

# Samuel S. Fels Fund Glossary

## Public

This glossary is a living document that begins to define complex concepts and key terms we encounter and address through our work and grantmaking at the Samuel S. Fels Fund. This tool is designed to offer a shared language to better communicate, internally and externally, our organizational values, grant-making, and operations.

Most definitions were adopted from credible social justice and educational institutions while some were co-created or adapted by Fels Staff to ensure a context specific to Fels was included in a word's meaning. We included a Comprehensive List of Footnotes at the end of the glossary for borrowed or adapted words.

---

### **Access<sup>1</sup>**

Gateway to inclusion and participation. It hinders or enables an individual or group to take part.

### **Accountability**

The practice of naming, tracking and showing progress on work. Fels embodies accountability by listening and responding to feedback from our partners. It includes sharing our thinking behind decisions, and managing Fels' resources responsibly. This is one of Fels Fund's core values.

### **Advocacy<sup>1</sup>**

A deliberate process, which includes the voices of those that are most affected, to influence policy or legislative outcomes so that change can occur.

### **Anti-Black<sup>2</sup>**

Devaluation of Blackness which systematically marginalizes Black people and their issues. The first form of anti-Blackness is overt racism and the covert structural and systemic racism that categorically predetermines the socioeconomic status of Black people in this country. The second form of anti-Blackness is the unethical disregard for anti-Black institutions and policies as a product of class, race, and/or gender privilege that certain individuals experience due to

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from [cascadiabioregion.org](https://cascadiabioregion.org)

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from [movementstrategy.org/glossary/](https://movementstrategy.org/glossary/)

anti-Black institutions and policies. The first form of overt racism protects the second form of anti-Blackness.

### **Anti-Black Racism<sup>3</sup>**

Prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping or discrimination that is directed at people of African descent. Rooted in Black peoples' unique history and experience of enslavement, segregation and perpetual racial trauma in the US. Deeply embedded in American institutions, policies and practices, to the point that it becomes a part of our systems.

### **Anti-Racism<sup>3</sup>**

A process of actively identifying and opposing racism. The goal of anti-racism is to challenge racism and actively change the policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.

### **Anti-Racist<sup>4</sup>**

One who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity.

### **Belonging<sup>5</sup>**

Feeling of community with the people and environments that make us feel connected.

### **Bias<sup>6</sup>**

A preference for or against an individual or group that interferes with or influences fair judgment. Bias can be both conscious and unconscious.

**Implicit Bias<sup>6</sup>** - The assumptions, stereotypes, and unintentional actions (positive or negative) we make towards others based on identity labels like race, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, or ability. Because our implicit associations are stored in our subconscious, we may act on our biases without even realizing it. Often, our implicit biases contradict our values. Be aware that implicit bias exists.

**Racial Bias<sup>3</sup>** - The form of implicit bias (which is a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another based on race, usually in a way considered to be unfair) that refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect an individual's understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

---

<sup>3</sup> CommunityBuild Ventures (CBV) definition list designed for Fels Fund

<sup>4</sup> "How to be an Anti-Racist" by Ibram X. Kendi

<sup>5</sup> Lafawn Davis

<sup>6</sup> Just Strategies' Key Equity Terms & Definitions V 03.24.23

## **BIPOC<sup>6</sup>**

Stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Black can refer to dark-skinned peoples of Africa, Oceania, and Australia or their descendants without regard for the lightness or darkness of skin tone. Indigenous, here, refers to ethnic groups' native to the Americas. People of Color is an umbrella term for non-white people. The term is intended to unify those who have faced racism but when speaking of specific racial and ethnic groups it is best to name the said group.

## **Black Lives Matter<sup>2</sup>**

An ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black humanity, Black contributions to society, and Black resilience in the face of deadly oppression.

A political movement started in 2013 by three radical Black organizers — Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi; it addresses systemic and state violence against African Americans.

## **Coalition<sup>7</sup>**

An alliance or union of different people, communities, or groups working for a common cause.

## **Collective Action<sup>8</sup>**

Public gathering or activity where the community comes together to display political power, raise awareness, change narratives and/or win commitments from decision makers.

