus in racist terms. The scapegoating of Asian people during national crises is not new, as this article recounts.
Usage: Do not repeat racist, xenophobic terms used by public figures. Also carefully consider whether to add the origin of the virus in China to your communications. It's fairly common knowledge likely not relevant to general communications and could come across as extraneous. The group Stop AAPI Hate tracks and regularly updates attacks against Asian American and Pacific Islander people.

COVID-19 health disparities

Definition: The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a disproportionate toll on the health and well-being of Black, Hispanic, Indigenous and Asian people.
Usage: It's important to retain the health equity context of COVID-19 in communications whenever possible. While COVID-19 has impacted everyone, it has not done so equitably. This CDC website offers good background. As always, be as specific as possible about who is affected by these inequities, how and why.

critical race theory

Definition: This originated in the 1970s as an academic field of study focused on the impact of race on the law, systems and institutions. Some public figures have used this term loosely — and sometimes inaccurately — to describe a wide range of beliefs, diversity training programs and educational curricula.

Usage: Because this term has become highly politicized, and the AHA is a nonpartisan organization, we should avoid it in general references. If necessary to reference, provide the full historic context defining the term.

cultural appropriation

Definition: When individuals or communities with privileged status adopt or co-opt — usually without acknowledgment — cultural aspects of oppressed or underrepresented people. This has included inventions, music, art and culture.

Usage: Context is important. Imitation also is flattery, but how that imitation is carried out is important.

Examples: Widely acknowledged examples of cultural appropriation range from white models wearing Native American headdresses to white musicians who claimed to have invented jazz without acknowledging Black artists.

cultural representations

Definition: Stereotypes, images and narratives reinforced by media, commonly used language, institutions and other mass communications. When portrayed accurately, they can be positive. However, Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, Asian and other people are often represented in dehumanizing ways through perpetuating and normalizing stereotypes[9].

Usage: Beware of such references slipping into language based on historic usage. When writing about cultural representations, specifics are best.

Examples: Avoid references to any group having a "natural" ability.

disadvantaged (REVISED)

Definition: Not having advantages such as money, resources, education, power and other opportunities.

Usage: Avoid this term as an adjective when talking about people and populations because it can be condescending, framed as blaming language or have other negative connotations. It is best to specifically show how a person or group has been disadvantaged. Other general terms that may work instead, if accurate and in context:

- specific terms for the communities discussed and how they are disadvantaged

- *disenfranchised* often is a better option, acknowledging people have been systematically placed at a disadvantage by others

- underrepresented groups or underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (if race or

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9   Fajardo-MDC F. LibGuides: Anti-Racism Teach-In: Glossary. Miami Date College-Libraries. Published November 5, 2020. https://libraryguides.mdc.edu/c.php?g=1057388&p=7694504

ethnicity is applicable) and how they are disadvantaged.
- excluded or historically excluded people

Examples: Don't do this: *Disadvantaged people lack access to health care*. This is OK: *Historic discrimination put the community at a financial disadvantage*.

discounting
Definition: Language or actions that cause people to feel less valuable or less important.
Examples: Dismissing people's concerns about microaggressions as oversensitive; referencing white or Christian traditions or activities as mainstream or normal for everyone.

discrimination
Definition: Prejudicial treatment based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation or another group, class or category to which people may belong. Discrimination can be overt and covert, including microaggressions, indirect or subtle behaviors such as comments reflecting negative attitudes or beliefs about a non-majority group[3].
Examples: Hiring, firing, promoting and other workplace decisions; decisions about funding or conducting scientific research.

disinvested, under-invested
Definition: These terms refer to the fact that neighborhoods, schools, institutions and communities have been historically excluded from equitable distribution of resources. *Disinvestment* means to reduce or stop funding. *Under-investment* means insufficient investment.
Usage: As always, specificity is best, so the ideal is to describe how a group or place has been disinvested or under-invested rather than using these terms. However, these terms can help avoid language that places blame on communities or populations, with past tense indicating the historic aspect.
Examples: *These neighborhoods are struggling with access to healthy food because of under-investment. Because of a lack of investment, access to healthy foods is a problem.*

diversity
Definition: *Diversity* implies an appreciation of differences that make up a community, nation or other grouping. Diversity is usually discussed in terms of background, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, geography, disabilities, veteran status and diversity of job type (physicians, researchers, etc.).
Usage: At the AHA, we reference diversity and inclusion, because including all people goes hand in hand with diversity. In writing for general audiences, *diversity* is a well-understood term that typically doesn't need definition. If in doubt for your audience, define.

Driving Health Equity in the Workplace
Definition: A report from the American Heart Association's CEO Roundtable dedicated to helping employers further understand, identify and eliminate workplace practices that lead to inequities based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, veteran status or other factors. The report includes actionable strategies that employers can use regardless of

where they are in their health equity journey.

empowerment <mark>(REVISED)</mark>
Definition: Authority or power given to someone to do something. In public health, the term is often used to describe communities or groups of people working on health solutions. Empowered communities will exercise more influence over public policy and tools to overcome structural and institutional barriers to equitable health, including health care, nutrition, education, economic development and housing.
Usage: Make clear that the American Heart Association frames empowerment as something that comes from within the communities — not from the AHA. When framed as from the AHA, it can come across as savior language. We don't empower anyone, and people don't NEED us to be empowered. Rather than using the term *empowerment*, consider focusing on:
- The transfer of power and resources, which results in greater agency.
- The power comes from within the community, rather than it being bestowed upon by others.
- Self-determination and control over issues that affect their lives and communities.

