

# MINNESOTA OPERA'S EDI GLOSSARY

*Updated: October 13, 2021*

**Ableism** – The practices and dominant attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities. A set of practices and beliefs that assign inferior value (worth) to people who have developmental, emotional, physical or psychiatric disabilities.

**Accessibility** - When a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. A tool or facility is accessible to the extent that it is readily approachable and usable by individuals with visible and/or invisible disabilities. Self-opening doors, wheelchair ramps, speak-to-text features on websites or raised lettering on signs are examples of accessible design. At MN Opera, we most often associate the term with disability. However, in order to create truly equitable and inclusive spaces, we feel it's important to expand this definition to include language access, economic access, and cultural access.

**Achievement Gap** – Refers to the observed, persistent disparity in measures of educational performance among subgroups of U.S. students, especially groups defined by socioeconomic status (SES), race/ethnicity and gender. Achievement Gap (outputs) is different than Opportunity Gap (inputs).

**Advocacy** - To work on behalf of those most negatively affected by a specific policy or practice. Those who are being advocated for may not have any idea that this action is taking place.

**Ageism** – Stereotyping and/or discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age. This may be casual or systematic. Though it can be used in regard to prejudice and discrimination against adolescents and children, the term is predominantly used in relation to the treatment of older people.

**Ally** - One who is not (most) directly impacted by an issue but works in solidarity with those who are most directly impacted by the issue. Allies understand that their primary roles are to: a) educate themselves, b) educate their community, and c) lend their support to the leadership of those most directly impacted by the issue.

**Anti-Blackness** – The Council for Democratizing Education defines 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. Society also associates un-politically incorrect comments with the overt nature of anti-Black 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.

The second form of anti-Blackness is the unethical disregard for anti-Black institutions and policies. This disregard is the product of class, race, and/or gender privilege certain individuals experience due to anti-Black institutions and policies. This form of anti-Blackness is protected by the first form of overt racism.

**Anti-Oppression** – Anti-oppression is the strategies, theories, actions and practices that actively challenge systems of oppression on an ongoing basis in one’s daily life and in social justice/change work. anti-oppression work seeks to recognize the oppression that exists in our society and attempts to mitigate its effects and eventually equalize the power imbalance in our communities.

Note: Though they go hand in hand, anti-oppression is not the same as diversity and inclusion. Diversity and inclusion have to do with the acknowledgment, valuing, and celebration of difference, whereas anti-oppression challenges the systemic biases that devalue and marginalize difference. One doesn’t work without the other, but they are not interchangeable.

**Anti-Racism** – “Anti-racism is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.” – NAC International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity.

**Anti-Racist** – An Anti-racist is someone who is supporting an Anti-racist policy through their actions or expressing Anti-racist ideas. This includes the expression or ideas that racial groups are equals and do not need developing, and supporting policies that reduce racial inequity. (Ibram X Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, Random House, 2019)

**Antisemitism** – Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. Anti-semitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

**Cisgender** – Often shortened to “cis,” cisgender is an adjective used to describe someone whose gender identity matches the gender assigned to them at birth– in other words, someone who is not transgender, nonbinary, or intersex.

**Cissexism** – Cissexism is the set of acts and norms that privilege cis people and/or oppress trans people. More broadly, cissexism is the appeal to norms that enforce the gender binary, and gender essentialism, resulting in the oppression of gender variant, non-binary and trans people. Anybody who does not pass and/or identify as cis faces some cissexism.

See also: [Feminism 101: What is Cissexism?](#)

**Classism** - Prejudicial thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in socioeconomic status and income, usually referred to as class. Differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class. Classism is the systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the dominant class groups. The systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class. "Classism" can also be expressed through the use of public policies and institutional practices that prevent people from breaking out of poverty rather than ensuring equitable economic, social, and educational opportunity.

**Colonialism** – the policy of a country seeking to extend or retain its authority over other people or territories, generally with the aim of economic dominance. In the process of colonization, colonizers may impose their religion, economics, and other cultural practices on indigenous peoples. The foreign invaders/interlopers rule the territory in pursuit of their interests, seeking to benefit from the colonized region's people and resources.

**Community** – a group of people who feel connected through shared experiences, beliefs, values; examples for MN Opera may include ticket buyers, donors, students, older adults, artists, staff, board, volunteers, "the Wayzata crowd," etc.; a group of people with something in common; a term that must be defined every time it is used; MNOP has two new initiatives, one to reach the active, older adults, and one to deepen support of long-time donors.

**Community Engagement** – Deliberate action to strengthen bonds or build bridges to existing or new groups of people.

**Community Organizing** – The coordination of cooperative efforts and campaigning carried out by local residents to promote the interests of their community.

**Consensus Organizing** – A method of community organizing that focuses on finding and developing areas of mutual self-interest between community stakeholders, as opposed to traditional conflict-based organizing strategies.

**Color Blind Casting** – Generally this term is should not be used; socially conscious casting is the preferred term. It refers to the practice of casting without considering the performer's race or skin color. Also referred to as nontraditional casting, also a term that should not be used.

