

# Guide to discrimination-sensitive language

This guide contains our basic principles on discrimination-sensitive language.

## **Why?**

We do not only need language to convey information, but we also use it to convey values and thus shape social discourse. We must be aware that language can hurt, cause exclusion and confirm hierarchies - even unintentionally. That is why it is important for us to use diversity-conscious language in the association and at the festival. We strive to be as free as possible from discrimination in exchanges with each other. For this purpose, we have developed this guideline including a glossary and code of conduct in a participatory process, which will be available to all participants.

## **We avoid generalizations**

Our society is heterogeneous, just like our employees, partners, artists and visitors. We reflect this heterogeneity in the way we express ourselves. We present facts in a differentiated manner and avoid generalizing statements about entire population groups.

## **We formulate in a discrimination-sensitive manner**

We are aware of the associations that can be evoked by our formulations. Therefore, we constantly reflect on ourselves and check whether our statements can be discriminatory.

## **We take into account self-names and labels and labels appointed by others**

In contrast to self-labels (e.g. People of Color, see overview of relevant terms and concepts), foreign designations are labels that are attributed to groups of people by others (e.g. refugees). If possible, we use the self-labels of the respective communities and we consider whether labels and attributions (e.g., indication of origin) are at all relevant in the respective context and, if necessary, omit them.

In doing so, the following applies: Whether formulations are hurtful and/or discriminatory is ultimately decided by the person affected, not others.

## **We are aware that names and labels are subject to constant change.**

Names and labels often reflect current social conditions and realities. We constantly review their use, because even if they were once unproblematic, they can take on a negative meaning.

## **We communicate our own insecurities**

Language is subject to constant change, which means that insecurities can always arise. Therefore, we address our insecurities openly, are aware that we make mistakes, and point out discriminatory expressions to people around us. We give constructive feedback, as this encourages reflection and moves us forward in developing a discrimination-sensitive culture of conversation.

## Glossary English

**Ableism:** The system of oppression that disadvantages people with disabilities and advantages people who do not currently have disabilities.

**Accountability:** Accountability refers to the ways in which individuals and communities hold themselves to their goals and actions, and acknowledge the values and groups to which they are responsible. To be accountable, one must be visible, with a transparent agenda and process. From a relational point of view, accountability is not always doing it right. Sometimes it's really about what happens after it's done wrong.

**Ally:** An action, not an identity. Members of the advantaged group recognize their privilege and work in solidarity with oppressed groups to dismantle the systems of oppression(s) from which they derive power, privilege, and acceptance. Requires understanding that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways.

**Anti-Black:** 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. 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.

**Antisemitism and Islamophobia:** Antisemitism (oppression of Jews) and Islamophobia are not only entangled, but deeply rooted in the same systems of white supremacy and Christian hegemony that have also driven ongoing genocide against indigenous people, and bigotry toward non-Christians from other parts of the world. Such ideologies have deep historical roots and use exploitation, marginalization, discrimination, and violence as its tools.

**Assimilationist:** One who is expressing the racist idea that a racial group is culturally or behaviorally inferior and is supporting cultural or behavioral enrichment programs to develop that racial group.

**BIPOC:** A term referring to «Black and/or Indigenous People of Color.» While «POC» or People of Color is often used as well, BIPOC explicitly leads with Black and Indigenous

identities, which helps to counter anti-Black racism and invisibilization of Native communities. Using BIPOC or the description used by the person themselves is preferred instead of terms like «colored», «indian» (Native-Americans) or «oriental», which have a background in colonization.

**Cisgender:** A term used to refer to an individual whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth. People who are not trans should avoid calling themselves «normal» and instead refer to themselves as cisgender or cis.

**Classism:** 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.

**Color-Blindness:** Color-blind ideology (or color-evasiveness – purporting to not notice race in an effort to not appear be racist) asserts that ending discrimination merely requires treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. Color-blindness, by overlooking the cumulative and enduring ways in which race unequally shapes life chances and opportunities for people from different groups, actually reinforces and sustains an unequal status quo.

**Colorism:** Using white skin color as the standard, colorism is the allocation of privilege and favor to lighter skin colors and disadvantage to darker skin colors. Colorism operates both within and across racial and ethnic groups.

**Cultural Appropriation:** Theft of cultural elements—including symbols, art, language, customs, etc.—for one’s own use, commodification, or profit, often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture.

**Cultural Racism:** Cultural racism refers to representations, messages and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with white people or «whiteness» are automatically «better» or more «normal» than those associated with other racially defined groups.

**Decolonization:** Decolonization may be defined as the active resistance against colonial powers, and a shifting of power towards political, economic, educational, cultural, psychic independence and power that originate from a colonized nation’s own indigenous culture.

This process occurs politically and also applies to personal and societal psychic, cultural, political, agricultural, and educational deconstruction of colonial oppression.

**Diversity:** Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued.

**Ethnicity:** A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base. Examples of different ethnic groups are: Cape Verdean, Haitian, African American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Irish, and Swedish (White).

**Gender:** Broadly, gender is a set of socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate.

**Gender Identity:** A person's deeply held core sense of self in relation to gender. Gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex. Gender identity is a separate concept from sexuality and gender expression

**Heterosexism:** Structural, interpersonal, or other forms of discrimination or prejudice against anyone who does not conform to binary gender norms.

**Inclusion:** Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

**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.

**Intersectionality:** Exposing [one's] multiple identities can help clarify the ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

**LGBTQ+:** An acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer, sometimes stated as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) or, historically, GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender). The addition of the Q for queer is a more recently preferred version of the acronym as cultural opinions of the term queer focus increasingly on its positive, reclaimed definition. The Q can also stand for questioning, referring to those who are still exploring their own sexuality and/or gender. The «+» represents those who are part of the community but for whom LGBTQ does not accurately capture or reflect their identity.

**Microaggression:** The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

**Multicultural Competency:** A process of learning about and becoming allies with people from other cultures, thereby broadening our own understanding and ability to participate in a multicultural process.

**People of Color:** Often the preferred collective term for referring to non-White racial groups. While «people of color» can be a politically useful term, and describes people with their own attributes (as opposed to what they are not, e.g., «non-White»), it is also important whenever possible to identify people through their own racial/ethnic group, as each has its own distinct experience and meaning and may be more appropriate.

**Person with a disability:** This term emphasizes in contrast to «handicapped», «differently-abled» or «disabled» that people with a disability should not be defined by their condition.

**Poor:** Instead of defining a person by their income, person with a lower socioeconomic status or from the working class, is more appropriate

**Privilege:** Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.).

Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we're taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.

**Race:** For many people, it comes as a surprise that racial categorization schemes were invented by scientists to support worldviews that viewed some groups of people as superior and some as inferior. Race is a made-up social construct, and not an actual biological fact.

**Racism:** Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

**Sexual Orientation:** The sexual attraction toward other people or no people. While sexual activity involves the choices one makes regarding behavior, one's sexual activity does not define one's sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is part of the human condition, and all people have one. Typically, it is attraction that helps determine orientation.

**Transgender:** Often shortened to trans, a term describing a person's gender identity that does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity.

**Xenophobia:** Any attitude, behavior, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the belief that immigrants are inferior to the dominant group of people.

## Sources

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