Examples: Do this: *Nonprofit Group XYZ is empowering people within its community to access more healthy options.* Don't do this: *The American Heart Association has empowered the community through our support of Nonprofit Group XYZ.*

equality, equity <mark>(REVISED)</mark>
Definitions: *Equality* is the idea of people experiencing or receiving the exact same amount of something. *Equity* occurs when people experience or receive something based on what's needed — which may not be equal — to achieve the desired outcome. These infographics give some examples to help visualize the difference between health equality and equity.
Example: Everyone having the right to purchase healthy foods is *equality*. But when trying to obtain those healthy foods, *equity* does not exist because of obstacles such as access, price and availability.

excluded people, historically excluded people
Definition: These terms include varied populations that have been excluded from full rights, privileges and opportunities.
Usage: Sometimes used to describe a broad group of people facing inequities based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual identity, ability, age, veteran status or other factors. These terms are acceptable when specific language is not possible. Saying what people are being excluded from makes the term easier for readers to understand.
Examples: *People from Southeast Asia have been historically excluded from the state's politics. The measure is intended to help all people who have been historically excluded from access to affordable care.*

fair, fairness
Usage: Be careful with these terms, which are usually not appropriate in discussions of equity because they are relative. *Fairness* depends on your vantage point. These words also don't acknowledge that structural racism is *unfair*.

gaslighting <mark>(NEW)</mark>

Definitions: Gaslighting is a method of gaining control over someone else. It works by breaking down a person's trust in themselves while increasing how much they trust or depend on the abusive person. Gaslighting is a form of psychological and/or emotional abuse in which a person or group causes someone to question their own sanity, memories or perception of reality. People who experience gaslighting may feel confused, anxious, or as though they cannot trust themselves. Over time emotional abuse may escalate into physical violence. Even if the abuse does not become physical, gaslighting can significantly undermine a person's self-esteem and mental health.

Usage: Gaslighting can operate on a broad scale as a feature of systemic oppression. People in power sometimes use it to damage the credibility of a person or group, which disempowers them. Gaslighting can occur in any type of interaction but is especially common in relationships as well as in these areas:
- *Racial gaslighting:* when people apply gaslighting techniques to an entire racial or ethnic group.
- *Political gaslighting:* when a political group or figure lies or manipulates information to control people.
- *Institutional gaslighting:* within a company, organization or institution to portray people as irrational or incompetent.

Examples: Questioning a person's memory: *Are you sure about that? I think you're forgetting what really happened.* Pretending not to understand the conversation: *Are you just trying to confuse me? I don't know what you're talking about.* Belittling or disregarding how someone feels: *You're just being too sensitive.* Refusing to take responsibility for their actions: *If it weren't for Joe, I wouldn't have done it.* Questioning the other person's credibility: *You can't believe what you read — it's nonsense.* Using negative stereotypes: *She's a woman — no one will believe her.*

genocide

Definition: The deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political or cultural group.
Example: A significant example of genocide in the United States is the treatment of Native Americans. Millions were slain, their land was taken from them, and they were forced to relocate and live in unfamiliar areas not conducive to their way of life or culture.

gentrification

Definition: When an area that has historically experienced underinvestment and under-resourcing, usually in a city, experiences an influx of middle-class or wealthy people who renovate and rebuild homes and businesses. This drives up property taxes, the cost of living and housing insecurity. Gentrification usually has a negative impact on the social determinants of health for those displaced or financially strained — often Black and Latino people.
Usage: The term can be loaded and may not be understood by all audiences. Define the word and its ramifications if you use it. This may be difficult to explain succinctly, but the context is important.
Example: *As wealthier people bought property nearby and property values increased, many families found themselves struggling to make ends meet. This is an example of gentrification,*

which often results in displacement, housing insecurity and health problems in communities that historically have lacked investment.

ghetto, inner city, urban <mark>(NEW)</mark>
Usage: Avoid these terms when describing people, systems, communities, populations and culture. The terms are acceptable strictly in a geographic sense, as we use *rural* and *suburban*.
Examples: Don't say: About 60% of *Black people in Anytown, New York, reported that it was difficult for them to find healthy foods in the inner city where they live.* Say: About 60% of *Black people reported that it was difficult for them to find healthy foods in their communities in Anytown, New York.* Don't' say*: The lack of access to quality health care in the ghettos of Chicago is staggering compared to those in white communities.* Say: *The lack of access to quality health care in Black communities in Chicago is staggering compared to those in white communities in the city.*

hate crime
Definition: The FBI defines a hate crime as a "criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender or gender identity."
Usage: Avoid this, as it is a specific legal term. Use should be in the context of official charges, so ensure accuracy before using.

health care disparities
Definition: Differences between groups in health insurance coverage, access to and use of care, quality of care, and outcomes related specifically to care. Race, ethnicity, sex, sexual identity, age, education level, disability, socioeconomic status and geography contribute to these disparities[10].

health care provider
Usage: Avoid *health care provider* because it can imply people, communities or populations need to be provided for. *Health care professional, doctor, doctor's office or clinic are* better for consumers. For medical and scientific audiences, *clinician, physician* or *members of the health care team* are all acceptable.

health disparities
Definition: Health differences among groups of people closely linked with social, economic, and environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health when measured by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, veteran status or other factors.
Example: Two factors leading to health disparities are lack of access to quality education and lack of access to medical care.

