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GLOBAL, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (GDEI) GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Language is ever-changing. The purpose of the **Global, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (GDEI) Glossary of Terms** is to help ground a common language across the Y Movement to better understand and highlight the diversity of the many individuals we serve and employ. Generationally, words have held significance, value, and offense for different groups, and this glossary strives to bridge the gaps between current meanings, previous usage, and new terms to support various identities. For individuals to show up as their most genuine selves, the Y must be intentional with creating space to allow participants, members, staff, and volunteers space to self-identify and share different dimensions of their diversity.

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TERM	DEFINITION
Ability	Physical, mental, or psychological power to do something. While physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychological variations may cause individual functional limitation or impairments, these do not have to lead to disability unless society fails to take account of and include people regardless of their individual differences.
Ableism	Structural and interpersonal oppression experienced by people with disabilities or those presumed or determined to be disabled.
Access	The opportunity or right to experience, participate in or make use of programs, services, facilities, staff/volunteer/leadership roles, etc.
African American	A U.S. citizen of African descent whose ancestors lived in America before and during the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
Ally	One who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their own privilege based on different or multiple dimensions of diversity and takes action in solidarity with marginalized groups to remove advantages created by that privilege. Being an ally is the action of using your privilege to close societal gaps to achieve equity.
Anti-Blackness	As being a two-part formation that both voids Blackness of value, while systematically marginalizing Black people and their issues. The first form of anti-Blackness is overt racism. Beneath this anti-Black racism is the covert structural and systemic racism which categorically predetermines the socioeconomic status of Black people in the U.S. The structure is held in place by anti-Black policies, institutions, and ideologies.

Anti-racism	The work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.
Anti-racist	An individual who works to actively oppose racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. These individuals work to undo internalized racial oppression that may perpetuate racist behaviors and systems.
Anti-racist, Multicultural, Organization (AMO)	An Anti-racist, Multicultural Organization (AMO) strives to reflect the contributions and interests of diverse groups in all aspects; including but not limited to mission, operations, services, and representation - while expressing anti-racist ideas and supporting anti-racist policy.
Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI)	This term encompasses any individual who is a native of, or descended from, people from the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island).
Asexual	Someone who does not experience sexual attraction or may only experience sexual attraction in limited situations. They may experience other types of attraction other than sexual attraction (such as romantic, aesthetic, sensual or physical, platonic, or emotional attractions).
Belonging	The shared experiences of co-created unity that grounds identity and transforms otherness into togetherness.
Bias	Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. With implicit bias , it refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.
Biological Sex	Refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic, or physical attributes that determine if a person is male, female, or intersex. These include both primary and secondary sex characteristics, including genitalia, gonads, hormone levels, hormone receptors, chromosomes, and genes. Sex is often conflated or interchanged with gender, which is more social than biological, and involves personal identity factors as well.
Bisexual	Someone who is attracted to people of their same gender and different genders.
Bigotry	Obstinate or intolerant devotion to one's own opinions and prejudices.
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous and people of color. This term evolved from people of color, to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Black and Indigenous people have, which includes a history of slavery, genocides, and colonization. See <i>people of color</i> for the broader definition.
Biracial	Consisting of, representing, or combining members of two separate racial groups.
Black	An umbrella term that includes any individuals or communities of indigenous African descent. Within a U.S. context, this includes African Americans, Black Caribbean people and other immigrants who trace their lineage to Africa and have a shared global history, experience, and culture.
Cisgender (Cis)	A description for a person whose gender identity, gender expression and biological sex align; describes someone who feels comfortable with the gender identity and gender expression expectations assigned to them based on their biological sex.

