

## DIVERSITY GLOSSARY

### **A**

**AFRICAN:** Refers to individuals with African ancestry and heritage.

**AGEISM:** Discrimination of individuals based on their age, i.e. of the elderly based on the notion that they are incapable of performing certain functions such as driving, or of the young based on the notion that they are immature and therefore incapable of performing certain tasks.

**ALLY:** An individual that supports the struggles of a group; self not part of the group.

### **B**

**BARRIER:** In the job situation, this term refers to the hidden, invisible/visible obstacles to equity in work or promotional opportunities.

**BIAS:** An opinion, preference or inclination formed without any reasonable justification. Bias is usually reflected in people's attitudes (towards other people of other races, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, social status, etc) and it makes it difficult for a person or a group to evaluate situations and thus act objectively or accurately.

**BISEXUAL:** Individuals attracted to members of the male and female sex.

**BLACKS:** Is a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians.

### **C**

**CLASS:** Category of division based on economic status; members of a class are theoretically assumed to possess similar cultural, political and economic characteristics and principles.

**CLASSISM:** Discrimination based on class.

### **D**

**DESIGNATED GROUP:** Means black people, women and people with disabilities.

**DISADVANTAGED:** 1. A historically oppressed group having less than enough resources to fund all basic needs; without expendable income.

2. A group characterized by disproportionate economic, social and political disadvantages.

**DISCRIMINATION:** A biased decision based on a prejudice against an individual group characterized by race, class, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, etc.

**DIVERSITY:** A situation that includes representation of multiple (ideally all) groups within a prescribed environment, such as a university or a workplace. This word most commonly refers to differences between cultural groups, although it is also used to describe differences within cultural groups. An emphasis on accepting and respecting cultural differences by recognizing that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another underlies the current usage of the term.

## E

**EMIGRANT:** One who leaves his/her country of origin to reside in a foreign country.

**ETHNICITY:** A quality assigned to a specific group of people historically connected by a common national origin or language. Ethnic classification is used for identification rather than differentiation.

**ESSENTIALISM:** The practice of categorizing a group based on an artificial social construction that imparts an "essence" of that group, which homogenizes the group and ignores individuality and difference.

**ETHNICITY:** A quality assigned to a specific group of people historically connected by a common national origin or language. Ethnic classification is used for identification rather than differentiation.

**ETHNOCENTRISM:** A practice, unconsciously/consciously privileging a certain ethnic group over others. This involves judging other groups by the values of one's own group.

## F

**FEMINISM:** Movement advocating equal rights, status, ability, and treatment of women, based on the belief that women are not in any way inferior to men.

## G

**GAY:** A male homosexual.

**GENDER:** System of sexual classification based on the social construction of the categories "men" and "women", as opposed to sex which is based on biological and physical differences which form the categories "male" and "female".

## H

**HETEROSEXUAL:** Pertaining to individuals attracted to the opposite sex.

**HOMOSEXUAL:** Individuals attracted to members of one's own sex.

## I

**IMMIGRANT:** A person who resides in a nation, country, or region other than that of his/her origin.

**INDIGENOUS:** Originating from a culture with ancient ties to the land in which a group resides.

## L

**LESBIAN:** Pertaining to female homosexuality.

## M

**MINORITY:** Term used to describe a group that represents a relatively smaller percentage of the overall population of a nation/state/continent, etc. The term usually refers to a smaller grouping although such may sometimes be larger at a national level.

**MULTICULTURALISM:** The practice of acknowledging and respecting the various cultures, religions, races, ethnicities, attitudes and opinions within an environment.

## N

**NATIONAL ORIGIN:** System of classification based on nation from which a person originates, regardless of the nation in which he/she currently resides.

## O

## P

**PREJUDICE:** Exerting bias and bigotry based on uninformed stereotypes.

**PRIVILEGE:** Power and advantages benefiting a group derived from the historical oppression and exploitation of other groups.

## R

**RACE:** 1. Classification of humans based on genetic characteristics. 2. Classification of people based on common nationality, history, or experiences.

**RACISM:** An act of discrimination based on an ideology of racial superiority.

**RELIGION:** 1. An organized belief system based on certain tenets of faith. 2. A belief in a supreme supernatural force of god(s).

**REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION:** Changes in the job or workplace which enables individuals with disabilities to perform the work. It also refers to adjustment made by the employer to accommodate employees whose religious beliefs forbid them to work on certain days and hours.

## **S**

**SEX:** System of sexual classification based on biological and physical differences, such as primary and secondary sexual characteristics, forming the categories "male" or "female" as opposed to gender which is based on the social construction of the categories "men" and "women".

**STEREOTYPE:** To categorize people based on an artificial construction of a certain group designed to impart the "essence" of that group, which homogenizes the group, effacing individuality and difference.

**SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM:** A perception of an individual, group, or idea, that is "constructed" through cultural and social practice, but appears to be "natural", or "the way things are". For example, the idea that women "naturally" like to do housework is a social construction because this idea appears "natural" due to its historical repetition, rather than it being "true" in any essential sense.

## **T**

**TOLERANCE:** Acceptance and open-mindedness to different practices, attitudes, and cultures; does not necessarily mean agreement with the differences.