PFA DEII: A Common Vernacular

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Our DEI language reflects cultural shifts and increasing awareness of bias, prejudice, discrimination and inequality issues. Language is dynamic and is evolving. This list is expected to change as cultural awareness and issues of social focus shift.

**Core Terms:**

**Diversity –** The intentional inclusion and full representation of individuals of multiple races, national origins, colors, religions, social status, sexual orientation, gender identity, creed, class, age, etc.

**Discrimination —** A term used to describe the unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual  
orientation, physical ability, religion, national origin, age, physical or mental abilities, and other categories that may result in differences.

**Equity -** The state or ideal of being just, impartial and fair. Currently used as synonymous with fairness and justice. The quality and ideal of treatment of others as independent of bias.

**Inclusion –** The practice or policy of including all people and groups in organizational and/or social activities, processes and structures. This is most commonly used when referring to those who have suffered persistent disadvantage, discrimination or under representation. Suggested within current use is the state of equal, authentic and empowered participation, and a true sense of belonging.

**Prejudice —**To “pre-judge” or have a negative attitude towards one type of person or group because of stereotypes or generalizations not directly related to an individual person. Assigning beliefs about a group to an individual without knowing the individual.

**Stereotype —**A broad and persistent belief about a particular group or category of people. The expectation that a trait, behavior or characteristic is true about every member of that group.

**ADOS —**American Descendants of Slavery. ADOS is a group that seeks to reclaim and restore the critical national character of the African American identity and experience in the United States.

**Affinity Groups —**A collection of individuals with similar interests or goals. Affinity Groups promote inclusion, diversity, and other efforts that benefit employees from underrepresented groups. Based upon the concept of having members feel supported by familiar members of their ingroup.

**Affirmative Action —**The practice of favoring groups of people who have been discriminated against in the past.

**Ally —**People who advocate for individuals from underrepresented or marginalized groups in a society.

**Allyship** — The process in which people with privilege and power work to develop empathy towards to advance the interests of an oppressed or marginalized outgroup. Allyship is part of the anti-oppression or anti-racist conversation, which puts into use social justice theories and ideals. The goal of allyship is to create a culture in which the marginalized group feels supported.

**Amplification —**Techniques a person uses to give a member of a less dominant group more credit by repeating their message. A tool supporting marginalized or underrepresented individuals.

**Anti-Racism —**To actively oppose racism by advocating for political, economic, and social change. Anti-Racist ideas refer to the assumption that racial groups are equals despite their differences.

**Assimilation —**The concept where an individual, family, or group gives up certain aspects of their culture to adapt to the beliefs, language, patterns, and behaviors of a new host country.

**Bias —**Exhibiting favoritism of one group over another group. A preference for similar groups to oneself, or a prejudice against groups that are dissimilar. Can be unconscious “implicit”, or intentional beliefs “explicit” that can (but do not necessarily) result in discrimination, prejudice and inequitable treatment of others.

**Bigotry —**To glorify a person’s own group and have prejudices against members of other groups.

**BIPOC —**Acronym stands for Black, Indigenous, People of Color.

**Biracial —**A term for mixed race. Biracial is used to describe a person who identities as being of two races, or whose parents are from two different race groups.

**Block list** — An inclusive replacement phrase in the U.S. and the UK for “blacklist” or “black list”, which is less offensive to people of color.

**Classism —**A form of prejudicial thoughts or to discrimination against a person or group based on differences in socioeconomic status and income level.

**Code-Switching —**When a person changes the way they express themselves culturally and linguistically based on different parts of their identity and how they are represented in the group they’re with.

**Color Blind(ness) —**Intended to refer to treating people as equally as possible without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. Some groups that have been racially oppressed find this term offensive and insensitive to their experiences of racial discrimination.

**Color Brave —**A term referring to a person or organization that seeks to open conversations about race that can help people better understand each other’s perspectives and experiences to improve inclusiveness in future generations.

**Covert Racism —**An indirect behavior used to express racist attitudes or ideas in hidden or subtle forms.

**Cultural Appropriation —**The act of stealing others’ cultural elements for some kind of gain or profit.

**Disablism —**Promoting the unequal or differential treatment of people with actual or presumed disabilities; either consciously or unconsciously.

