



EQUITY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Racial Equity in Advocacy, Fact Sheet #1

September 2020

Racial Equity in Advocacy is a series of fact sheets for social policy advocates addressing unequal opportunities by race. Each fact sheet will provide information equipping advocates to embed a racial equity lens into their work to close gaps and improve outcomes for communities of color.

Today, inequitable outcomes for people of color are the result of decades of policy and systems that disregarded or intentionally hampered them. To achieve equity, we must consider race in every step of our policy analysis. We begin this series by identifying the common language that grounds our conversations on equity.

Definitions

- **Dehumanization:** the persistent invalidation of humanity through perceptions or actual treatment. It manifests in five dimensions: historical, cultural/spiritual, social, emotional, and physical.ⁱ
- **Disparity:** all things being equal—including need, eligibility, and preferences—one group systematically fares worse than another.ⁱⁱ
- **Disproportionality:** when the share of a racial/ethnic group in a program or service is high or low relative to the share of the group's representation in the general population.
- **Ethnicity:** a group of people that share a culture, nationality, ancestry, and/or language; a social construct with no basis in biology.
- **Health equity:** the state in which everyone can attain their full health potential unencumbered by socially-defined circumstance.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Individual discrimination:** discriminatory actions taken by individuals against people of color.
- **Institutional racism:** common business practices and policies that disadvantage people of color and offer advantages to white people. The language in these policies and practices do not explicitly mention race making the racism more difficult to detect.
- **People of color:** racial/ethnic groups that have been the object of racism and discrimination in the United States.



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- **Prejudice:** a belief based on preconceived notions and stereotypes. This belief has no basis in evidence and is not subject to change, even when confronted with contrary evidence. **Prejudice** relegates racism to the realm of ideas and attitudes rather than actions.
- **Race:** a group of people that share socially defined physical characteristics (e.g. skin color, hair texture, or facial features). **Race** is a social construct with no basis in biology.
- **Racial equity:** the condition that will be achieved when one's racial identity no longer statistically predicts how one fares. To achieve **racial equity**, we must address both the root causes of inequities and their manifestations. This includes eliminating policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race.^{iv}
- **Racialized trauma:** the cumulative effect of racism on an individual's mental and physical health that exceeds their capacity or resources for coping.^v
- **Racism:** any intentional or unintentional action, attitude, belief, or behavior that threatens, harms, or disadvantages one racial/ethnic group over another.
- **White privilege:** the rights, benefits, advantages, and immunity granted to white people not granted to people of color. **White privilege** exempts white people from certain liabilities others are burdened with.

Equity and Organizational Culture

One of the first steps to embedding equity into organizational culture is getting everyone on the same page about terms and concepts. We encourage you to share this fact sheet with your staff and coworkers, hold meetings for in-depth discussions, and use this as a primer for further reading on integrating an equity lens in policy analysis.

ⁱ Forward Promise National Program Office. (November 2019). *Disrupting Dehumanization and Affirming the Humanity of BYMOC and their Villages*. Retrieved from <http://forwardpromise.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/FP-Dehumanization-Concept-Paper.pdf>

ⁱⁱ McDaniel, M., Woods, T., Pratt, E. and Simms, M. C. (2017). *Identifying Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Human Services: A Conceptual Framework and Literature Review*. OPRE Report #2017-69. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/identifying_racial_and_ethnic_disparities_b508.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2017). *Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.17226/24624>

^{iv} Racial Equity Tools. *Glossary*. Retrieved from <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

^v Ibid.