**Color Informed Casting** – Generally this term is should not be used; socially conscious casting is the preferred term. The term refers to the practice of casting with consideration of the performer's race or skin color.

**Creative Aging** – Programs that focus on the act of creating art by older adults; this type of programming is active, not a passive, experience that is adapted for the needs and desires of this particular age group.

**Creative Development** - An approach to educational programming that prioritizes creativity, personal growth, and connection.

**Cultural Appropriation** – The unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption or use of the customs, practices, ideas, etc. of one people or society by members of another and

typically more dominant people or society. In opera, works such as *Madame Butterfly*, *Turandot*, *The Pearl Fishers*, or *Aida* may be described as this.

**Cultural Competence** - the ability to effectively and empathetically work and engage with people of different cultural identities and backgrounds in order to provide safe and accountable spaces for dialogue and discourse; cultural competence is relevant in all fields of work, education, and informal social interactions.

**Culture** - A shared way of life among a social group. This shared way of life includes commonalities in: geography, language, history, traditions, rituals, belief systems, etc.

**Decolonization** – The action or process of a state withdrawing from a former colony, leaving it independent; a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power; when a nation seeks to become free of the oppressor/oppressed regime imposed on them by a colonial power, and to physically and legally undo the colonial state, or Empire, that has dominated their society.

See also: [Decolonization ~ Meaning What Exactly?](#)

**Disability** – The medical model of disability defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. It also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are regarded as having a disability. The ADA also makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person based on that person's association with a person with a disability.

The social model defines disability as the loss or limitation of opportunities to participate in a community's everyday life on an equal level with others due to physical or social barriers.

**Diversity** – Awareness, understanding and recognition of differences of people, including race, socio-economic status, culture, age, education, sexuality, gender, geography, etc.; all the ways we differ from one another; MNOP use of the term contains an actionable quality within it; MNOP values diversity as a way to strengthen its core mission.

**EDI** – As a collective term, it is the combination of equity, diversity, and inclusion; a belief that parts of the social or cultural status quo are not sustainable or desirable.

**Equality** – The condition under which every individual is treated in the same way, and is granted same rights and responsibilities, regardless of their individual differences.

**Equity** – Ensures that individuals are provided the resources they need to have access to the same opportunities, as the general population; acknowledgment of differences of people and the need for fair, and sometimes different access to resources and information.

**Ethnicity/Ethnic Group** - A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, cultural

heritage, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base.

**Gender** - The socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that society considers "appropriate" for men and women. It is separate from 'sex', which is the biological classification of male or female based on physiological and biological features. A person's gender may not necessarily correspond to their birth assigned sex or be limited to the gender binary (woman/man).

**Gender Identity** - Refers to all people's internal, deeply felt sense of being a man, woman, both, in between, or outside of the gender binary, which may or may not correspond with sex assigned at birth. Because Gender identity is internal and personally defined, it is not visible to others, which differentiates it from gender expression.

**Heterosexism** – The idea that heterosexuality is a normal, natural, or superior state of human sexual orientation, and the system of oppression based on that belief. It is very closely related to homophobia and the two ideas tend to coexist. Like homophobia and cissexism, heterosexism exists on both a societal and individual level and can be either deliberate or unintentional on part of the person holding those beliefs.

**IDI** – Intercultural Development Inventory; a method to measure one's awareness, sensitivity, and ability to adapt when in the presence of cultural difference.

**Inclusion** – The deliberate act of bridging and bonding with others to create an environment of involvement, respect, and connection; it puts the concept and practice of diversity into action.

**Indigenous peoples** – According to common definition, those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived.

See also: [Indigenous Peoples Fact Sheet](#)

**Institutional Racism** - Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

**Internalized oppression** – When oppressed people come to believe the stereotypes and myths about their own group that are communicated by the dominant group. They accept and inculcate the negative image of themselves and absorb their subordinate status as being deserved, normal and inevitable.

**Intersectionality** – The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. For example, a woman of color may face sexism in the workplace, which is compounded by pervasive racism.

See also: [Kimberlé Crenshaw: What is Intersectionality?](#)

**Islamophobia** – A fear, hatred, or prejudice toward Islam and Muslims that results in a pattern of discrimination and oppression. Islamophobia creates a distorted understanding of Islam and Muslims by transforming the global and historical faith tradition of Islam, along with the rich history of cultural and ethnic diversity of its adherents, into a set of stereotyped characteristics most often reducible to themes of violence, civilizational subversion, and fundamental otherness.

**Land Acknowledgement** – A formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. Minnesota Opera is on the traditional lands of the Dakota people.

See also: [Full MN Opera Land Acknowledgment](#)

**Marginalized/Marginalization** - The process by which minoritized groups/cultures are excluded, ignored or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community. A tactic used to devalue those that vary from the norm of the mainstream, sometimes to the point of denigrating them as deviant and regressive.

**Mental Health** – Includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how one thinks, feels, and acts. It also helps determine how one handles stress, relates to others, and makes choices.

**Microaggression** – A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority. An indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against member(s) of a multicultural or marginalized group.