Chicano	Someone who is native of, or descends from, Mexico and who lives in the United States.
Classism	Prejudice against or in favor of people belonging to a particular social class.
Colonialism	A form of dominance, dispossession, and subjugation of Indigenous peoples and their land by a foreign power. Foreign invaders rule the territory for the economic benefit of their home country. The impact of colonialism on the subjugated population is complex and extensive. It includes economic exploitation, unequal education and medical outcomes, spread of diseases, suppression of political rights and sovereignty, and endangerment of culture, among others.
Color Blind	The belief in treating everyone “equally” in an effort to minimize people’s differences. Color blind attitudes assume that differences are, by definition, bad or problematic and therefore best ignored (i.e., “I don’t see race.”). The consequence of color blindness is that it forces people to repress important aspects of others’ identity and ignores the historic oppressions groups have experienced based on difference.
Coming Out	May refer to the process by which one accepts one’s own sexuality, gender identity, or status as an intersex person (to “come out” to oneself). May also refer to the process by which one shares one’s sexuality, gender identity, or intersex status with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.). This can be a continual, life-long process for homosexual, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals.
Cultural Appreciation	When individuals from a particular group share aspects of their culture with members from outside of their group and the outsider of the group is seeking to better their understanding and learn about that culture in an effort to broaden their perspective and strengthen their cultural humility.
Cultural Appropriation	The intentional or accidental theft of cultural elements for one’s own use, commodification, or profit often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture. Results from the assumption of a dominant culture’s right to take other cultural elements.
Cultural Competency	The ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own.
Cultural Humility	Beyond cultural competency, cultural humility is a lifelong process that commits to reflecting on one’s own biases, an openness to discovery and learning, and addresses power imbalances to build genuine relationships.
Culture	Integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious or social groups; a system of meanings and customs that is developed by a group of people and then adapted by individuals through socialization and evolved through individual experiences.
Diaspora	Refers to a group of people that has moved from their homelands into new regions through voluntary or forced migration. Diaspora communities live outside their ancestors’ place of birth (or imagined place) territories and recognize that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, religions they adopt, and the cultures they produce.
<u>Dimensions of Diversity</u>	Refers to the variety of factors and influences which contribute to a person’s identity, such as appearance and body type, class, cultural background, disability, gender identity, mental health, national origin, orientation, race, work location, or veteran and military status.

Disability	The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines the term disability, with respect to an individual: a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment. This is the legal definition of disability. Disability is also shaped by attitudinal and environmental barriers that limit people's full social, political, and economic participation. Many people with disabilities only have trouble participating in daily life activities due to the inaccessibility of their social environments. The World Health Organization's (WHO) framework for disability is the interaction between individuals' health conditions and the features of the social and personal environments in which they live.
Discrimination	The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories.
Disparities	Preventable differences experienced by social groups in educational, health, economic, legal and other outcomes. Disparities stem from intentional discrimination, as well as from unconscious bias and systemic forces. (See: <i>Anti-Blackness, Bias, Discrimination, Equity, Privilege, Systems of Oppression.</i>)
Diversity	The presence of differences that make each person unique and that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, religion, disability, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance or other dimensions.
Dominant Culture	A dominant culture is one whose values, language, and ways of behaving are imposed on a subordinate culture or cultures through economic or political power. This may be achieved through legal or political suppression of other sets of values and patterns of behavior, or by monopolizing the media of communication (e.g., in the U.S., the dominant culture is white, heterosexual, Christian and male.) Beliefs, thoughts and assumptions of those within the dominant culture often result in a sense of internalized superiority.
Empathy v. Sympathy	Empathy is defined as the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner. Not to be confused with "sympathy" in which a person achieves a sense of understanding another person through feelings of pity or sorrow for their misfortune.
Ethnicity	The characteristics of a group of people that share a common and distinctive racial, national, religious, linguistic and/or cultural heritage. The U.S. Census Bureau defines ethnicity or origin as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States.
Equity	A continual process of ensuring that every individual has the access and opportunity they need to thrive, and are not at a disadvantage from achieving their potential because of their background, identity, or social position.
Gay	An adjective used to describe a person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. This term is also sometimes referred to represent males who are attracted to males in a romantic, physical, and/or emotional sense.
Gender	A set of social, psychological, and/or emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual along a spectrum of man, woman, both, or neither.

Gender-expansive	A person with a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. Often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring the possibilities of their gender expression and/or gender identity.
Genderqueer	An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between the gender spectrum, or is some combination of genders.
Global Engagement Strategies	Intentional strategies to engage global communities at home and abroad in order to break down existing access barriers for communities to achieve a high quality of life.
Hate Crime	A crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation of any person.
Heteronormativity	The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to any other form of sexuality.
Heterosexual	A person attracted to members of another sex or gender.
Hispanic	Identifies a person who traces their origin or descent to Spanish-speaking countries or other Spanish cultures. It is important to know that this is an umbrella term created by the U.S. Census; therefore many migrants who may be assumed to be Hispanic may not identify as such and prefer identity connected to their home country. Hispanics can be of any race.
Homophobia	The irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals, homosexuality, or any behavior or belief that does not conform to rigid sex role stereotypes. It is this fear that enforces sexism as well as heteronormative assumptions and behaviors.
Homosexual	A person who is attracted to members of what they identify as their own sex or gender. Note that this term is commonly associated with outdated clinical understandings of homosexuality as a psychiatric condition, and may be considered derogatory or offensive, as opposed to the generally preferred terms <i>gay</i> , <i>lesbian</i> , or <i>queer</i> .
Ignorance	The state or fact of being ignorant; lack of knowledge, education, or awareness.
Immigrant	"Immigrant" is not a term used universally: though common in North America to refer to those living in a country other than their birth country, other terms frequently used include "international migrant," the "foreign born," and "migrant."
Inclusion	The full engagement, participation and development of all communities; the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.
Indigenous	Individuals who identify as those who were the first people to live on a given land (e.g., in the U.S., Indigenous people are often identified as Native Americans). Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them by conquest, settlement or other means, and subjected them to a non-dominant or colonial condition.
Internalized Oppression	The process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept, rationalize, and live out the inaccurate stereotypes applied to the oppressed group.
Internalized Racial Oppression	A complex, multi-generational socialization process that teaches people of color to believe, accept and live or act out negative societal definitions of self based on perceived race.
Internalized Racial Superiority	Is a complex multi-generational socialization process that teaches white people to believe, accept and or live superior societal definitions of self-based on perceived race.