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[10] Artiga S, Orgera K, Pham O. Disparities in Health and Health Care: Five Key Questions and Answers. KFF–Filling the need for trusted information on national health issues. Published March 4, 2020. https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health- policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-five-key-questions-and-answers/

health equity, health inequities (REVISED)
Definition: Health equity would be achieved if all people had the just opportunity to be healthy. The AHA's official statement on health equity reads:

> *Everyone deserves an optimal and just opportunity to be healthy, giving special attention to the needs of those at greatest risk of poor health and no one is disadvantaged from achieving their potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance.*

Achieving health equity requires removing structural, unjust obstacles such as racism, poverty, discrimination and their consequences. Those consequences include powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay; quality education and housing; safe environments; and health care. Health inequities are systematic differences in the health status of different groups, and they have significant social and economic costs to individuals and societies.
Usage: These are common terms but define them for audiences, as needed. In situations where health inequities and structural racism are clearly linked, make sure to communicate them together, ideally with historical context included. *Health equity* is usually written as a singular term because it is a concept. *Health inequities* is usually plural because there are many more specific inequities. Use a health equity lens for creating inclusive communication.
Example: *The neighborhood didn't offer access to healthy foods, one of the health inequities residents faced because of structural racism.*

Hispanic-serving institution
Definition: An institution of higher learning with at least 25% Hispanic students enrolled as full-time undergraduate students. The American Heart Association's Hispanic-Serving Institutions Scholars Program serves as a pipeline for diverse researchers and health care professionals through academic and career-enriching resources, including scholarships and mentoring for undergraduate students.

historically Black colleges and universities
Definition: These institutions are described by the Higher Education Act of 1965 as any historically Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans. HBCUs are open to all students, regardless of race.
Usage: Spell out on first reference. *HBCUs* is acceptable on second reference.

immigration status
Usage: Only mention a person's immigration status if it's central to the story or communication. Exercise caution because there is not one word or phrase that accurately depicts every person's immigration status. Avoid *illegal immigrant* and the offensive terms *illegal alien* and *illegal* as a noun. Use *illegal* only to refer to a specific action, not a person.
Example: Say this: *The man was arrested on suspicion of crossing the border illegally.* Don't say this: *The man was arrested at the border as an illegal immigrant.*

intersectional, intersectionality (REVISED)

Definition: The concept of intersectionality describes the interconnected nature in which systems of inequality, including race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and gender, overlap to create interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Usage: If using these terms, briefly define for audiences as needed.

Examples: There are many possible variations of intersectionality. For example, a person who is Hispanic and also part of the LGBTQ+ community faces the inequities common to both groups. A Black person who is disabled faces inequities common to both groups.

Jim Crow laws

Definition: State and local statutes legalizing racial segregation, denying Black people the right to vote, hold jobs, get an education or other everyday opportunities. People who tried to defy Jim Crow laws often faced arrest, fines, jail sentences, mob violence and murder. The laws existed about 100 years, from the post-Civil War era until 1968. The laws were named after a Black minstrel show character.

Juneteenth

Definition: Juneteenth is the traditional commemoration date of the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States. The holiday also has been called Juneteenth Independence Day or Freedom Day. President Abraham Lincoln first issued the Emancipation Proclamation declaring all slaves free in Confederate territory on Sept. 22, 1862. Word of the proclamation reached Texas on June 19, 1865 — more than two and a half years later and two months after the end of the Civil War on April 9, 1865.

Usage: Briefly explain the origins of this term for audiences who may be unfamiliar with the term or its significance.

justice

Definitions: The quality of being moral, right and equitable. This word appears often in references to structural racism, including:

- **criminal justice:** Avoid when describing the system of law enforcement, courts and prisons. Instead use *justice system* so as not to imply people within it are criminals.

- **education justice:** Ensuring all students have access to equitable educational opportunities for success, and a safe and positive learning environment. Many audiences may not be familiar with this phrase. It's best to show rather than tell.

  Example: *The school in the mostly Latino neighborhood couldn't invest in a new gym because its property tax base was lower than that of neighboring schools.*

- **environmental justice:** The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

Example: *Industrial air pollution, often based in lower-income areas where Black and Hispanic people live, has been linked to health problems.*

- **health justice:** The condition in which everyone would have an equitable opportunity to access affordable, quality care and resources to stay healthy. Achieving health justice requires finding solutions to improve social determinants of health such as poverty, education, employment, housing and health insurance.

