WITH THE YMCA OF
GREATER RICHMOND

BELONG

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLAN

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND

The Y's mission is reflected by the core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. These values inspire us to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential and be authentic in all aspects of diversity including ability, age, cultural background, economic status, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender identity, ideology, language, national origin, political view, race or sexual orientation. Together, we celebrate strong, inclusive communities FOR ALL.

For 167 years, our core values and "spirit, mind and body" focus, have grounded us to weather social change, expand membership, enhance our services and thrive as a community organization that bridges divides and cultivates human relationships.

We are advancing diversity, equity and inclusion through an intentional strategic plan, **BELONG WITH THE YMCA**, to emphasize to our members, employees, donors, stakeholders and communities that the YMCA stands committed to creating strong, inclusive communities that reject discrimination in all forms. This plan turns ideas into action and underscores our dedication to equity. Through these strategies, the YMCA will become a more inclusive, diverse, multicultural organization embracing anti-racist principles that actively identify and break down systems that perpetuate inequities.

GOAL: **To create an environment in which staff, members and other stakeholders experience an organization rich with multicultural inclusivity, the promotion of equity across all walks of life and a genuine sense of belonging for people of all demographics and identities with intentional focus on underrepresented and historically marginalized communities.**

PURPOSE: **To assure that the YMCA is promoting equity and inclusion, ensuring that our promise to be "Open to All" remains at the forefront of our approach to staff, members, community partners and our communities, and increasing collective awareness of the YMCA as an agent of social change.**

This framework is designed to create a space for transparency and open dialogue where our community and staff can engage, collaborate and hold each other accountable to the Y's work of **providing health equity, equity of opportunity and equity in education and leadership to all residents within our region**. The YMCA recognizes that this is ongoing, comprehensive work and is committed to making the changes needed to be foundational and sustainable. We are dedicated to being an organization where the entire community can thrive.

INCLUSION STRATEGIC PLAN

LEADERSHIP: The President and CEO of the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND in collaboration with the Y's department of Social Responsibility has assembled a team of staff and volunteers to establish and evaluate metrics to measure the success of the DEI Strategic Plan.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Cabinet is comprised of staff representatives from across the organization. This cabinet will:

- Champion and model a cause-centered culture that is grounded in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.
- Participate in and initiate thought leadership that will generate solution-focused, asset-based approaches toward the strategic implementation of DEI goals in the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.
- Exhibit a commitment to develop organizational policies, procedures and practices that are rooted in justice and equitable for all our employees and members and creates an environment where all can grow and thrive free of discrimination in any form.
- Recommend achievable plans of action that enable effective integration of DEI strategies across key operational and programmatic areas to have meaningful impact across the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.

Mission, Equity and Inclusion Committee is comprised of volunteers (Board Members) and staff at the Association level and embedded within each Branch Board of Managers:

- Recommends achievable plans of action that enable effective integration of DEI strategies across key operational and programmatic areas to have meaningful impact within their specific community.
- Supports YMCA community engagement that leverages the power that exists within historically marginalized populations toward the achievement of equitable outcomes for all.
- Fosters community cohesion.
- Holds all employees of the Y accountable to the achievement of the DEI Strategic Plan.

Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is comprised of CEO, COO, and CFO at the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND and are charged to boldly listen, lead, and drive the implementation of the DEI Strategic Plan for the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.

Anti-racism subcommittee within the DEI Cabinet commissioned by the CEO, comprised of staff and volunteers are tasked with analyzing policies, procedures and practices that need critical examination across multiple dimensions of diversity, to include:

- Identifying and discerning areas of racism and discrimination in any of our policies, guidelines or practices.
- Developing recommendations and subsequent action steps that address any areas of discrimination, devaluing and/or disenfranchisement within the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.

WORKING AT THE YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND

Our employees are the Y's most important resource. We are dedicated to becoming the most welcoming, inclusive, equitable organization possible, where employees feel a genuine sense of belonging. Y staff will reflect and represent the diverse and multicultural communities where we all live, work and play, and our authentic relationships with one another will create a culture of compassion and empathy where everyone can thrive. Employee Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives focus on retention, recruitment, advancement and culture.

OBJECTIVE: To recruit, hire and retain diverse, multicultural staff, with a focus on BIPOC, underrepresented and historically marginalized communities reflective and representative of the communities in which we work at all levels of the organization.

- By 2025, our employees will be at least 70 percent reflective of community demographics.

This will be assessed in Q1 of each year to continue work outlined below as is or to course correct. See Appendix 1 for a more detailed breakdown of staff representation.

STRATEGY: Periodic reviews of hiring policies and procedures to confirm that the YMCA is actively identifying and dismantling systems that perpetuate inequities.

STRATEGY: Understand the community demographics around YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND branch locations.
- **Tactic:** Review demographic data from the Richmond Metro Region and provide insights to the branches on where they currently stand.
- **Tactic:** Work with YUSA to maintain updated local community demographic sheets.
- **Tactic:** Give hiring manager current branch metrics.

STRATEGY: Culturally intelligent recruitment of staff from historically marginalized populations.
- **Tactic:** Work with Employee Resource Groups on the promotion of open Y employee positions.
  - ☐ Incentivize current staff to recruit new hires to create a workforce that is reflective of our communities (currently active in aquatics and youth development).
- **Tactic:** Utilize the job boards at local colleges and universities (like VSU, VCU, U of R, JSCC and VUU).
- **Tactic:** Develop partnerships with local agencies that specialize in recruitment from wide ranges of diverse communities in our region.
- **Tactic:** Quarterly reviews of successful recruitment areas (Indeed.com is highest, followed by employee referrals), hiring, termination demographics.
- **Tactic:** Communicate appropriate data with all staff and stakeholders through all-staff meetings, town halls, HR newsletter and other appropriate communication avenues.
- **Tactic:** Commit to promoting and hiring staff of color in senior leadership positions.

STRATEGY: Utilize a multi-layered hiring approach that addresses and rectifies cultural bias in interviews and resume review.
- Tactic: Actively seek input from various perspectives with employees outside of the hiring unit.