Intersectionality	The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of identity and discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. Understanding how intersectionality informs identities and experiences provides opportunities for building empathy and building bridges. (See <i>Dimensions of Diversity</i> for interconnectivity of diversity dimensions sans discrimination.)
Intersex	Refers to individuals born with ambiguous genitalia or bodies that appear neither typically male nor female, often arising from chromosomal anomalies.
Justice	The proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.
Latino/Latina	Identifies a person who traces their origin or descent to Latin American countries (including non-Spanish speaking countries). It is important to know that this is an umbrella term primarily used in the U.S. – many Latinos prefer identification of their home country. Latinos can be of any race.
Latinx	A gender-inclusive way of referring to people of Latin American descent. This new term is more commonly being used by younger generations, however many Latino communities themselves have not adopted this language. The emergence of Latinx coincides with a global movement to introduce gender-neutral nouns and pronouns into many languages.
LGBTQIA+	This is the shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual individuals. You may see variations of this, such as LGBTQ+, GLBT, etc. The plus is inclusive of similar identities that are encompassed with these non-normative gender and sexual orientation identities.
Lesbian	Term used to describe female-identified people attracted romantically, physically, and/or emotionally to other female-identified people.
Marginalization	The treatment of a person, group or concept as insignificant or peripheral. This experience applies to individuals or groups who are denied social, economic and political equity in society, and hence, relegated to its margins.
Mental Health	Refers to cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being. Mental Health is more than just the absence of mental illness or disabilities.
Microaggression	A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, unintentional or intentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group.
Multicultural	An adjective used to describe a person, place, or entity that incorporates and embeds the value of diverse ideas, beliefs and/or people from many different countries and cultural backgrounds.
Multiculturalism	The presence and promotion of the peaceful coexistence and value of diverse races, ethnicities and several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society, community or network.
Native / First Nations People	Native is often used to refer to “original,” or “inherited,” traits of an individual, or that with which one is associated by birth. Native peoples are the original, or “first” peoples of a given geographic region. However, use of the term “native” or “natives” may carry negative or pejorative historical connotations.
Newcomer	An umbrella term that includes various categories of immigrants who are born outside of the United States.
Nonbinary	An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or outside of the gender spectrum, or is some combination of genders.

Opportunity Gap	Refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower barriers to educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students.
Oppression	The systematic subjugation of a group of people by another group with access to social power, the result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices; systemic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing, and disadvantaging of certain social identities in contrast to the privileged norm; when some people are denied something of value, while others have ready access.
Outing	Involuntary disclosure of one's sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status, as opposed to "coming out" which is voluntary disclosure of such status on one's own terms.
Pansexual	An adjective used to describe individuals who have the potential for sexual attractions or romantic love toward people of all gender identities and biological sexes. The concept of pansexuality deliberately rejects the gender binary.
People-First Language	Language that elevates the individual and emphasizes that there is more to each person than their descriptors.
People of Color (POC)	An identity created to unify and mobilize and celebrate the collective power of individuals self-identity as or society perceives as Asian American/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, mixed, and biracial individuals - nonwhite individuals.
Power	Possession of control, authority or influence. Wealth, race, citizenship, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Although power is often conceptualized as power over other individuals or groups, other variations include "power with" (used in the context of building collective strength) and "power within" (which references an individual's internal strength).
Prejudice	Negative beliefs or judgments made about an individual or group prior to any actual knowledge or experience involving that person or group. The word is often used to refer to a preconceived evaluation of another person based on their dimensions of diversity.
Pronouns	Pronouns make up a small subcategory of nouns. The distinguishing characteristic of pronouns is that they can be substituted for other nouns (i.e.: Jason can be replaced with other pronouns he self-identifies with, such as he or him). Adding pronouns to nametags and introductions is used to allow individuals to self-identify their pronouns. The use of the term "preferred pronouns" is offensive, as it implies individuals have a preference of how their gender identity. Go here to learn more about gender pronouns.
Privilege	An unearned advantage, benefit, right or immunity granted to and enjoyed by an individual or group, beyond the advantages, and often at the expense, of others.
Queer	A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively as heterosexual and/or folks who have nonbinary or trans identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.
Questioning	A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.
Race	A social construct (human invention) based on physical traits and/or geographic origin, designed to categorize humans and support hierarchical worldviews that maintain some groups (white) as superior while keeping others (non-white) as inferior.