- **immigrant justice:** Ensuring the humane and legal rights of all immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the United States.

- **justice system:** Use this instead of *criminal justice system*, to make clear that all people in the system are not criminals. This is the system through which crimes are identified and people are arrested, judged and punished. Black and Hispanic people are disproportionately affected by this system. Statistics show Black people are disproportionately stopped by police, arrested, killed by police, convicted and sentenced more harshly than white people. Using statistics to illustrate these inequities often is a powerful illustration.

  Example: *Several statistics point to structural racism in the justice system. For example, Black people are stopped 87% more than white people in the city.*

- **racial justice:** This is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. *Racial justice* is the absence of discrimination and inequities, and the presence of systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity.

- **social justice:** A concept in which equity or justice is achieved in every aspect of society rather than some aspects or for some people. A world organized around social justice principles affords individuals and groups fair treatment and an impartial share or distribution of society's advantages and disadvantages.

leader
Usage: Avoid *Black leader, Hispanic leader, Asian leader, Indigenous leader* and similar constructions. These terms imply one person speaks for an entire community or population. When referring to a person in a leadership position, be specific about what the person leads.

marginalized
Definition: Being treated as insignificant or peripheral. *Historically marginalized* refers to individuals, groups and communities who historically and systematically have been denied access to services, resources and power as a result of systemic, durable, and persistent racism, discrimination and other forms of oppression. Structural historic marginalization has resulted in poor outcomes in these areas: health, social, political, economic as well as overall increased vulnerability to harm. Historically marginalized populations are often identified based on their race, ethnicity, social-economic status, geography, religion, language, sexual identity

and disability.

Usage: Avoid these terms when describing people because it can come across as condescending and have other negative connotations. Specificity is best: Describe *how* people are being marginalized. However, it may be necessary and appropriate in context. If you do use it, avoid *the marginalized,* and don't use *marginalized* as an adjective. Don't say *marginalized people* or *marginalized populations*. Other terms that may work instead, if accurate in context:

- specific terms for the makeup of the communities discussed, and how they are marginalized

- partial listings if some populations are known, with language showing how the groups were marginalized (*Hispanic, Black and other people in the neighborhood*)

- underrepresented groups or underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (if race or ethnicity applies)

- disenfranchised

- excluded or historically excluded people

mass incarceration

Definition: The high number of prisoners per capita in the U.S., relative to comparable countries, which includes a disproportionately high number of Black and Hispanic people. The expansion of the corrections system has been called "the New Jim Crow" based on these extreme racial disparities. The prison population has expanded since the late 1960s amid a "law and order" movement and subsequent arrest rates and sentencing requirements in the war on drugs. Mass incarceration has hurt the health and well-being of Black and Hispanic people.

microaggressions

Definition: Everyday and often-subtle verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults that are intentional or unintentional. They communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to Black, Latino, Asian, Indigenous people and other people[11].

Examples: Someone referencing all Latinos as from Mexico. Someone interrupting a Black woman and talking over her. This article explores reactions to microaggressions, as does this one.

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[11] Sue DW Ph.D. Microaggressions: More Than Just Race. Psychology Today. Published November 17, 2010. http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race

minority, minorities

Usage: Avoid when talking about race and ethnicity, as it can be offensive and sometimes inaccurate. Instead, be as specific as possible about race and ethnicity. There are times when *minority* may be unavoidable, such as when it is part of a proper name (Office of Minority Health, for example) or when applying for grants that use such language.

When the term cannot be avoided, add more specific language to describe precisely who is included in that description.

If the term is used in a document that we have to follow, adjust the language if possible and appropriate. For example, if a grant application uses *minority* but we are discussing a specific community, use the more specific term and then depart from the use of minority. Example: *This Minority Health Grant would benefit South Asian people in Detroit. Many South Asian neighborhoods cannot easily access affordable, nutritious food. South Asian people in Detroit ...”*

If the term can be avoided and is used to describe race and ethnicity, instead use *people of underrepresented races and ethnicities.* Or, if more appropriate, one of these suggestions:

- specific races and ethnicities of the people discussed, if known

- partial listings if known: Black, Hispanic people and other people

- excluded or historically excluded people

Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NEW)

Definition: A Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution is an institution of higher education that at the time of application is an eligible institution under section 312(b), has an enrollment of undergraduates that is not less than 10 percent Native American students, and is not a Tribal College or University. NASNTIs are not controlled by tribes, but rather a university that serves a percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native students. The Native American-serving Nontribal Institutions Program provides grants and related assistance to Native American-serving, nontribal institutions to enable such institutions to improve and expand their capacity to serve Native Americans and low-income individuals.
Usage: Spell out on first reference. NASNTI is acceptable on second reference.

non-white people

Usage: Avoid, as the term frames the discussion from a white-centric perspective. This term has appeared in studies when comparing white people and everyone else. If other races and ethnicities are not specified, these terms may work instead:

- partial listings if known: Black, Hispanic people and other people

- underrepresented racial and ethnic groups

- excluded or historically excluded people

- people of color

- all racial and ethnic groups except white people (This would be used only in very specific instances, such as studies comparing outcomes for all races and ethnicities to the outcomes of white people.)