STRATEGY: Develop employee orientation that utilizes DEI/DIG training.
- **Tactic:** Develop New Employee Orientation for part-time staff with specific DEI/DIG training embedded.
- **Tactic:** Develop Full Time Orientation (FTO) for full-time staff with specific DEI/DIG training embedded.
- **Tactic:** Develop 4-5 "short burst" training program for employees to complete prior to start.
- **Tactic:** Develop a follow up training for the first 6 months of employment that is embedded throughout the organization.

STRATEGY: Require training in cultural competencies and emotional IQ for all employees.
- **Tactic:** Initial training includes a clear deadline of completion within the first year of employment.
- **Tactic:** 1-3 class annual training program promoting culturally responsive practices, cultural humility and emotional intelligence for all staff.
- **Tactic:** Add DEI topics and discussion points within staff meetings and cabinet meetings; have Executive Directors lead conversations.

STRATEGY: Incorporate cultural conversations into quarterly staff meeting.
- **Tactic:** Develop training videos, questions that evoke discussion, honoring cultural diversity in the staff and education around various ethnic and racial groups.

OBJECTIVE: Our employees feel a deep sense of belonging, support, and encouragement in a welcoming, respectful, nurturing, and affirming environment with equitable opportunities for advancement.

- By 2023, employee engagement will increase by 3.86.
- By 2025, employee satisfaction and sense of belonging will increase by 3.96.

Currently, the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND conducts a semi-annual climate and culture survey with all full-time staff. Between the first and second surveys, responses shifted .2 points, indicating a statistically significant decline in employee satisfaction and cultural cohesion. It is important to note, this survey was taken in February 2021 during the pandemic and ongoing civil unrest.

The strategies outlined below are designed to increase employee satisfaction and enhance a sense of belonging within the staff community to be measured by an increase in the overall net promoter score by 2025, with an intermediate goal to increase employee engagement from the current 3.78 mean by 2023. For a breakdown of the Employee Engagement Report by race see Appendix 2.

STRATEGY: Hire Association-level staff member to focus on D.E.I within the organization with the goal of expanding position(s) into association leadership.
- **Tactic:** Work with all departments, specifically philanthropy, marketing, and leadership development, to incorporate D.E.I focused initiatives and goals into all operations.
- **Tactic:** Lead Association Employee Resource Groups.
- **Tactic:** Provide visionary leadership to DEI Cabinet sub-committees, Newcomer Welcome Center, Welcoming Week, branch board diversity efforts and community partnerships.

STRATEGY: Utilize Social Responsibility Progression Scales with branch Executive Directors and Association SMEs.
- **Tactic:** Individual quarterly check-in between Executive Director, VP supervisor, and a member of the Association social responsibility team to review status of progression scale progress and develop ways to move branch social equity work forward.
- **Tactics:** Include Social Responsibility Progression Scales in annual reviews.

STRATEGY: Share widely the various programs and support available to staff.
- **Tactic:** Promote SharePoint use to increase awareness of programs.
- **Tactic:** Quarterly notifications of the ERGs through emails or townhall discussions.
- **Tactic:** Quarterly notifications of EAP program through emails or townhall discussions.

STRATEGY: Measure employee satisfaction throughout the year to understand the overall morale and culture of the organization.
- **Tactic:** Continue Employee Engagement committee work.
- **Tactic:** Conduct semi-annual staff satisfaction surveys.
- **Tactic:** Create a list of questions that can be utilized within staff and cabinet meetings periodically to capture anecdotal employee feedback.

OBJECTIVE: Increase YMCA employees' opportunities for advancement through transparent, equitable practices.

STRATEGY: Develop a training and succession planning program that promotes/grows part-time staff into a pathway for opportunities for full-time positions.
- **Tactic:** Develop DEI-specific Mentor program, training provided for mentors.
- **Tactic:** Utilize ERGs as key pathway clearers, coaches and cheerleaders.

STRATEGY: Advance opportunities for internal candidates to apply for open positions.
- **Tactic:** Continuation of the peer-coaching model.
- **Tactic:** Internally recruit staff whose performance indicates growth and potential readiness for a promotion.
- **Tactic:** Utilize the performance standard process to develop growth opportunities that ready both part-time and full-time staff for promotion.
- **Tactic:** Incorporate inclusive excellence (definition below) questions that are weighed as heavily as operational functions on performance reviews.
- **Tactic:** Provide specific feedback and constructive recommendations for future goal achievement when internal candidates are not selected.

METRICS: Conduct culture/climate surveys twice per year. Quarterly audits/examination of hiring, retention and promotion rates—specifically looking at various demographics as compared to the communities—including but not limited to; race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, diverse ability, age, and other identities that are available; utilize external volunteers (board members) to assist with unbiased reviews.

SHARING OUR STORY

Communicating our work in diversity, equity and inclusion is paramount to the success of our strategies in achieving the goals we have put forth. We are determined to increase the collective awareness of the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND as an agent of social change. We are dedicated to open dialogue, transparent actions and accountability to our staff, members, community partners and the general public.

It is vital to communicate the YMCA's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and increase collective awareness of the YMCA as an agent of social change. We are dedicated to open dialogue, transparent actions and accountability to our staff, members, community partners and the community.

We will increase awareness of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives through enhanced, culturally-intelligent communications internally and externally, ensuring that all stakeholders understand the YMCA's mission to create a more equitable community.

OBJECTIVE: Increase understanding and awareness of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion culture work to Y staff through enhanced communication of internal and external messaging.

Offer quarterly townhall meetings to raise awareness and understanding of the work in the DEI strategic plan. (identify team for this work)

STRATEGY: Create DEI training plan focused on the seven key DEI focus areas YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND has identified: Racial Inequality and Racism, Immigrant Rights, LGBTQ+, Seniors, Children's issues, Women's Issues and Diverse abilities.
- **Tactics:** Staff training video required by all FT and PT staff.
- **Tactics:** Development of ongoing training plan for staff.
- **Tactics:** Monthly town hall meetings to discuss ongoing DEI work.
- **Tactics:** Ongoing discussion and roll out updates at the Operations Team, Executive Director, Association Leadership Team, Cabinet and Executive Leadership Team Meetings monthly.

OBJECTIVE: YMCA members and community partners are aware of and understand the YMCA's mission to create a more equitable community—focused on equity of education, leadership, and health.