**Misogyny** – Dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women. See also: [Transmisogyny](#) and [Misogynoir](#)

**Monitoring** – An organized and transparent process in which MN Opera staff and/or board track the progress of specific EDI goals against a predetermined set of criteria.

**Opera 360** – A grant MNOP received to develop an internal decision-making process to better develop programming across the company that reflects community need. Included in this work is Consensus Organizing, a methodology in which community partnerships are developed in a mutually beneficial way.

**Opportunity Gap** – Refers to the inequitable or unequal distribution of resources or opportunities; Opportunity Gap (inputs) is different than Achievement Gap (outputs); For example, a student who does not have enough disposable income, reliable transportation, or from a community with high educational aspiration may not fulfill his/her potential because the steps required to participate are too great to overcome; a student may have the academic knowledge to succeed but doesn't due to a lack of opportunity to even participate.

**Oppression** - The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression

fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society. Oppression also signifies a hierarchical relationship in which dominant or privileged groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups.

**Prejudice** - A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics.

**Privilege** - Unearned social power (set of advantages, entitlements, and benefits) accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to the members of a dominant group (e.g., white/Caucasian people with respect to people of color, men with respect to women, heterosexuals with respect to homosexuals, adults with respect to children, and rich people with respect to poor people). Privilege tends to be invisible to those who possess it, because its absence (lack of privilege) is what calls attention to it. In other words, men are less likely to notice/acknowledge a difference in advantage because they do not live the life of a woman; white people are less likely to notice/acknowledge racism because they do not live the life of a person of color; straight people are less likely to notice/acknowledge heterosexism because they do not live the life of a gay/lesbian/bisexual person.

**Race** - A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. There are no distinctive genetic characteristics that truly distinguish between groups of people. Created by Europeans (Whites), race presumes human worth and social status for the purpose of establishing and maintaining privilege and power. Race is independent of ethnicity.

**Racism** - The term "racism" specifically refers to individual, cultural, institutional, and systemic ways by which differential consequences are created for different racial groups. Racism is often grounded in a presumed superiority of the white race over groups historically or currently defined as non-white (African, Asian, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Indigenous Peoples, etc.). Racism can also be defined as "prejudice plus power." The combination of prejudice and power enables the mechanisms by which racism leads to different consequences for different groups.

**Racial and Ethnic Identity** - An individual's awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe themselves based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience.

**Racial Binary** - The Western/U.S. tendency to only think and talk about race and racism in terms of Black and White people; thus making invisible the racialization of other people of color including bi/multiracial and bi/multiethnic people.

**Racial Justice** - The proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

**Settler Colonialism** – Settler colonialism is a distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty.

**Sex** - The biological classification of male or female based on physiological and biological features. A person's sex may differ from their gender identity.

**Sexism** – Discrimination, prejudice, or stereotyping on the basis of gender, most often expressed toward girls and women. Sexism manifests at both the individual and the institutional level.

**Sexual Orientation** - Refers to the sex(es) or gender(s) to whom a person is emotionally, physically, sexually, and/or romantically attracted. Examples of sexual orientation include gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual, pansexual, queer, etc.

**Social Justice** - The practice of allyship and coalition work in order to promote equity, respect, and the assurance of rights within and between communities and social groups.

**Socially Conscious Casting** – This is the preferred term to use instead of color-blind casting and/or color informed casting. The term refers to the practice of casting with consideration of the performer's race or skin color, and its social implications within the dominant culture.

**Social Emotional Learning** – The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. SEL are skills that one needs in addition to the traditional “3 R's of education.” One can be book smart, but needs to have SEL skills to apply them.

**Stereotype** - Widely held beliefs, unconscious associations and expectations about members of certain groups that are presumed to be true of every member of that group, and that present an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude or uncritical judgment. Stereotypes go beyond necessary and useful categorizations and generalizations in that they are typically negative, are based on little information and are highly generalized and/or inflammatory.

**Structural Racism** - The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of white domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics and entire social fabric. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in any particular institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually reproducing old and producing new forms of racism. Structural

racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism – all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.

**Tokenism** – The practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups in order to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality within a workforce.

**21st Century Learning Skills** – The term generally used to refer to certain core competencies such as collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving that advocates believe schools need to teach to help students thrive in today's world. In a broader sense, however, the idea of what learning in the 21st century should look like is open to interpretation—and controversy.

**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.

**Workforce Development** – Developing skills needed for youth to transition to adult workforce. Its focus is on the person instead of the business.

**Xenophobia** – the fear or hatred of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange. It is an expression of perceived conflict between an ingroup and an outgroup and may manifest in suspicion by the one of the other's activities, a desire to eliminate their presence, and fear of losing national, ethnic or racial identity.

**Note** – Definitions reflect the use of the term in relation to MNOP. We acknowledge terms may be defined differently by others and/or use in differing ways.

**References** – Wikipedia and the Urban Dictionary have also been consulted. Additional terms relating to EDI such as sexuality and gender are not defined in this glossary but more definitions may be found [here](#).