Examples: *Hispanic patients in the study recovered more quickly, researchers found.*

oppression
Definition: The unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power by those in authority. Oppression is a central component of structural racism.
Usage: Don't hedge or water down the term in proper context. However, exercise caution based on your communication, as it is a sweeping and powerful word.
Examples: This usage works: *Historic oppression of Native American people led to some of the current health problems experienced by too many of them.* This one does not: *She felt it was clearly oppression when the nurse asked whether she had seasonal allergies.*

people of color (REVISED)
Definition: A broad term describing people who are not white.
Usage: Avoid this term in general. *People of color* is overly vague and can have the connotation of people being lumped together as "other." For some people, it also hits too close to the dated and offensive term *colored*. Some Native Americans say the term does not encompass their sovereign status, and some Black people do not include themselves in this term due to historical treatment that does not apply to other racial demographics This term can be acceptable when appropriate and used in context by an appropriate messenger. However, it is always better to use specific terms. Do not use as a synonym for Black people. Avoid the acronym *POC*. Other terms that may work, if accurate and in context:

- specific terms for the communities discussed

- partial listings if known: Black, Hispanic and other people

- underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (assuming representation is accurate)

- excluded or historically excluded people

Examples: The most specific is always best, when we know the facts: *The legislation would be harmful to Colombian residents in Chicago.* Better than overly broad terms: *The legislation would be harmful to Black and Hispanic people.* Acceptable if needed but try to include the known details: *The legislation would be harmful to the health of Black people and other people.*

phrases and terms with racist history
Definition: Several commonly used words and phrases celebrate, are influenced by or allude to racist beliefs, events or practices. Many people are not aware of the offensive origins and do not use them with ill intent.
Usage: When in doubt, find a way around these words. It's always worth asking: Might this offend someone? Err on the side of not offending.

Examples: Some common examples can be found throughout this guide. [This article](#) and several links within it detail the history of some of these terms, including:

- **cakewalk:** Originated to describe gatherings in which enslaved people dressed up and performed dances mocking wealthy white people. Later, white people in blackface mocked these events at minstrel shows.

- **call a spade a spade**: The word *spade* has been used as a racial slur.

- **cotton-picking:** The term has racial overtones, particularly against Black people in the South.

- **crack the whip:** The whip is a powerful symbol of slavery, as the weapon was commonly used to assault enslaved people. It's best to err on the side of sensitivity when considering use of the term *whip*.

- **grandfather clause, grandfathered-in:** These terms come from one of the many measures taken to stop Black people from voting after passage of the 15th Amendment prohibited racial discrimination in voting. In such measures, only men who were descendants of men who voted before 1867 — meaning white men — were permitted to vote.

- **gyp, gypped, jip, jipped:** Verbs used to indicate being cheated in a transaction, based on the term *gypsy*, considered a slur against Roma people.

- **inner city (NEW):** Most often used as a reference to generalize Black, Hispanic and other people in high-need communities. *Inner city* is not a synonym for Black neighborhoods. To refer to people living within a city, use *metropolitan population* or *city-dwellers*. When referring to a lower income economic class, *low-income* or *high-need* might be appropriate terminology.

- **long time, no see:** Originated as a mockery of American Indian people who weren't familiar with English.

- **lynch mob:** Used sometimes today to describe an angry crowd in general, but it literally describes who lynched Black people. For decades, Black people in the South were lynched with little to no consequences for people leading or in the mobs.

- **master, slave:** Even when not referencing slavery, the terms can and usually should be avoided because of the historic symbolism. So much so that Twitter has stopped using both terms, and the Houston Association of Realtors now describes bedrooms as *primary* rather than *master*. Note: *Master*, when used alone in relation to expertise or education rather than dominance over others, is acceptable. For example, *master's degree, masterclass, Mission Mastery*.

- **no can do:** Began as a mockery of Chinese immigrants' pidgin English.

- **off the reservation:** Term originated for Native Americans considered rebellious against white people because they left the land they were required to live on because of their race.

- **peanut gallery:** Originated with the cheap and inferior seats designated for Black audiences at performances.
- **sold down the river:** Alludes to the practice of slaves literally being sold down the Mississippi and other rivers.
- **spirit animal:** Used recently as a lighthearted, whimsical reference, this phrase is offensive to many American Indians and Alaska Natives for whom a spirit animal has specific and important meanings.
- **tipping point:** This term became popular in the 1950s describing "white flight," when white people fled cities for segregated suburbs.
- **uppity:** Used as a code word to indicate people — usually Black people — are behaving with confidence beyond their social standing.