The YMCA will continue to push our messaging broadly through various channels that include social media, radio and TV. Currently we have a total of 1,209,600 radio impressions, 855,496 TV impressions, and 58 DEI-specific social media posts that have generated 331 likes, 14 comments and 88 shares. We will continue to drive this work and increase message saturation each year to help the community-at-large know and understand the Y's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. For a detailed list of radio and TV media spots see Appendix 4.

STRATEGY: Share For United Us DEI Campaign broadly to include efforts that the Y supports, organizes and celebrates.
- **Tactic:** Determine effective ways to share with members, partners, community members who are not engaged with the Y, board members, volunteers and other stakeholders.
- **Tactic:** Embed YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND's DEI Marketing campaign in the online joining process.
- **Tactics:** Updated DEI FAQs.
- **Tactic:** Calendar of events.
  - ☐ **2021 DEI Calendar.Updated03.15.2021.xlsx**
- **Tactic:** Updated Assets—social media posts covering all branches.
- **Tactic:** Updated Branch Assets—fliers and social media posts at a more micro level, banners, posters, digital displays.

STRATEGY: Increase earned media activity in order to elevate YMCA DEI work.
- **Tactics:** Created a quarterly focus calendar in partnership with a reputable third party.

STRATEGY: Execute a media training program for staff, volunteers and other partners.
- **Tactics:** Infuse DEI language into job descriptions.
- **Tactics:** Identify and train Y staff or volunteers as ambassadors for each of the DEI focus areas.
- **Tactics:** Board trainings/presentations.

STRATEGY: Ensure language barriers are not preventing the effective communication of the DEI Campaign.
- **Tactics:** Provide all Marcom assets in both English and Spanish.
- **Tactics:** Provide translation options of our messaging in additional languages.
- **Tactics:** Launch new website in Q2 of 2021 equipped with Google Translator to assist the automatic translation of our messaging to more than 100 languages.
- **Tactics:** Develop Spanish Facebook Page for YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.

SHARING OUR STORY (continued)

OBJECTIVE: Ensure that YMCA messaging is culturally intelligent.

STRATEGY: Make certain that a broad set of perspectives are reviewing and analyzing marketing materials on at least a bi-annual basis.
- **Tactic:** Formation of marketing advisory group; a group consisting of members of the Anti-Racism Task Force, select ERG and DEI cabinet members and select MEI members.
- **Tactic:** Review with the marketing advisory committee ways to incorporate additional asset-based language —"uplifting community strength" vs. focusing on community needs.

- **Tactic:** Annual external Audit for YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND Marketing and Communications and Member Experience.
- **Tactic:** External audits will take into consideration our peers include both gyms and other nonprofits.

STRATEGY: Identify ways the Y can support and elevate community-led community engagement work.
- **Tactic:** YMCA convene and host Community Conversations with community partners.
- **Tactic:** MEI committees at each YMCA branch board are active supporters.

METRICS: Overall communication saturation—video views, social media audit (reactions, views, shares, etc.) staff survey for information acceptance.

OUR Y COMMUNITY

A vital component of our commitment to equity is that the YMCA is Open to All. This premise is foundational—part of our "DNA"—and we are dedicated to advancing health equity, equity of opportunity, and equity in education and leadership. We work in concert with others, engage alongside community members and partners, through authentic and trusting partnerships. Community Diversity, Equity and Inclusion focuses on investments in marginalized communities, advocacy for the organization's mission, and commitment to community partnerships.

OBJECTIVE: To recruit diverse, multicultural board members, with a focus on BIPOC, underrepresented and historically marginalized communities, that are reflective and representative of the communities in which we serve.

- By 2023, YMCA branch Boards of Managers will be 65 percent reflective of the communities served.

- By 2025, YMCA branch Boards of Managers will be 70 percent reflective of the communities served. This will be reviewed in Q1 of each year. For complete detail of board demographics see Appendix 3.

STRATEGY: Work with YMCA branch executive directors to broaden board recruitment tools.
- **Tactic:** Create partnerships with key community stakeholders
  - ☐ Ex: Various houses of worship, residential communities, schools, County management (etc.)
- **Tactic:** Build community outreach through partnerships with organizations with like-minded missions and non-profit networks.
- **Tactic:** Equip executive directors with demographic information relevant to their service area footprint.

STRATEGY: Incorporate cultural conversations into bi-annual board meetings.
- **Tactic:** Develop training videos and questions that evoke discussion that honors cultural diversity in the volunteers, members, and staff with education around multiple ethnic and racial groups.

OBJECTIVE: To ensure YMCA donors are aware of and understand the YMCA's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

STRATEGY: Clearly define gift acceptance policy to include the YMCA's DEI work.
- **Tactic:** Promote the DEI work as part of donor cultivation to ensure understanding in early stages of relationship.
- **Tactic:** Regular updates to volunteers and donors of the ongoing DEI work.

STRATEGY: Develop site tour process that is more engaging.

OBJECTIVE: To forge community partnerships that support and promote equity, inclusion and asset–based community engagement.

- The completion and expansion of capital projects in under-resourced communities will be a measurement of success.

STRATEGY: Devote capital and program investment opportunities within historically marginalized communities.
- **Tactic:** Northside/Petersburg facility renovations.
- **Tactic:** Manchester facility renovation, to include Newcomer Welcome Center.
- **Tactic:** Invite and utilize the talent within the community to drive the programming.

STRATEGY: Open opportunities for innovative partnerships with multi-level organizations (small and large) that work to advance community health equity for all.
Tactics: Develop relationships with partners that are listed within the platform Help1RVA. **help1rva.org**

STRATEGY: Continue to invest in programming within the seven key DEI focus areas YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND has identified of equity focus: Racial Inequality and Racism, Immigrant Rights, LGBTQ+, Seniors, Children's issues, Women's Issues and Diverse abilities.
- **Tactic:** Implement and expand Power Scholars Academy.
- **Tactic:** Implement and expand GRACE Swim programming.
- **Tactic:** Implement and expand alternative student learning options as needed.
- **Tactic:** Newcomer Welcome Centers located in local YMCAs, beginning with the MANCHESTER FAMILY YMCA.
- **Tactic:** Work with partners to identify new additional programming, ex: Power Scholars, GRACE swim lessons and Miracle League.