## **Culture<sup>6</sup>**

The characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people fostered by social patterns unique to the group. Culture encompasses language, religion, cuisine, music and arts, and social habits such as what we wear, how we wear it, dialect, marriage, what we believe is right or wrong, how we embrace strangers and our loved ones and a million other things. These shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding are learned by socialization and passed down from generation to generation. An understanding of culture requires an understanding of language, knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

## **Diversity<sup>6</sup>**

Encompasses all those differences that make us unique, including but not limited to race, color, ethnicity, language, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, gender, socio-economic status, age, and physical and mental ability. Can also include education, marital status,

---

<sup>7</sup> [ABC's of Social Justice A Glossary of Working Language for Socially Conscious Conversation](#)

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from POWER's Organizing Toolkit

language, physical appearance, and diversity of thought: ideas, perspectives, and values. We must also recognize that individuals affiliate with multiple identities. It is everything that we are, and everything we are not.

*\*Diversity focuses on representation.*

## **Equity<sup>6</sup>**

When everyone gets what they need to have access, opportunities, and a fair chance to succeed. Equity recognizes that the idea of equality (“the same for everyone”) may not address widespread disparities and individual circumstances where individualized solutions are necessary.

Equity is not only a value and desired outcome, but also a proactive process of creating and enforcing practices, policies, attitudes, and actions that produce fair and equitable access, opportunities, treatment, and outcomes for all. It is striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups within our institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources.

## **Ecosystem<sup>2</sup>**

A self-contained community of people linked by a shared identity, interest, and/or location.

In the pursuit of racial equity and social justice, Fels is most effective when we work at the intersection of multiple ecosystems, in collaboration and coordination with community members, grantee partners, funders, government, nonprofits, consultants, philanthropic-serving organizations and nonprofit capacity building and training organizations.

## **Emotional Labor<sup>2</sup>**

The effort required to manage emotions and behaviors in accordance with the demands of a job. This includes regulating emotions to meet the expectations of employers, colleagues, and customers. Unfortunately, emotional labor is often disproportionately borne by BIPOC individuals, particularly women. For example, suppressing negative reactions to discriminatory comments or pretending to be cheerful to appease customers.

## **Ethnicity<sup>2</sup>**

Refers to identifying a group based on a perceived cultural distinctiveness that makes the group into a “people.” A social construct, Ethnicity divides people into smaller social groups based on ancestral geographical base, history, the shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests.

## **Historically Excluded Communities**

Communities that have systematically been denied access to economic, political and cultural participation, power and privileges due to one or more aspects of identity. (Also referred to as “communities that are marginalized”)

## **Inclusion<sup>6</sup>**

The act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. An inclusive group is diverse, but a diverse group isn't always inclusive.

*\*Inclusion focuses on attitudes, approaches, and strategies to make sure people are not excluded because of their differences. It's about relationships, experience, participation, and voice.*

## **Intersectionality<sup>2</sup>**

Coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, intersectionality can help clarify how a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in the same way as a White woman, nor does she experience racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively distinct experience.

## **Justice**

Action-oriented and not a fixed state of being. Justice honors the dignity and wholeness of all people, across all systems, leading to full, fair, and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. This is one of Fels Fund's core values.

## **Liberation<sup>8</sup>**

Recognizing that all our struggles are intimately connected, and that we must work together to create the kind of world we know is possible, a society that is mutually shaped to meet our needs. We believe that every person is worthy of dignity and respect, and that within systems of oppression everyone suffers. (Also referred to as “freedom”)

## **Movement Building<sup>2</sup>**

The process of organizing and activating the will and capacity of people and organizations to work individually or collectively toward a shared vision.

## **Organizing<sup>8</sup>**

Community organizing is the process of building power that includes people encountering injustice in defining their community, defining the problems that they wish to address, the solutions they wish to pursue, and the methods they will use to accomplish their solutions.

## **Oppression<sup>3</sup>**

Unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power; mistreatment at scale.

## **People of Color<sup>9</sup>**

Often the preferred collective term for referring to non-White racial groups. Racial justice advocates have been using the term “people of color” (not to be confused with the pejorative “colored people”) since the late 1970s as an inclusive and unifying frame across different racial groups that are not White, to address racial inequities. 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.