Racial Reconciliation	Reconciliation involves three ideas. First, it recognizes that racism is both systemic and institutionalized, with far-reaching effects on both political engagement and economic opportunities for minorities. Second, reconciliation is engendered by empowering local communities through relationship- building and truth-telling. Lastly, justice is the essential component of the conciliatory process—justice that is best termed as restorative rather than retributive.
Racism	<p>A system of oppression based on the social construction of a racial hierarchy, which is expressed in individual, institutional as well as cultural forms and functions for the benefit of the dominant race at the expense of the others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism can be internalized by those who it oppressed (internationalized racism); • Racism can be built into the foundation of societal constructs and institutions (institutionalized racism); • Racism can occur between two individuals (interpersonal racism) or a single person's beliefs, attitudes, rhetoric that supports or perpetuates racism (individual racism).
Sexism	A system of oppression based on social constructions of gender superiority and inferiority, which is expressed in individual, institutional as well as cultural forms.
Sexual Orientation	An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.
Stereotype	A standardized mental picture or assumption that is held in common by multiple individuals, that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment about the characteristics of another group, person or entity.
System of Oppression	Systems of oppression are discriminatory institutions, structures or norms that are embedded in the fabric of our society. Examples include racism, sexism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia.
Systems	A set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network. Systems can operate at the organizational level (e.g., the YMCA) or at the societal level (e.g. the education system, health care system, etc.).
Systems Change	Systems change is both a process and an outcome. Both a verb and a noun. Systems change requires collective approach, to change the conditions associated with a complex problem, with a goal of addressing its root cause(s).
Tokenism	The practice of demonstrating a disingenuous effort or symbolic gesture toward the accomplishment of an equity goal, in order to deflect criticism or comply with affirmative action rules (e.g., a company hires a black woman as VP of Diversity and showcases her as demonstrating their commitment to diversity without making changes to policies, practices and procedures).
Transgender	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.
Transition	Refers to the process a person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they identify with and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression.
Transphobia	The fear or hatred of persons perceived to be transgender.

White	An umbrella term that has changed over time in the United States historical context to identify individuals who have ancestral origins in Europe. Throughout U.S. history, those who were considered white changed based on court cases that defined which groups were considered white based on skin color and continental origin.
Whiteness	Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups of are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal.
White Supremacy	White supremacy is a historically based, institutionally-perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.
Xenophobia	An unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers or of that which is foreign or strange. Manifestations of xenophobia are usually triggered by intense dislike or hatred against people that are perceived as outsiders, strangers or foreigners to a group, community or nation, based on their presumed or real descent, national, ethnic or social origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation or other grounds.

Adapted From: **1.** *Washington University Mosaic Project Bias Glossary* **2.** *Xavier University Office of Diversity & Inclusion Glossary of Terminology* **3.** [Racial Equity Tools](#) Glossary of Terms **4.** *U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs Office of Diversity & Inclusion Glossary of Terms* **5.** *Berkeley University Division of Equity & Inclusion Glossary of Terms* **6.** *National Performing Arts Convention Diversity Glossary* **7.** *American Civil Liberties Union* **8.** *University of California-Los Angeles LGBT Terminology* **9.** *Laurier University Diversity & Equity Office* **10.** [Race Forward](#) **11.** *How to be an Antiracist* **12.** *Oxford English Dictionary* **13.** *Webster Dictionary* **14.** *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner on Xenophobia* **15.** [Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group](#) Systems of Oppression **16.** [Chinook Fund](#) General Terms & Forms of Oppression **17.** [YWCA](#) Our Shared Language: Social Justice Glossary **18.** [Afro](#) "Black" or "African America" **19.** [U.S. Department of Education](#) Newcomer Tool kit **20.** [National Museum of African American History & Culture](#) Talking About Race