STRATEGY: Identify gaps in programming.
- **Tactic:** Utilize Help1RVA to identify programs that will support our programming gaps.

OBJECTIVE: For all YMCA facilities to be welcoming spaces for the community to access resources that support families and individuals in reaching their full potential.

In 2020 the YMCA had 576 total closed referrals through Social Needs Navigation (SNN). **By 2025, we will support 4,500 families and individuals through social needs navigation and Help1RVA.**

STRATEGY: Utilize the Newcomer Welcome Center as a conduit to access the tools and services available for SNN and to build intentional and effective relationships within the community.

STRATEGY: The Y is regarded as a community liaison and partner for this work and that relationships are ongoing.
- **Tactic:** Hold regular meetings with key Newcomer Welcome Center partners.

STRATEGY: Embed SNN services into the MANCHESTER NEWCOMER WELCOME CENTER with expanded services.
- **Tactic:** Seek sustainable funding opportunities to hire more SNN navigators in order to serve more community members.

OUR Y COMMUNITY (continued)

OBJECTIVE: To ensure that all community members can access YMCA programs and services in a barrier-free, user-friendly manner.

STRATEGY: Through the use of various technologies, becoming a Y member will be user friendly and barrier-free.
- **Tactic:** Utilize online tools for ease. Online services will offer disability-friendly features for the visual and hearing impaired.
- **Tactic:** Place kiosks within each branch to allow for in-person access to online tools with Y staff support.
- **Tactic:** Utilize the YMCA Engagement and Solution (YES) Center staff who can offer personalized help with membership and program registration.

STRATEGY: Financial Assistance (FA) is easily accessible and has an immediate turnaround.
- Tactic: FA will be available to anyone in need.
- Tactic: Boldly share the most recent FA policy prominently on our website.
ymcarichmond.org/income-based-membership/

STRATEGY: Services offered to the community happen out in the community and within the YMCA branch buildings.
- **Tactics:** Engage with community partners to co-determine which community strengthening efforts (programs, services, etc.) are desired and potentially achievable.
- **Tactics:** Hire staff and volunteers from within the community to provide vision, leadership and implementation of programs and services.

METRICS: Measurement of success within programs (i.e. Power Scholars Academy); Board/ volunteer surveys; program participant surveys; demographic break downs of participants and the value they find from it; Social Responsibility Progression Scales.

the Y®
YMCA

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

WORDS THAT WELCOME

Inclusive Language Style Guide

CONTENTS

RELATED RESOURCES

In addition to this style guide, YMCA of the USA offers a suite of resources to assist you in thoughtful and intentional use of inclusive language:

- Diversity, Inclusion, Global and Multicultural Development (DIGMD) Glossary of Terms

- YMCA Equity Messaging Guide

- Brand Messaging Guide

- Y-USA House Style Guide

QUESTIONS?

Email communications@ymca.net

INTRODUCTION

Why Words Matter

As a community-serving organization committed to advancing equity and inclusion for all, it is critical that the Y demonstrates in words and actions its commitment to becoming an anti-racist, multicultural organization. All Y staff and volunteers can help move the Y forward on this journey by being mindful of and consistent in the words we use to describe the diverse individuals and communities we serve.

Words matter, especially the words we use to describe one another. Words used carelessly can make people feel diminished, devalued and alienated, as well as perpetuate hurtful and harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about diverse individuals and communities. Conversely, **intentional, inclusive language can make people feel seen, validated, respected and welcomed.**

Using inclusive language also aligns with our organization's core values and brand personality, which guide us in communicating in ways that are welcoming, genuine, nurturing, hopeful and determined.

The Purpose of This Style Guide

A style guide documents style preferences related to particular words or terms to ensure consistency of usage across an organization. It is not a glossary or a set of key messages (both of which are available in other Y resources as noted on page 2). Rather, it is a complementary resource that offers recommended terms, terms to avoid, guidance when it comes to capitalization and other grammatical elements, as well as general inclusive language guidelines. For full definitions of terms, please consult Y-USA's DIGMD Glossary of Terms.

How Were These Style Decisions Made?

For the initial launch of this resource, YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) prioritized four categories of identity language: **ability; faith, belief and religion; gender and sexual orientation; and race and ethnicity**. Relevant stakeholder groups across the Y Movement contributed to the creation of the style guide, including several of the Y's National Employee Resource Groups.

Understanding that language evolves, Y-USA is committed to reviewing and updating this style guide periodically. The review process will also offer opportunities to expand the style guide with additional categories. We invite any Y staff or volunteer to share suggestions for additional topics and terms to update or add to future versions of this style guide by emailing communications@ymca.net.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Self-Identification

While this document establishes specific style and wording choices for content created by Y-USA (which are also recommended for YMCAs to adopt), these choices may not apply to every individual. It is always important to respect how people choose to self-identify and defer to their preferences, interacting with them as the unique individuals they are.

Guidelines, Not Rules

While words do matter, their purpose is to facilitate — not discourage — honest dialogue around difficult topics. It's important to remember that language evolves quickly, and preference can vary widely by region, age, and culture and based on individuals' life experiences. We encourage Y leaders to use the recommendations included here with grace and as tools to support intentional, empathetic communication rather than fixed rules to be employed regardless of context.

Flexibility for Field-Specific Terminology and Audiences

Certain situations and audiences may require deviations from the styles presented here (e.g., the need to align with U.S. Census Bureau classifications for race and ethnicity). Such situations still represent an opportunity to take steps — for example, initiating conversations with partners or adding context and framing to communications — to demonstrate the Y's commitment to equity and inclusion and remain true to the foundational principles of this style guide.

Offensive Terminology

Some terms are universally understood to be offensive; this style guide does not list such terms. However, we have noted certain terms to avoid, which, while considered offensive to many, may not be understood as offensive by all.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

When communicating about people and communities, keep these guidelines in mind:

➢ **Use person-first language** to elevate the individual and emphasize that there is more to each person than their descriptors. Mention characteristics such as age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race/ethnicity or ability only when relevant.

> **Example:** *a person with diabetes* instead of *a diabetic*

➢ **Use language** that empowers individuals and communities by focusing on their positive attributes and strengths and avoids portraying them as passive and/or powerless.

