

## Baltimore Racial Justice Action's Definitions of Terms Commonly Used in Contemporary Conversations about Race

**PREJUDICE:** A positive or negative attitude toward a person or group, formed without just grounds or sufficient knowledge, and not likely to be changed in spite of new evidence or contrary argument. All ethnic and social groups may possess it. Often expressed through code words and symbolic issues rather than overtly offensive language.

**DISCRIMINATION:** Unequal treatment of people based on their membership in a group. A behavior, it is the treatment of a person, not on the basis of their intrinsic individual qualities, but on the basis of a prejudgment about a group. It can be either de jure (legal, as in segregation laws), or de facto (in fact, without legal sanction).

**RACISM:** An institutionalized system of economic, political, social, and cultural relations that ensures that one racial group has and maintains power and privilege over all others in all aspects of life. As such, racism is measured by its economic, cultural, sociological, and political outcomes rather than its intentions. In the U.S., it is the white race that has and maintains such power; people of any race can contribute to or act against racism. *(Adapted from Unitarian Universalist Association definition)*

**OPPRESSION:** The systematic exploitation of one social group by another for its own benefit; it involves institutional control, ideological domination and the imposition of the dominant group's culture on the other group(s). This is different from discrimination, bias or prejudice or because:

- It is pervasive – woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness
- It is restricting – structural limits significantly shape a person's life chances and life choices in ways beyond the person's control
- It is hierarchical – the dominant or privileged groups benefit, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups
- The dominant group has the power to define and name reality and determine what is "normal," "real" or "correct."

**WHITE PRIVILEGE:** The concrete and material benefits automatically received from being socially identified as white in the United States. It includes not having to think about the implications of one's identity because of automatically fitting in the category that is the "norm" or the "standard" for the society. The advantages created are often invisible to the people receiving them, or are considered "rights" available to everyone.

**WHITE ALLY:** Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their racialized privilege and work in solidarity with peoples of color in the struggle for justice.

**RACIAL DIVERSITY:** A reflection of at least some differences of human variation regarding skin color, physical characteristics, culture, and/or other social markers of identity within a group, organization or community. This term speaks only to the presence of such a variation of identities. It is silent on the subject of power.

**EQUITY:** The process to achieve, and the condition that would exist, if the identities assigned to historically oppressed groups no longer acted as the most powerful predictor of how one fares -- if everyone got what they needed (opportunity & access) to have a fair chance at creating quality of life.

Level of Racism	Evidence from Film
<p><b>INDIVIDUAL/INTERPERSONAL*</b></p> <p>Refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support racism. Individual racism can be deliberate or the individual may act to support racism without even knowing.</p>	
<p><b>CULTURAL</b></p> <p>Refers to the behaviors that reflect a worldview that gives value and normality to white people and whiteness, and devalues, stereotypes, and labels people of color as “other,” different, less than, or renders them invisible</p>	
<p><b>INSTITUTIONAL*</b></p> <p>Established laws, policies, customs, practices and organizational culture which systematically reflect, produce and maintain racial inequalities in U.S. society, whether or not the individuals implementing these practices have racist intentions. This is often discrimination without prejudice. Individuals can unintentionally discriminate by applying policies and practices that perpetuate past inequalities.</p>	
<p><b>STRUCTURAL</b></p> <p>The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage people socially identified as white, while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for peoples of color. It is a system of hierarchy and inequity, characterized by white supremacy. It exists underneath and across society, permeating its entire history, culture and institutions. Within U.S. culture, this perpetuates, normalizes and legitimates the effects of white supremacy, while often making those it affects invisible to the narrow legal definition of unlawful discrimination.</p>	