



Explanation of Terms

Unrealized Impact 2.0

*The Hard Truth About Where We Are
and Ways to Move Forward*

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Explanation of Terms

Language is powerful; it helps to shape norms, assumptions, and context in our interactions and communication. As we evolve and learn from our own reflections, and from our work with communities and partners, we continue to evolve our language to be maximally inclusive and consistent with our core values and mission. With that in mind, we made intentional decisions about the language we used in this report and, below, we'll elaborate on our orientation and rationale for some of our choices.

We recommend that organizations work intentionally to develop definitions that are tailored to their own specific context, to examine their own language choices and the rationale for them, and to make common meaning of terms that they are using. This process can build skill and alignment to support organizations' DEI and antiracism efforts and expectations.

To see these terms in action, check out our [Unrealized Impact 2.0](#) report.

AAPI

Throughout this report, we use this acronym to capture a range of identities, including "all people of Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander ancestry who trace their origins to the countries, states, jurisdictions and/or the diasporic communities of these geographic regions" and including those who identify as Native Hawaiian.¹

Antiracism

The "active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices, and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared..."² We believe that antiracism requires rigorous self-examination around our individual roles in creating, perpetuating, and upholding white supremacy. We have made an intentional choice to use one word, rather than a hyphenated "anti-racism," as we believe it better connotes the necessarily proactive nature of antiracist work, as opposed to reactive incremental change.

Black

We intentionally use the term Black instead of African American throughout this report because we recognize the important distinctions in these terms. While the term Black is inclusive of the entire African diaspora (i.e., all African-descended people), the term African American refers primarily to descendants of enslaved people in the United States.³

1 Census Data & API Identities. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/census-data-api-identities>

2 Anti-racism. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.aclrc.com/antiracism>

3 Segal, R. (1995). *The Black diaspora: Five centuries of the Black experience outside Africa*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Diversity

For the purposes of our wide-reaching surveys and this broadly focused report, we define diversity as the presence of different types of people (from a wide range of different identities and with different perspectives, experiences, etc.).

Equity

For the purposes of our wide-reaching surveys and this broadly focused report, we define equity as enabling uniform outcomes for all and removing the predictability of outcomes based on any specific identity marker.

Inclusion

For the purposes of our wide-reaching surveys and this broadly focused report, we define inclusion as embracing diversity by creating an environment of meaningful connection, engagement, and belonging — where people experience a deep sense of value and respect for their full humanity.

Latinx

Throughout this report, we chose to use this term because we believe it to be the most inclusive language option encompassing a wide range of people of Latin American descent or origin along with their varied ancestry and diverse racial and gender identities. While the terms Latina/o and Latin@ are inclusive in terms of both ancestry and binary gender, these terms can exclude people who identify as non-binary, non-conforming, agender, genderqueer, etc.

LGBTQIA+

Throughout this report, we use this acronym to capture a range of identities: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and the + to acknowledge the additional range of identities within the LGBTQIA+ community that may not be captured within the boundaries of existing terms or labels.⁴

Native American/Indigenous

Throughout this report, we use this term because we believe it most specifically describes the communities we are referring to here as captured in our survey tool today: native peoples from the North American continent in addition to the more general term Indigenous, which could refer to native peoples from any land.

Non-Binary

We use this term to identify people whose gender is not accurately defined through the gender binary (man/woman).⁵ We also acknowledge that this term has many limitations and can also marginalize people that do not identify with gender in any shape or form (agender) or identify more closely with a different term from among a wide range (e.g., genderqueer, gender non-conforming).

Racism

“The marginalization and/or oppression of People of Color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people”⁶ and proximity to whiteness. We believe that racism can be intentional and unintentional, plays out in the form of explicit and implicit bias, and takes place on individual, organizational, and systemic levels.

4 Glossary of terms. (n.d.). Human Rights Campaign. Retrieved from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

5 Non-binary inclusion. (n.d.). LGBT Foundation. Retrieved from <https://lgbt.foundation/who-we-help/trans-people/non-binary>

6 Racism. (n.d.). Anti-Defamation League. Retrieved from <https://www.adl.org/racism>

Radically Human/Radical Humanity

The concept of “radical humanity” at Promise54 originated in a blog post by CEO Xiomara Padamsee in October 2019⁷ as an alternative to white supremacy culture. A radically human approach enables people to be whole at work — to bring the fullness of complex and intersecting identities, honor their histories, and acknowledge their pain. Radical humanity requires regular demonstrations of authenticity, vulnerability, and compassion, alongside ownership and responsibility for pains caused to others. It nurtures risk-taking and meets mistakes with grace and reflection, knowing that imperfection is a fundamental part of being human and that learning fuels growth. In a radically human environment, we prioritize trusting, authentic relationships and deep engagement. We prioritize physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs at all times, including when it is messy; we slow down and insert intentionality, planfulness, care, humor, joy, and love into our work.

White Supremacy Culture

The norms,⁸ values, beliefs, and subsequent ways of thinking, behaving, and decision-making valued and centered in white, western-dominant culture that uphold white supremacy and thereby continuously privilege white people and proximity to whiteness.

7 Padamsee, X. (2019). Radically Human. Promise54. Retrieved from <https://www.promise54.org/radically-human/>

8 White supremacy culture: Characteristics. (n.d.). Showing Up for Racial Justice — SURJ. Retrieved from <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture-characteristics.html>