**Emotional Tax —**The effects of being on guard to protect against bias at work because of gender, race, and/or ethnicity; the impact on a person’s health, well-being, and the ability to be successful at work.

**ERG —**Employee identity or experience-based groups that are meant to build the feeling of community in the workplace. ERGS are sometimes known as Affinity Groups or Diversity Groups.

**Hepeating —**When a man repeats a woman’s comments to takes them as his own to gain credit or praise for the idea.

**Implicit Bias —** The attitudes or stereotypes that affect a person’s understanding, actions, or decisions unconsciously as it relates to people from different groups. Also known as Unconscious Bias.

**Institutional Racism —**Institutional practices and policies create different outcomes for different racial groups. These policies may not specifically target any racial group, but their effect creates advantages for white people and oppression or disadvantages for people of color. Often used interchangeably with Structural Racism.

**Mansplain —**When men are explaining something to a person in a condescending or patronizing manner, typically aimed toward a woman.

**Microaggression —**Describes behavior (verbal or nonverbal) that communicates hostile or negative insults towards a group, either intentionally or unintentionally, particularly culturally marginalized groups.

**Multicultural Competency —**Refers to the process of learning about other cultures and becoming allies with people from different backgrounds.

**Oppositional Sexism —**The belief that femininity and masculinity are rigid and exclusive categories.

**Oppression —** Refers to systemic and institutional abuse of power by a dominant or privileged group at the expense of targeted, less privileged groups.

**Outgroup Bias —**When people view people from outside their “group” as less similar and have negative bias against them.

**POC —**People of Color. It is commonly used as an acronym in the United States to describe people who are not white.

**Privilege —**A personally unearned social power or preference reserved for members of a dominant group of society including benefits, entitlements, or a set of advantages in society.

**Race –** A socially constructed system of organizing and categorizing people based on observable physical features such as skin color. Throughout human history, race has often been used as a basis for domination or discrimination. Perceived racial differences are perpetuated through film, literature, music and stories. Ironically, in addition to social exposure to other races, these are also the way that racial categorization can be eliminated.

**Racial Equity/Racial Justice –** The systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone, allowing all persons to elevate themselves based on their innate capacities and personal desires vs opportunities being selectively available to them.

**Racism –** The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races. Also refers to a complex system of hierarches and inequities that support unequal access to opportunity.

**Interpersonal Inequity / Interpersonal Racism –** How our private beliefs about race become public when we interact with others. When we act upon our biases (consciously or unconsciously). Can be explicit (bigotry, hate speech or violence) or implicit/unintentional in nature.

**Institutional Inequity / Institutional Racism –** When institutions possess policies, practices, treatment that offers advantages to one or more groups over others, perpetuating discriminatory treatment and inequitable opportunities and outcomes. Like Interpersonal Inequity, may be intentional or unintentional (neglectful). Enormously powerful in perpetuating inequality.

**Racial Privilege –** Race-based advantages within a given culture, and preferential treatment based on skin color or perceived physical features.

**Reverse Discrimination / Reverse Racism –** Discrimination against members of a dominant or majority group in favor of members of a minority or historically disadvantaged group. In such cases, it is intended to remove or disrupt discrimination that minority groups already face.

**Racial Justice —**To support or reinforce policies, practices, actions, and attitudes that produce equal treatment and opportunities for all groups of people.

**Sponsorship —**An action by allies that are taken to advance the career of members of marginalized groups. These may include mentoring, protecting, or promoting.

**Tokenism —**The practice of including one or a few members of an underrepresented group in a team or company. Can lead to dominant groups (mistakenly) believing they “are diverse”. Often results in the appearance of Diversity and Inclusion without true empowerment and equity being present.

**Unconscious Bias —**Also known as Implicit Bias, refers to attitudes or stereotypes about certain groups which are often based on mistaken or inaccurate information.

**URM** — Acronym for underrepresented minorities.

**White Privilege —**Refers to the unearned set of advantages, privileges, or benefits that white individuals experience based solely on being white. Often they are unaware that these experiences are unique to, and reserved for, white people.

**White Supremacy —**The exploitation or oppression of nations or people of color by white people for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, privilege, and power.

**Xenophobia —**Prejudice or a dislike for people from other countries.