> **Example:** instead of saying *the YMCA served at-risk youth,* try *the YMCA designed a program to engage youth who could benefit from literacy training*

➢ **Be specific.** When describing an individual or community, use specific language when possible and relevant. This can help us avoid applying terminology or colloquial phrases inaccurately or in ways that are confusing and not helpful to the reader.

> **Example:** *a person with bipolar disorder* instead of *a person with mental illness*

➢ **Avoid stereotypes and labeling.** Stereotypes are widely held but oversimplified opinions or prejudiced attitudes about a particular group of people. They cannot accurately or effectively describe a unique individual or group and instead can imply unfair judgment or connotation. When possible, provide specific data to support your statements and add clarity.

> **Example:** instead of saying *older generations struggle to use technology,* try *70 percent of members over the age of 70 said they struggle with technology*

ABILITY

General Guidelines

- Most importantly, follow an individual's or a community's preference for self-identification. Once someone has self-identified, if you are still unsure what term(s) to use, inquire to learn their preference.

- Use person-first language (e.g., a person who is deaf), but be mindful that some individuals and communities prefer identity-first language (e.g., a deaf person). For example, identity-first language is commonly preferred in the Deaf community and increasingly so in the autistic community.

- Consider carefully when deciding whether to reference an individual's disability. Often, it is an irrelevant factor, and drawing unnecessary attention to it can be interpreted as bigotry or discrimination. In addition, ensure any reference to an individual's disability is used only with their knowledge and approval. This information is theirs to define and share when and how they prefer.

- Focus on what a person does rather than limitations or negative labels (e.g., a person who uses a wheelchair, not a person confined to a wheelchair, and a person with a traumatic brain injury, not brain-damaged).

- Avoid using *defect* or *defective* when describing a disability, which are considered derogatory. Instead, state the nature of the disability or injury and use the general term condition when needed.

Common Ability Terms Used in the U.S.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
people with disabilities	people with diverse abilities serving a diversity of abilities	handicap; handicapped; handicapable the disabled the differently abled abnormal people with special needs	• This recommendation represents a shift in Y-USA style from recent years and is grounded in a recognition that *diverse ability* is not a widely used term and that many individuals have reclaimed the term *disability.* Even so, it's important to note that *disability* is not always the preferred term of individuals and communities. Some may still view it as having a negative connotation and prefer *diverse ability*. • *Abnormal* can be found in medical or scientific contexts but should not be used to describe an individual or community.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
			• *The disabled* should be avoided as a descriptive category for the disability community. However, it's important to note that more individuals with disabilities are reclaiming the term *disabled* as a way to define their identity and discourage unpreferred alternatives.
			• The term *special needs* is still commonly used in some geographic regions, often by guardians of youth with disabilities. It is not commonly used when describing adults.
people without disabilities	neurotypical	normal healthy	• Using *normal* to describe people without disabilities implies that people with disabilities are *abnormal*.
disability community		disabled community	
a person with [specific condition or diagnosis] a person with mental illness	a person diagnosed with [specific condition or diagnosis] a person with a psychiatric disability	mentally ill crazy insane psycho psychotic emotionally disturbed demented nuts	• Refer to a person's specific diagnosis when possible. For example, *a person with bipolar disorder* is preferable to *a person with mental illness*. • Some individuals may dislike use of the term *mental illness* because of the stigma often associated with a mental health diagnosis. • Avoid using psychotic, bipolar, multiple personality disorder, schizophrenic, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) colloquially or to describe anything other than a diagnosed medical condition.
a person with a developmental disability a person with an intellectual/ cognitive disability	a person diagnosed with a developmental disability a person diagnosed with an	mentally retarded mentally challenged retarded slow simple	• While the terms *developmental disability*, *cognitive disability* and *intellectual disability* are acceptable, it is best to be specific about the disability when possible.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
	intellectual/ cognitive disability	high functioning low functioning	
a person with a learning disability a student who receives special education services	diverse learners	learning disabled a special ed student a special education student	
a person who has a congenital disability	a person who has had a disability since birth a person who was born with a disability	a person with a birth defect	
a person with Down syndrome	a person who is living with Down syndrome	Downs person Down's syndrome or Down's Syndrome	• The terms *developmental disability*, *cognitive disability* and *intellectual disability* are acceptable when used in a person-first context to describe someone with Down syndrome, such as *a person with a developmental disability*.
a person who has autism	a person who has been diagnosed with autism a person on the autism spectrum an autistic person		• Some individuals and communities use identity-first language and prefer to be described as *an autistic person* rather than *a person who has autism.*
a person with a physical disability a person with quadriplegia a person with paraplegia	a person who walks with crutches a person who uses a walker	a quadriplegic a paraplegic physically challenged cripple	• Avoid terms that describe an individual's limitations or carry a condescending or negative connotation.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
a person with a mobility impairment	a person who uses a wheelchair	confined to a wheelchair disfigured lame	
a person who is unable to speak a person who uses a communication device		mute nonverbal	
a person who is blind a person who is visually impaired	a blind person a person with limited vision a person with low vision		• Some individuals and communities use identity-first language and prefer to be described as *a blind person* rather than *a person who is blind.*
a person who is deaf/partially deaf a person who is hard of hearing the Deaf community	a deaf person		• Some individuals and communities use identity-first language and prefer to be described as *a deaf person* rather than as *a person who is deaf*. • Generally, when referring to an individual's sense of hearing, lowercase *deaf*. However, be prepared to reflect an individual's preference if they capitalize *Deaf* when referring to themselves. • When referring to the culture or community of individuals who are deaf or partially deaf, capitalize *Deaf* (e.g., *the Deaf community*).
a person with a brain injury a person with a traumatic brain injury	a person who has sustained a brain injury	brain-damaged	

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
a person with dwarfism	a dwarf a little person a person of short stature	a midget	• When using these terms, it is especially important to reflect an individual's or a community's self-identification preference as there is no universally preferred terminology. While some individuals identify as a *little person* and find the term *dwarf* offensive, others take the opposite view of these terms.
a person with a substance use disorder a person with an alcohol use disorder a person in recovery a person recovering from alcoholism	a person struggling with addiction/ alcohol addiction a person who uses/misuses drugs	an addict a junkie/druggie an alcoholic a person with a drug problem/ alcohol problem a drug abuser/ substance abuser a former/reformed addict	• Addiction is a neurobiological disease, so it is best to use the word only to refer to a disease or medical disorder. Avoid using the term colloquially or in a manner that implies it is a condition one can easily change (e.g., a drug *problem).* • Use the word *misuse* in place of *abuse* when describing harmful drug usage.
a person with [chronic disease] (e.g., a person with diabetes)		a diabetic	

FAITH, BELIEFS AND RELIGIONS

Below are the basic identification terms related to the six most-practiced faiths, beliefs and religions in the United States. For additional context and terminology related to these religions, please reference the resource, [Strengthening Inclusion: Engaging Communities of Diverse Faiths and Beliefs in Your YMCA](#).