This article details examples of inclusive language in technology, such as using *built-in feature* versus *native feature* and *web product owner* instead of *webmaster*.

police violence
Usage: Use specific language about what happened. For example, it is appropriate to say George Floyd was murdered by police in Minneapolis in 2020. Don't use *the death of,* or *the passing of* George Floyd or other terms that soften what happened.

prejudice
Definition: Irrational or unjustifiable negative emotions or evaluations toward people[3] from other social groups, and a root cause of discriminatory behavior. Negative prejudices are typically based on unsupported generalizations or stereotypes.
Usage: Be careful not to confuse *prejudice* and *discrimination*; *prejudice* is a way of thinking and feeling, and *discrimination* is taking action based on prejudice or bias.

presidential advisory on structural racism
Definition: This 2020 document from an American Heart Association science writing group found that structural racism is a principal driver of health disparities. The advisory details the history of structural racism in the United States and calls for all of society — not just those affected — to be accountable for addressing these issues.
Usage: The formal name is Call to Action: Structural Racism as a Fundamental Driver of Health Disparities: A Presidential Advisory From The American Heart Association. However, it's acceptable in consumer and internal copy to reference it as the American Heart Association's presidential advisory on structural racism.

privilege, white privilege

Definitions: Privilege connotes access to resources, benefits and advantages for a dominant social group but not for all. In the U.S., white people are generally unexposed to and protected from many forms of discrimination and have more social and economic privilege. Often, white people don't acknowledge or are unaware of this privilege, which contributes to unequal distribution of wealth, power and opportunity based on skin color[12].

Usage: Exercise caution with the term *white privilege* and use specific explanatory language as needed.

Examples: Day-to-day examples of white privilege include: Not being followed in a store; being able to drive a car in any neighborhood without being perceived as being in the wrong place or looking for trouble; getting hired despite more-qualified candidates of other ethnicities.

racial and ethnic comparisons

Usage: The American Heart Association often publishes results of studies or reports that purposefully compare outcomes between white people and other populations, with the important intention of shining a light on disparities and inequities. As a science-based organization devoted to health equity, this is appropriate.

However, such language often unnecessarily seeps into other kinds of other writing when there is no need for racial and ethnic comparisons. Here are some good ways to make the point about disparities without using white people as a baseline:

- Black people face disproportionately high rates of diabetes.
- Indigenous people deal with higher rates of unhealthy cholesterol than most people in the United States. (Note: Currently most people in the United States are white, so this says the same thing without comparing races.)
- Some South Asian people are diagnosed with disproportionately high rates of heart disease.
- Statistics show Hispanic people face disproportionately high rates of obesity.

In each of those examples there's no need to compare to white people or anyone else. The point is clearly made and the focus stays on the people or issue we are writing about.

The above examples are in a vacuum, and we should make every effort to add the proper context although space sometimes gets in the way. This simple phrase is very helpful to frame, when we are short on space to provide full context:

Because of societal, systemic and historical inequities, Black people in general face disproportionately high rates of diabetes.

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[12]   MP Associates, Center For Assessment And Policy Development. WWW.RACIALEQUITYTOOLS.ORG'S *GLOSSARY,* 2013. https://www.racialequitytools.org/images/uploads/RET_Glossary913L.pdf

Racial Equity in Public Policy — A Message Guide

This Voices for Healthy Kids message guide for advocates advances conversations with decision-makers on structural racism and embeds equity in policy language.

redlining

Definition: A government-backed discriminatory practice designed to segregate housing by race and ethnicity. Redlining occurs when banks and other institutions refuse to offer mortgages or offer worse rates to people who are not white. While outlawed in 1968, redlining has enduring effects to this day in the form of wealth gaps and health disparities. The term itself came from maps created for New Deal-era housing programs from the Federal Housing Administration, created in 1934. The maps were color-coded to indicate where it was safe to insure mortgages for white people. Places near or in predominantly Black neighborhoods were colored red. At the time, during a large housing shortage, the FHA subsidized builders who were mass-producing entire subdivisions that explicitly refused to allow Black Americans from living there. Local governments often reinforced this segregation with their own rules and policies. This video takes a creative approach to explain redlining in a simple way. In addition to redlining, racial covenants were put into place. Racial covenants are clauses that were inserted into property deeds to prevent people who were not white from buying or occupying land. Racial covenants served as legally enforceable contracts. They stipulated that the property had to remain in the hands of white people and could be enforced in perpetuity.
Usage: Define and explain the ramifications as needed for each audience.

reverse discrimination

Definition: The unfair treatment of members of the *majority* group based on race, gender, national origin, abilities, sexual orientation or other traits, beliefs or groupings of people.[13]
Usage: Avoid this term, instead using *discrimination*, which is accurate in any case, and be specific when discussing such situations.
Example: *Susan said she experienced discrimination because she is white.*

savior language

Definition: Language that implies a group, community or population can't solve major problems without help from people or institutions. Although often used in reference to white people or white-led institutions, it can occur between other racial groups.
Usage: Do not imply the American Heart Association is saving, serving, educating, rescuing or otherwise swooping in because people need our help. Context is important (especially because we often talk about the AHA *saving* lives).

Examples: There is a long history in charity, nonprofits, Hollywood, art and literature advancing the "savior" theme, which reinforces structural racism and white supremacy.