## **Power<sup>2</sup>**

The ability to influence others and impose one’s beliefs. All power is relational, and different relationships either reinforce or disrupt one another. The importance of the concept of power to anti-racism is evident: racism cannot be understood without understanding that power is an individual relationship and a cultural one. Those power relationships are constantly shifting. Power can be used malignantly and intentionally but need not be, and individuals within a culture may benefit from the power they are unaware of. Cultural power is all-encompassing, economic power is foundational, and political power reflects economics and culture.

**Power Building or Building Power<sup>3</sup>** - Supporting systemic change by funding and/or supporting civic engagement, advocacy and community organizing among communities facing injustice.

**Power Sharing or Sharing Power<sup>3</sup>** - Nurturing transparent, trusting, transformative relationships and co-creating strategies with stakeholders facing injustice.

**Power Wielding or Wielding Power<sup>3</sup>** - Exercising public leadership to create equitable, catalytic change.

---

<sup>9</sup> Race Forward, “[Race Reporting Guide](#)” (2015).

### **Race<sup>3</sup>**

The social interpretation of how we look.

### **Racial Equity**

Race no longer predicts or determines one's quality of life.

In Fels' grantmaking context, race equity refers to the redistribution of funds and resources within existing systems to include those who have been historically excluded and harmed.

### **Racial & Ethnic Identity<sup>10</sup>**

An individual's awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe him, her or themselves based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience.

### **Racism<sup>3</sup>**

A system of power that structures opportunity (education, housing, jobs, justice) and assigns value (worthy or unworthy, full of potential or full of menace) based on so-called "race", the social interpretation of how we look.

**Interpersonal<sup>3</sup>** - The expression of racism between individuals. It occurs when individuals interact, and their private beliefs affect their interactions.

**Personal/Internalized<sup>3</sup>**- The private beliefs, prejudices, and ideas that individuals have about the superiority of Whites and the inferiority of People of Color. Among People of Color, it manifests as internalized oppression. Among Whites, it manifests as internalized racial superiority.

**Institutional<sup>3</sup>** - Discriminatory treatment, unfair policies, and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race, produced, and perpetuated by institutions (schools, media, nonprofits, etc.). Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they act in ways that advantage and disadvantage people, based on race.

**Structural<sup>3</sup>**- The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics-historical, cultural, economic, institutional and interpersonal-that routinely advantage Whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse, even deadly, outcomes for People of

---

<sup>10</sup> [Racialequitytools.org](http://Racialequitytools.org)

Color; a system of hierarchy and inequity, primarily characterized by preferential treatment, privilege and power for White people.

### **Responsiveness**

The practice of active listening, learning, and evolving in connection with community. Fels' responsiveness is grounded in understanding the historical, social and cultural contexts that drive injustice in Philadelphia and beyond. Fels embodies responsiveness through being accessible, dedicating time for reflection, and willingness to shift practices to deepen relationships with the community and respond to our changing world. This is one of Fels Fund's core values.

### **Self-Agency<sup>1</sup>**

Agency means that individuals know their rights and are empowered to assert them, they own their own decisions and choices. They have the capacity and the ability to voice their concerns and act on them to create change for the better. (Also referred to as "self-determination")

### **Social Change<sup>3</sup>**

Changes over time in human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions and/or norms.

### **Social Construct**

An idea that has been created and accepted by the people in a society.

### **Social Justice**

Elimination of the systemic mistreatment, exploitation, and abuse of a social group or groups of people by a dominant social group or groups of people. This includes addressing power over another in society through the control of social institutions, along with society's laws, customs and norms.

In Fels' grantmaking context, social justice means supporting efforts designed and led by or with people and communities that have been historically excluded or marginalized, to improve, reimagine or recreate systems and structures, laws, and norms, that lead to full, fair, and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs.

### **Solidarity<sup>7</sup>**

Unity or agreement based on shared interests and objectives; long-term mutual support within and between groups.



## **Solidarity Action<sup>1</sup>**

Refers to working with others to act for the collective betterment. It requires us to recognize injustice, know and navigate our social location within power, privilege, and oppression to work across differences toward common ground, and to achieve equity. Solidarity action requires coalition building within a group and networking with other groups.