General Guidelines

- Consider carefully when deciding whether to reference an individual's faith, belief or religious affiliation. Often, it is an irrelevant factor, and drawing unnecessary attention to it can be interpreted as bigotry or discrimination. In addition, ensure any reference to an individual's faith, belief or religion is used only with their knowledge and approval. This information is theirs to define and share when and how they prefer.

- Be mindful that within a religion, there can be different denominations with diversity of beliefs and cultures. Avoid making broad generalizations about individuals or communities of a particular religion.

- Don't make assumptions about a person's religion based on their country of origin.

- Follow an individual's or a community's preference, and be specific when possible and relevant.

- As an organization dedicated to diversity, inclusion and multiculturalism, it is important for Y staff to consider religious holidays and observances when planning communications and events. Consult the Y's [Religious Holidays and Observances](#) calendar to learn more.

Common Faith, Belief and Religion Terms Used in the U.S.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
Buddhism Buddhist			• A person who practices Buddhism is *Buddhist*.
Christianity Christian			• A person who practices Christianity is *Christian*.
Hinduism Hindu			• A person who practices Hinduism is *Hindu*.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
Islam Muslim			• A person who practices Islam is *Muslim*.
Judaism Jewish			• A person who practices Judaism is *Jewish*. • Some individuals who do not practice Judaism may still identify as Jewish based on their ancestry, ethnicity or cultural background.
religiously unaffiliated	atheist agnostic		• According to the Pew Research Center, the religiously unaffiliated includes atheists (do not believe in God), agnostics (not sure if there is a God), and those who respond with, "nothing in particular" when asked to state their religion. • Don't assume that someone who is not religious is an atheist.

GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Do not conflate or draw connections between gender identity and sexual orientation. Gender is an individual's own, internal personal sense of being a man, woman, or someone outside of the gender binary. Sexual orientation describes a person's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. To further reinforce this distinction, the identity terms that follow are separated accordingly.

General Guidelines

- Avoid references to *both*, *either* or *opposite* sexes or genders as a way to refer to all people. Not all people fall under one of two categories for sex or gender.

- When asking people to identify their sex or gender (e.g., on a form or survey), ensure individuals have the space to enter their own preferred term.

- Avoid heteronormative language, which is defined as language that implies that everyone is heterosexual or that heterosexuality is superior to other sexual orientations (e.g., avoid the use of terms like *normal* to refer to male-female relationships and *special* to refer to male-male or female-female relationships; avoid terms like *mom and dad* if you are unaware of the sexual orientation of a child's caregiver.).

- Consider carefully when deciding whether to reference an individual's gender identity, sexual orientation, or intersex status. Often, it is an irrelevant factor, and drawing unnecessary attention to it can be interpreted as bigotry or discrimination. In addition, ensure any reference to an individual's gender identity, sexual orientation or intersex status is used only with their knowledge and approval. This information is theirs to define and share when and how they prefer.

- Avoid attributing gender to an individual without understanding first how they identify. How a person presents does not necessarily reflect how they identify. In addition, avoid gender pronouns. When referring to unspecified persons, make your subject plural or otherwise reword to avoid gender whenever possible.

  Singular (avoid): If a member has questions, ask him or her to call me.

  Preferred: If members have questions, ask them to call me.

  In limited cases, when rewording is impossible or awkward, it is acceptable to use they/them/their as a singular or gender-neutral pronoun (e.g., *The person left their credit card at the membership desk.*).

- When asking individuals to share their pronouns, avoid the phrase "preferred pronouns" as the use of "preferred" can imply the pronouns used do not align with the individual's gender identity. Simply ask for their pronouns.

- Avoid gender-specific language that can exclude people or promote stereotypes (e.g., *folks* or *y'all* instead of *guys; humanity* instead of *mankind; first-year student* instead of *freshman; chairperson* or *chair* instead of *chairman*).

Common Gender Identity Terms Used in the U.S.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
transgender (adj.)	trans man, trans woman, trans community (adj.)	transgendered (adj.) transsexual (n. or adj.) a transgender (n.) tranny (n.) transvestite (n.)	• Identify individuals as transgender only if pertinent and only with their knowledge and approval. • In referencing this population, seek to include language that underscores a commitment to protecting the privacy of individuals who identify in this way. • Because its meaning is not precise or widely understood, use the term *trans* with caution. • When referring to transgender individuals, use the name by which they live publicly.
nonbinary (adj.)			• Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used. • *Nonbinary* and *genderqueer* are not synonymous with one another or with *transgender*. See the DIG Glossary for a full definition of these terms.
genderqueer (adj.)			• Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used. • *Nonbinary* and *genderqueer* are not synonymous with one another or with transgender. See the DIG Glossary for a full definition of these terms.
gender-nonconforming (adj.)			• Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used. See the DIG Glossary for a full definition of this term. • Note the placement of the hyphen in *gender-nonconforming*.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
intersex (adj.)		hermaphrodite (n.)	• Identify individuals as intersex only if pertinent and only with their knowledge and approval.
transition, transitioning (v.)	gender transition (v.)	sex change (n.)	• Individuals who are transitioning may use medical procedures to match their sex to their gender, but not necessarily.
cisgender (adj.)	non-transgender (adj.)	normal (adj.)	• *Cisgender* is not synonymous with *heterosexual*, which refers to sexual orientation.