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[13] On behalf of TDL Firm, P.L.L.C. Reverse discrimination in the workplace: What it is and what to do about it/The Devadoss LawFirm, P.L.L.C. Published June 22, 2016. https://www.fedemploymentlaw.com/blog/2016/06/reverse-discrimination-in-the-workplace-what-it-is-and-what-to-do-about-it/

Here are some AHA usage examples: Do: *Community members, working with the American Heart Association, volunteered to try the nutrition program.* Don't: *The American Heart Association implemented the free program to teach people in the community about nutrition.* Do: *Contact your health care professional.* Don't: *Contact your health care provider. Provider* can come across as savior language.

slaves, enslaved people

Definition: The term *slaves* denotes an inherent identity of a person or people treated as chattel or property. The term *enslaved people* underlines that the slave status has been imposed on individuals.

Usage: *Enslaved people* is generally preferred for the AHA based on our overarching emphasis of people over condition, although references to *slaves* is acceptable if the context is appropriate. Avoid the term unless necessary as referring to institutional, criminal or organized enslavement.

social exclusion

Definition: A state in which people or groups are assumed to be excluded from social systems and relationships. In most definitions, this state is associated with extreme poverty and disadvantage[14].

social determinants of health

Definition: The conditions in which people are born and live. The American Heart Association is dedicated to improving the effects of the social determinants of health. The determinants are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources, and, when they are adverse, are mostly responsible for avoidable differences in health status. Internally, we categorize these determinants into five areas: economic stability; educational attainment; social cohesion; infrastructure and environment; and health and health care. Specific social determinants include:

- racial bias

- income instability

- education level and access

- access to affordable, quality health care

- access to affordable, quality health insurance

- access to healthy foods

- transportation options

- clean, healthy environments

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[14] Popay J, Escorel S, Hernández M, Johnston H, Mathieson J, Rispel L. *SEKN Final Report Understanding and Tackling Social Exclusion Final Report to the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health From the Social Exclusion Knowledge Network On Behalf of the WHO Social Exclusion Knowledge Network;* 2008: Page 33, Second Paragraph.
https://www.who.int/social_determinants/knowledge_networks/final_reports/sekn_final%20report_042008.pdf?ua=1

- social support

- employment opportunities and job training

- safety concerns

Usage: For consumer audiences, it is OK to use simpler and easier-to-understand terms if needed, such as *health risks, social health risks or environmental health risks* in place of *social determinants of health*. (This is similar to how we say *myocardial infarction* for professionals and the simpler *heart attack* for consumers.) Ensure the definition and context are accurate when using simpler language. When using the term *social determinants of health*, always briefly define it. This simple definition is often enough: *The conditions in which people are born and live.* Don't use *social influencers of health*. Do not feel obligated to mention everything about every determinant. This will make your content unfocused and possibly confusing.

Examples: *Many in the largely Egyptian neighborhood don't have clean water to drink or safe places to exercise. These social health risks have been shown to hurt people's heart health and emotional well-being. Many people are dealing with the effects of social determinants of health, or the conditions in which they are born and live.*

stereotype
Definition: An oversimplified opinion or judgment applied to an entire group of people.
Example: Believing that people, groups or events typify or conform to a pattern and lack individuality.

Stop AAPI Hate
Definition: A movement started in March 2020 in response to a rise in anti-Asian bias and racism during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stop AAPI Hate tracks and responds to incidents of hate, violence, harassment, discrimination, shunning and child bullying against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. Some prefer using the hashtag #StopAsianHate.

tokenism
Definition: The policy or practice of making only a symbolic effort (as to desegregate[15]).
Example: Hiring or appointing a Black or Hispanic person to represent ideas and cultures of a community and falsely represent diversity.

toxic stress
Definition: Occurs when a person experiences strong, frequent and/or prolonged adversity, such as from racism, physical or emotional abuse, exposure to violence and chronic neglect. While studies show stress can have negative mental health and cardiovascular side effects on everyone, pervasive exposure to structural racism and discrimination can create additional daily stressors for Black, Hispanic, Asian, Indigenous

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[15] Webster M. Definition of TOKENISM. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tokenism

and other people of color.

Example: *The African American Women's Heart and Health Study, which has been examining links between racism and health since 2012, has measured physical responses to stress, such as blood pressure and certain hormone levels.*

underrepresented

Definition: Often an effective term when discussing communities and populations.

Usage: As always, specificity and context dictate the best usage, but this term often works well when discussing less-specific groups. However, it's very important to ensure it is accurate in context. Sometimes the descriptors "historically" or "intentionally" make this more accurate.

Examples: *Black and Hispanic people are underrepresented in the field of cardiology. Underrepresented racial and ethnic groups were considered in these statistics.*

under-resourced

Definition: This refers to communities lacking in income, employment opportunities, educational opportunities, access to care, access to healthy foods, safe places to exercise and other resources.

Usage: Use only in a literal sense: When an area lacks resources, be specific about what is lacking if possible. Exercise caution and carefully consider context; some usages can inaccurately imply race or ethnicity.

Example: *The community is under-resourced in terms of quality health care.*

underserved

Usage: Avoid this term generally when describing people because it can have negative connotations, as if people need to be served to succeed. It can be condescending and support the negative "savior" idea. *Under-resourced* is usually a better option. *Underserved* can sometimes be necessary and appropriate in context but avoid if possible.