## **System<sup>11</sup>**

An interconnected set of elements or parts that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something.

## **Systems Change**

Intervening in a system in a way that fundamentally changes how it operates to be more equitable and just.

## **Transformation<sup>2</sup>**

Intentional acts, processes, or activities done over an extended period of time with the purpose of change in appearance, culture, operations, practices and/or relationships that results in growth and creation of a new way of being. Specific to social justice, it means creating new systems that are designed for the collective good rather than the current systems that are designed to keep dominant groups in power while oppressing nondominant groups.

## **Trust**

A framework of understanding and faith established between a group of people through behavior, words, and actions. Trust is believing in the reliability, truth, and ability of our grantee and grantmaking partners. Fels earns trust through matching our actions with our words in consistent and reliable ways. This is one of Fels Fund's core values.

## **Trust Based Philanthropy<sup>12</sup>**

A holistic approach to giving that addresses the inherent power imbalances between funders, nonprofits, and the communities they serve. At its core, trust-based philanthropy is about redistributing power—systemically, organizationally, and interpersonally—in service of a healthier and more equitable nonprofit ecosystem.

On a practical level, this includes multi-year unrestricted giving, streamlined applications and reporting, and a commitment to building relationships based on transparency, dialogue, and mutual learning. The values of TBP are culture, structures, practices and leadership. Principles of TBP include: giving multi-year general support, doing the homework, simplifying &

---

<sup>11</sup> "An Introduction to Systems Thinking" by Donella Meadows

<sup>12</sup> [TrustBasedPhilanthropy.org](https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org) and The 6-Practices of Trust-Based Philanthropy Guide

streamlining paperwork, being transparent & responsive, soliciting & acting on feedback, and offering support beyond the check.

### **Wellness<sup>13</sup>**

Active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.

### **Wellbeing<sup>14</sup>**

Satisfaction with one's quality of life in the following eight interconnected dimensions: physical, emotional, social, intellectual, environmental, spiritual, vocational, and financial.

### **White Fragility<sup>2</sup>**

A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable for White people, triggering a range of defensive moves. These can include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and/or guilt, and behaviors including argumentation, silence, and/or leaving a stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate White racial equilibrium.

### **White Privilege<sup>2</sup>**

Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits, and choices bestowed on people solely because they are White. Generally, White people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.

### **White Supremacist Culture/ White Dominant Culture<sup>3</sup>**

The explicit and subtle ways that the norms, preferences and fears of White European descended people overwhelmingly shape how we organize our work and institutions, see ourselves and others, interact with one another and with time, and make decisions.

### **White Supremacy<sup>3</sup>**

A political, economic and cultural system in which Whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of White superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of White dominance and non-White subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.

---

<sup>13</sup> [Global Wellness Institute](#)

<sup>14</sup> Adapted from <https://www.northwestern.edu/wellness/8-dimensions/>

## Comprehensive List of Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Adapted from [cascadiabioregion.org](http://cascadiabioregion.org)
- <sup>2</sup> Adapted from [movementstrategy.org/glossary/](http://movementstrategy.org/glossary/)
- <sup>3</sup> CommunityBuild Ventures (CBV) definition list designed for Fels Fund
- <sup>4</sup> “How to be an Anti-Racist” by Ibram X. Kendi
- <sup>5</sup> Lafawn Davis
- <sup>6</sup> Just Strategies’ Key Equity Terms & Definitions V 03.24.23
- <sup>7</sup> [ABC’s of Social Justice A Glossary of Working Language for Socially Conscious Conversation](#)
- <sup>8</sup> Adapted from POWER’s Organizing Toolkit
- <sup>9</sup> Race Forward, “[Race Reporting Guide](#)” (2015).
- <sup>10</sup> [Racialequitytools.org](http://Racialequitytools.org)
- <sup>11</sup> “An Introduction to Systems Thinking” by Donella Meadows
- <sup>12</sup> [TrustBasedPhilanthropy.org](#) and The 6-Practices of Trust-Based Philanthropy Guide
- <sup>13</sup> [Global Wellness Institute](#)
- <sup>14</sup> Adapted from <https://www.northwestern.edu/wellness/8-dimensions/>