

Glossary

Altruism

An unselfish concern for the well-being of others. Being helpful to other people with little or no interest in being rewarded for one's efforts. Altruism is the opposite of selfishness as it focuses on the needs of others.

Antisemitism

A form of racism related to the discrimination, persecution or hatred of Jews, resulting from their cultural, linguistic and religious differences; blaming the Jews for everything from economic conditions to epidemics and natural disasters.

The term "antisemitism" was first used by Wilhelm Marr (a German theorist, 1819-1904) to express the hatred towards Jews that was at the heart of his political philosophy. Some people confuse the issue by claiming that antisemitism is really hatred of "Semites;" the term "Semite" comes from Semitic languages, which include both Hebrew and Arabic. Removing the hyphen from the term focuses the reader on the original meaning.

Bigot

One who is strongly partial to his or her own group, religion, race, or politics and is intolerant towards those who do not share these group memberships. A bigot shows an unreasonable or irrational attachment to negative stereotypes and prejudices.

Bystander

Someone who is present at an event without participating in it. Bystanders are also called observers or spectators; they "stand by" and watch while something is happening.

Citizenship

The responsibilities, rights and privileges that a person has as a result of either being born in a country or going through the process of becoming a citizen of a country. Citizenship implies working towards the betterment of the community through participation, volunteer work and efforts to improve life for all.

Culture

The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that we use to understand the world and each other. The culture of a community will define the rules of conduct and provide a framework for living together. Culture is transmitted from generation to generation through learning.

Diversity

The presence of an infinite range of human characteristics, cultures and languages. Respect for diversity means understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing our individual differences in race, gender, age, religious beliefs,

physical abilities and ethnicity. In communities that honour diversity, people make efforts to understand each other and move beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity found within each individual.

Dominant

Exercising power and influence over others. Dominant groups often think that they are superior to other groups and that they are entitled to power, privilege and prestige. Dominant groups may also fear minority groups because they believe that they will take away some of their power.

Equality

The belief that equal — meaning the same — treatment of all citizens will result in equal opportunity for all citizens. Research indicates that treating everyone the same may not create equality if the “starting points” are unequal. For example, if a student has just arrived at your school and doesn’t know how to speak English, that student will need additional support as an English-language learner; this does not mean that all students in the school need this support, however.

Equity

Treating everyone in a way that can result in equality of outcomes. To achieve equity people may need to receive different treatment so that they all have equal opportunity. For example, students who don’t yet know how to speak English will need extra support so that they have the same opportunities to learn as native English-speaking students. Without this additional support, they would not have equal opportunity for success in school.

FAST

(Fighting Antisemitism Together) A coalition of Canadian non-Jewish business leaders who have chosen to speak out against the resurgence of antisemitism in Canada. Choose Your Voice is the first initiative sponsored by FAST.

Hate Crime

The Criminal Code of Canada says a hate crime is committed to intimidate, harm or terrify not only a person, but an entire group of people to which the victim belongs. The victims are targeted for who they are, not because of anything they have done. Hate crimes involve intimidation, harassment, physical force or threat of physical force against a person, a family or a property. The victim is targeted because of the perpetrator’s prejudice towards such things as gender, race, class, ethnicity, language, religion, age, disability or sexual preference.

Holocaust

The mass murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II. Many individuals and groups were persecuted and suffered during the Holocaust, but only the Jews were targeted for total “extermination.” The term literally means a burnt sacrifice or sacred burning.

Humanitarian

One who holds the view that all people should be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve as human beings, and

who believes that advancing the well-being of humanity is a noble goal. Humanitarianism is the antithesis of the “us vs. them” mentality.

Inclusive

A term that describes a community (e.g., school, city, family, social club) whose culture includes everyone, honours diversity, and shares responsibility.

Minority

A group of people that is different from – and generally has less power and influence than – the dominant group. For example, First Nations Canadians are a minority in most parts of Ontario.

Multicultural

The term that is often used to describe societies (especially nations) which exhibit a range of distinct cultural groups, usually as a result of immigration, and that recognize the benefits that different cultural groups bring to the community. Multiculturalism is the official policy of Canada.

Oppression

The unjust and cruel use of power against an identified group of people. Oppression is most commonly felt and expressed by a widespread, if unconscious, assumption that a certain group of people is inferior.

Perpetrator

Someone who carries out intentionally wrongful (and sometimes even criminal) behaviour towards someone else.

Prejudice

A negative or hostile belief which can be felt or expressed about a group or an individual in that group. To pre-judge. Prejudice is based on faulty and inflexible generalizations or stereotypes.

Racism

A form of discrimination based on race, especially the belief that one race is superior to another. Racism may be expressed individually and consciously through explicit thoughts, feelings, or acts. It may also be expressed socially and unconsciously through institutions that promote racial inequality.

Stereotype

A simplified, fixed idea that people have about what an individual or group of people is like. Common stereotypes include a variety of allegations about various racial groups (called racial stereotypes), predictions of behaviour based on wealth (called social stereotypes), or beliefs about characteristics tied to whether one is male or female (called gender stereotypes).

Swastika

The swastika dates back to ancient times, where Jains, Hindus, Buddhists and others used (or still use) it as a religious symbol or talisman and sign of good luck. In modern times, it is most widely known and used as a symbol of the Nazi party of Germany during the time of Adolph Hitler. As a result, it is the most highly recognizable symbol of hatred in the world today.

Systemic

Actions and beliefs that are spread throughout an entire social system such as the government or a school.

Victim

An individual who suffers direct or threatened physical, emotional, financial, or spiritual harm as a result of the actions of others and through no fault of her or his own.
