

SOME WORKING DEFINITIONS

Multiculturalism is a philosophy or world view that recognizes that people of diverse ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds need to come together as full and equal members of a congregation, organization, neighborhood, society or nation for the betterment of both the individual and the whole.

Anti-racism includes beliefs, actions, movements, and policies adopted or developed to oppose racism. In general, **anti-racism** is intended to promote an egalitarian society in which people do not face discrimination on the basis of their race. Racism, the belief that people of one race are inferior to that of another, has been institutionalized in both egregiously obvious and subtle ways. Awareness, exposure and actions to remove racist policies and practices are social imperatives.

Similarly, **anti -oppression** work encompasses those beliefs, actions, movement and policies directed toward reducing and eradicating systemic subordination of any group victimized by unjust power and authority.

Prejudice is a preconceived judgment, irrational attitude, or unfounded opinion about a person, group, race, nationality, etc. based on supposition. The connotation is almost always negative.

Bias is a term used for a giving preference to a particular worldview, group or lifestyle, particularly in a way that precludes objectivity.

A **stereotype** is a composite picture of a person or group based on preconceived ideas of that group. The term usually has a negative connotation and refers to exaggerated or oversimplified characteristics of group members loosely based on their profile.

Group identification is the term given to those characteristics- positive, negative and neutral - given to all who are by birth, choice, or accident perceived as members of that particular social group. Key examples:

Race	Gender
Ethnicity	Sexual orientation
Social-economic class	Age in years /generational
Religion	Geographical/ cultural roots

Jeanne Crane 128 Holiday Harbour, Canandaigua, NY 14424
585.394.5679 jmc128hh@yahoo.com

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WORKING LOVINGLY WITH DIFFERENCE

If we are to build the Beloved Community, we all need to work lovingly with differences- differences that are at the core of our very identity. Learning to trust that both similarity and difference enrich our understanding is part of the momentum of the multicultural future many of us seek.

As UUs, we pride ourselves in our theological diversity. We also know how challenging it is to build and grow community amid such differences. (See UUA Commission on Appraisal Report 2005: Our Theological Diversity).

Sometimes the task of advancing multiculturalism is stalled, I believe, because the addition of more areas of difference seems overwhelming. "How do we accommodate more difference? What else can we do to welcome the others?" are questions I often hear. My answer, in part, is to raise our individual and group consciousness about *GROUP IDENTIFICATIONS*. When we add the many group identifications that are part of *EACH* of our identities, we see more opportunity for similarity than for difference.

Of course, these lens, through which we see and experience the world, also can lead to stereotyping, distortion and distancing ourselves from knowing one another as individuals. They may sometimes keep us isolated from entire groups different from ourselves. All the more reason we need to deal with them.

The interplay of these three dynamics:

- how we define ourselves based on our group identifications,
- how others define us by group identifications, and
- how we define others by the same

creates an opportunity for continual learning for all of us.

The following group identifications have high valence in our culture:

Race

Ethnicity

Social/economic class

Religion of origin/present religion

Gender

Sexual orientation

Age in years /generational experience

Geographical/ cultural roots

Another more permeable and changeable set of group identifications can also categorize and separate us, but not so strongly:

Educational level

Nature of work experience

Marital/family makeup

Political and social orientation

Of course, all of these factors PLUS the idiosyncratic life experiences we have had mix together to create an amazingly complex set of dynamics as we learn to live and love together.

Our exercise today will merely scratch the surface of what we know and still need to learn on our journey to wholeness and right relationship.

Overtime, you might explore:

What group identifications are strongest for you?

How do you see yourself because of each of these?

How do you think/feel others see you as a member of each category?

How is the way you see others influenced by each of your group identification(s)?