Common Sexual Orientation Identity Terms Used in the U.S.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
asexual (adj.)			• Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used.
bisexual, bi (adj.)			• Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used. • Do not hyphenate *bisexual*.
pansexual (adj.)			• Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used.
gay (adj.) lesbian(s) (n. or adj.) questioning (adj.)	queer (adj.)	gay(s) (n.) homosexual (n. or adj.)	• *Lesbian* is the more common term for women who are attracted to the same sex. • Use the term *questioning* only when individuals first use the term to describe themselves. • The use of gay as a noun (*a gay*, *the gays*) is sometimes considered offensive. Instead, use the term as an adjective (e.g., *gay man, gay woman, gay people*). • Use the term *queer* with caution. While it has been reclaimed by some, it is not a universally accepted term even in the LGBTQ+ community. • The term *homosexual* can be seen as evoking negative stereotypes and outdated clinical understandings of homosexuality as a psychiatric condition. In general, it should be avoided unless being used to provide historical context.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
heterosexual (adj.)	straight (adj.)	normal (adj.)	• Avoid the use of *straight* in a way that implies those who identify this way are part of an in-group or that anyone who does not identify this way is somehow outside the norm.
LGBTQ+ (adj.)	LGBT+ (adj.) LGBTQIA+ (adj.)		• These terms are best used as umbrella terms. Avoid using them, for example, to refer to a group that is limited to bisexuals. • The plus used at the end of these terms is inclusive of all the different ways people think of their sexual identity. • If using LGBTQIA+, explain the other letters. *I* generally stands for intersex. *A* generally stands for asexual (a person who does not experience sexual attraction).
LGBTQ+ community	LGBT+ community, LGBTQIA+ community	gay community gay lifestyle, alternative lifestyle	
sexual orientation (n.)		sexual preference (n.) same-sex attractions (n.) sexual identity (n.)	• Avoid *sexual preference*, which implies that sexuality is a matter of choice.
marriage	marriage for all, marriage equality	gay marriage same-sex marriage	• Use the term *same-sex marriage* only when necessary to distinguish it from marriage between male-female heterosexual couples.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

General Guidelines

- Consider carefully when deciding whether to identify individuals and communities by race. Often, it is an irrelevant factor and drawing unnecessary attention to someone's race or ethnicity can be interpreted as bigotry or discrimination.

- Follow an individual's or a community's preference, if known, and be specific when possible and relevant. Be careful not to make assumptions about an individual's race or ethnicity based on their appearance.

- When designating dual heritage (e.g., *Mexican American*), do not use a hyphen, regardless of how the term is used.

Common Race and Ethnicity Identity Terms Used in the U.S.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
people of color communities of color	BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) Black and Brown	minorities (n.) minority (n., adj.) vulnerable, at-risk (adj.) nonwhite (adj.) "all the colors of the rainbow" terms urban, inner-city (adj.) diverse (adj.)	• Avoid describing people and communities as *minorities, vulnerable* or *at-risk* as this implies a deficit or deficiency. When necessary to compare a nondominant racial group with a dominant racial group to identify an inequity, the terms *racial minority, ethnic minority, marginalized community* or *underrepresented group* may be more appropriate (e.g., *According to CBS News, Black people are underrepresented in senior leadership roles at large companies, representing only 3.2 percent of C-suite positions.*). Similarly, *nonwhite* should be avoided, as it implies that *white* is the norm. • Use the term *BIPOC* with caution. While it appears more frequently as a more expansive alternative to *people of color*, it is still not widely understood by the public and could further confuse the individuals being referred to because many Black and Indigenous individuals identify as people of color. Remember to spell out the term at first mention in keeping with preferred Y-USA style. • The phrase *Black and Brown* is used in many communities to convey a strong sense of shared

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
			experience and solidarity between Black and Latinx communities.
			• Avoid describing diversity and inclusion in colorblind or "all the colors of the rainbow" terms, e.g., "we don't care if you're white, black, brown, red, yellow or purple." These terms rely on the concept that race-based differences do not matter and ignore the realities of systemic racism. They also minimize the value of differences across all individuals and imply the desire to achieve a monocultural experience for all involved.
			• Terms like *urban* and *inner-city* can operate as code words that carry a stigma or perpetuate stereotypes.
			• Avoid using the term *diverse* to describe people of color who identify as the same race or ethnicity. Instead, use it to describe a group of individuals of different races and ethnicities.
Black (adj.)	African American (n., adj.) African diaspora (n.) [Specific country/region of origin] American person of color (n.)	Black (n.) Black/African American	• Do not use *Black* as a singular noun. For plural usage, use phrasing such as *Black people* or *Black communities*. (Referring to people as *Blacks* can be seen as pejorative.)
			• Note that we capitalize *Black* when used in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense to convey an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black.
			• In a U.S. context, *African American* is often an appropriate option; however, even in the U.S., the terms *Black* and *African American* are not always interchangeable. Americans of Caribbean heritage, for example, generally refer to themselves as *Caribbean American*.
			• Use the outdated terms *Afro-American*, *Negro* or *colored* only in names of organizations or quoted in a clearly historical context.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
white (adj.)	[Specific country/region of origin] American	Caucasian (n.)	• Do not use *white* as a singular noun. For plurals, use phrasing such as *white people* or *white communities*. • Many have differing views on whether to capitalize *white*, and it is an evolving conversation. Y-USA recommends lowercasing the term because generally those who identify as *white* do not share a history or culture (as would, for example, those who identify as Irish or Italian American). However, we recognize each community is unique and some Ys may capitalize *white* to enable constructive dialogue and progress to occur. • The use of the term *Caucasian* as an alternative to *white* or *European* is discouraged because it originated as a way of classifying *white* people as a race superior to other races.
Asian American/ Pacific Islander (n.) Asian American (n.) Pacific Islander (n.)	Regional specifications, e.g., *Southeast Asian* [Specific country/ region of origin] American person of color (n.) AAPINH (Asian American/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian)	Oriental (n.) yellow (adj.) Brown (adj.) exotic foreign ethnic	• *Oriental* is outdated and considered a pejorative term when used to describe people. • Avoid misidentifying Asian American/Pacific Islander individuals and communities as belonging to an arbitrary country of origin (e.g., indiscriminately referring to all AAPI individuals as "Chinese"). • Avoid the term *Brown* on its own as it is a broad and imprecise term with respect to race/ethnicity. As noted above, the term *Black and Brown* may be appropriate to use in certain contexts.
Hispanic/Latino (n.) Hispanic (n., adj.) Latino/a (n.)	[Specific country/ region of origin] American Latinx (n.)	Spanish Brown (adj.)	• *Hispanic* refers to a person who is from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking land or culture. • *Latino* refers to a person who is from, or whose ancestors were from, a Latin-American land or culture,