Example: *The community is medically under-resourced (*not underserved*).*

voter suppression

Definition: Any legal or extralegal measure or strategy to reduce voting or voter registration by members of a racial group, political party or religious community. The overwhelming majority of victims of voter suppression in the United States have been Black people.

Usage: Avoid language about political parties, as the American Heart Association is nonpartisan.

vulnerable

Definition: Susceptible to physical or emotional harm, often in need of help or special care or treatment.

Usage: Avoid this term in general when describing people because it can be vague, condescending and imply some people need someone to save them. If context is appropriate for use, don't say *the vulnerable* or use *vulnerable* as an adjective. Avoid *vulnerable people* or

vulnerable populations. Instead, specifically describe how and why people are vulnerable. Other terms that may work instead, if accurate in context:

- specific terms for the communities discussed and why they are vulnerable
- underrepresented groups or underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (whichever is correct)
- disenfranchised
- excluded or historically excluded people

Examples: Acceptable: *After the surgery, she felt emotionally vulnerable.* Not acceptable: *People in the Lebanese neighborhood are vulnerable*. In context, it can work with economic and social vulnerabilities as well: *Historical redlining leaves members of Black communities vulnerable to housing insecurity.*

war on drugs
Definition: A decades long government-led initiative aiming to stop illegal drug use, distribution and trade by dramatically increasing prison sentences for drug dealers and users. The movement started in the 1970s and is still evolving. The war on drugs has disproportionately impacted Black, Hispanic and Native American people, as detailed here and here.

weathering
Definition: *Weathering* refers to the cumulative toll on a person's health from repeated racism, discrimination and social adversity. These factors chip away at health over time, just as forces of nature chip away at rocks in the geological use of the term weathering. The usage related to health came about in the 1990s, from a researcher exploring the reasons why Black women faced risks for unhealthy pregnancies years earlier than white women. The term later became relevant to all Black adults. This story delves deeper.
Usage: If used, define the term as necessary for the audience.

white supremacy, white superiority
Definition: The idea that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs and actions of white people are superior to the ideas, thoughts, beliefs and actions of other people[16].
Usage: Often in our work we won't need to reference these terms. But, when needed, exercise caution. Be sure to provide context because some audiences may think only of extremist groups with these terms.
Examples: This supremacy or superiority can be indistinguishable from U.S. culture or norms. For example, definitions of *normal, professional* and *effective* can come from a perspective that white people are superior.

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[16] Cogburn, CD Ph.D. Original Scholarship-Culture, Race and Health: Implications for Racial Inequities and Population Health. *The Milbank Quarterly-A Multidisciplinary Journal of Population Health and Health Policy.* 2019; 97(3). doi: The Milbank Quarterly, Vol. 97, No. 3, 2019 (pp. 736-761)

whiteness, white-centric

Definition: Characteristics and experiences generally associated with being white. Sociologists believe the white perception as "normal" is directly connected to the correlating construct of other races as inferior, foreign or "other" in society[17]. Whiteness and normalization of white racial identity throughout U.S. history has created a culture in which people who are not white often are seen as inferior or abnormal[18]. This is sometimes referred to as a white-centric view.

Usage: Be careful with language that make white people the "default people" and everyone else as "others." This language can easily sneak into text because of language historically used. Avoid referencing common white experiences or cultural references to describe things that are *normal*, *good* or *bad*. Or, phrasing such as *most people.*

Examples: Don't say: *Most people live in the suburbs.* There also are examples from the world of research finding discrimination against people who don't "look white."

woke, anti-woke (NEW)

Definition: A slang term that originally described enlightenment or awakening about issues of racial and social justice, which can contribute to health disparities and other inequities. Some people and groups use it in a derogatory sense, declaring themselves "anti-woke." These people and groups imply being woke is a negative thing and an overreaction to historical racial and social issues.

Usage: Avoid using the term other than in direct quotations. If it is necessary, explain the meaning.

Sources*: Below is a list of many sources referenced for this guide, including some that also are linked to or cited more specifically elsewhere in the document:*

The Associated Press Stylebook, American Medical Association Manual of Style, American Public Health Association, The Aspen Institute, Cato Institute, History.com, Internal Document: AHA Editorial Style Guide, Internal Document: Health Equity Messaging Document, Internal Expertise: numerous reviews, Kaiser Family Foundation, Katrina Reader Workshop, Miami Dade College, National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of School Psychologists, National Museum of African American History and Culture, The New York Times, Openresourceleadership.com, PBS, Psychologyresearchnet, Psychology Today, Racial Equity Resource Guide, Racialequitytools.org, Sage Journals, The San Diego Foundation, Southern Poverty Law Center, SUMOFUS Progressive Style Guide, Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, ThoughtCo, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Justice, Vanderbilt University, The Washington Post, W.K. Kellogg Foundation Racial Resource Guide

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[17] Cole, NL Ph.D. The Definition of Whiteness in American Society. ThoughtCo. Published November 8, 2019. https://www.thoughtco.com/whiteness-definition-3026743

[18] Kunst JR, Dovidio JF, Dotsch R. White Look-Alikes: Mainstream Culture Adoption Makes Immigrants "Look" Phenotypically White. *SAGE journals.* Published November 3, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167217739279