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
	person of color (n.)		including non-Spanish-speaking places (e.g., Brazil). *Latina* is the feminine form. *Latinx* is a gender-neutral form that has gained popularity with younger, American Hispanics/Latinos but not widely used in the Hispanic/Latino community as a whole.
			• Note that *Spanish* is used to describe the people of the country of Spain and should not be used to describe all Latinos. However, *Spanish speakers* or *Spanish-speaking communities* can be appropriate terms to use in certain contexts (e.g., when describing Y programs that serve individuals who speak Spanish).
			• Avoid the term *Brown* on its own as it is a broad and imprecise term with respect to race/ethnicity. As noted above, the term *Black and Brown* may be appropriate to use in certain contexts.
Indigenous (adj.)	Native American (n.) Native Peoples (n.) American Indian (n.) Alaska Native (n.) Native Hawaiian (n.) Specific group, tribe or nation, e.g., *the Cherokee Nation* person of color (n.)	Indian (n.) Eskimo (n.) Aborigine (n.) native (n.) red (adj.)	• Capitalize *Indigenous* when referring to the original inhabitants of a place. • Note that *Indian* is used to describe the people of the South Asian nation of India and should not be used to describe Indigenous people. • *Alaska Native* is the preferred term to describe Indigenous people from Alaska (not *Eskimo*). • When referring to a specific Indigenous group, tribe or nation, defer to how they self-style.

Recommended	Also Acceptable	Avoid	Context and Considerations
multiracial (adj.) biracial (adj.)	person of color (n.)	mixed race (adj.) half breed (n.) mulatto (n.)	• While *mulatto* is seen widely as an offensive term, some groups may self-identify with the term.
multicultural (adj.) bicultural (adj.)		melting pot (n.)	• The expression *melting pot,* traditionally used to describe diverse communities, should be avoided, as it implies that individuals of diverse backgrounds must assimilate into a dominant monoculture.

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DIVERSITY INCLUSION GLOBAL MULTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (DIG-MD) GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Language is ever-changing. The purpose of the **Diversity Inclusion Global Multicultural Development (DIG-MD) Glossary of Terms** is helps to 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 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 Blacks in this country. The structure is held in place by anti-Black policies, institutions, and ideologies.

Antiracism	Is the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Antiracism tends to be an individualized approach and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.
Antiracist	A term used to describe a tendency or preference towards a particular perspective, ideology or result, especially when the tendency interferes with the ability to be impartial, unprejudiced, or objective.[4]
Asian Pacific Islander (API)	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 attraction1 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).
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 grew from People of Color, to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context.
Biracial	Consisting of, representing, or combining members of two separate racial groups.
Black	An umbrella that includes anyone of African descent, including indigenous Africans, African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and immigrants, within the context of the U.S. In other countries, other non-white/Euro-centric groups may also utilize this similar identity for people of African descent and for other ethnic groups.
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 minimizes 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; 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	Diaspora refers to a group of people that has is the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions. 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.
Dimensions of Diversity	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: *Anti-Blackness, Bias, Discrimination, Equity, Privilege*, *Systems of Oppression*.)
Diversity	Diversity means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. 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 (i.e.: "In the U.S., for example, the dominant culture is white, heterosexual, Christian 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	The process of evaluating the barriers to opportunities, access, and resources which are needed to exist where no one is at disadvantage because of social position.
Gay	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 Identity	One's deeply held core sense of being a woman, man, some of both, or neither. One's gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex. Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced as early as 18 months old.

Global Engagement Strategies	Intentional strategies for YMCAs 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. These strategies can be activated through domestic global work (i.e.: engaging newcomers locally, supporting immigrants locally, exploring individual's national origins) and international global work (i.e.: World Service, international partnerships and coalitions, volunteer and staff exchanges, immersion experiences, etc.). These approaches overlap to drive a global engagement strategy to strengthen global communities by leveraging the global YMCA movement.
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 trace 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 heterosexism.
Homosexual	A person who is attracted to members of what they identify as their own sex or gender. An outdated clinical term sometimes considered derogatory and offensive, as opposed to the generally preferred terms *gay, lesbian,* or *queer.*
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 existing and potential 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 the 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 reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition.
Internalized Oppression	Is 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	Is a complex multi-generational socialization process that teaches people of color to believe, accept and live or act out negative societal definitions of self0based 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	Is 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 *Dimensions of Diversity* 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 or ambiguous genitalia.
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 trace 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 identity that is encompassed with these non-normative gender and 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	A person, place, or thing 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	Both are identities of a person whose gender identity is neither male nor female (gender variant), 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 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.
Pansexual	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 emphasizes the individual as the most essential element; 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 non-white individuals, towards common goals – rejecting any notion that their life experiences are politically marginal.
Power	Wealth, race, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, 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.
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 fluid identities and orientations. Often used interchangeably with "LGBTQ."
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, while still maintaining its vital punitive character.

Racism	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.

- 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 an singular 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	Emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings toward other people. While sexual behavior involves the choices one makes in acting on one's sexual orientation, sexual orientation is part of the human condition, one's sexual activity does not define one's sexual orientation; typically, it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.
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 thing.
System of Oppression	Systems of oppression are discriminatory institutions, structures or norms that are embedded in the fabric of our society. Examples: racism, sexism, cissexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism.
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	Shifting the conditions that are holding the problem in place.
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 (i.e.: a company hires a black woman for the VP of Diversity, showcases her as their company-wide diversity, without making changes with policies, practices, procedures).
Transgender	A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity. This word is also used as an umbrella term (sometimes shortened to trans) to describe groups of people who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression.
Transition	This term is primarily used to refer to the process a gender variant person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex 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	White is an umbrella term that has changed over time in the United States historical context to identify individuals who have ancestral origins from Europe. Throughout U.S. history, those who were considered white changed based on court cases which defined which groups were considered white based on skin color and continental origin.

Whiteness	Whiteness itself refers to the specific dimensions of racism that serve to elevate white people over people of color based off the historical development of the construct of race in the United States.
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

DIVERSITY
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