

Often people will interchange the words "prejudice," "discrimination," "stereotyping," and "racism" as though they all mean about the same. Knowing the difference among these words can result in understanding where each of us fits into the broader picture of cultural diversity in our nation and will assist us in respecting and treating with human dignity all peoples.

**PREJUDICE:**

An attitude, opinion or feeling formed without adequate knowledge, thought or reason. Prejudice can be prejudgment for or against.

**STEREOTYPE:**

An oversimplified, generalized image describing all individuals in a group as having the same characteristics, i.e., appearance, behavior, beliefs.

**DISCRIMINATION:**

Differential treatment of persons according to the particular group to which they belong. Discrimination generally functions to restrict people's access to, or opportunities for, such things as housing, employment and education. These social, political and economic limitations are carried out by conscious and unconscious, formal and informal methods.

**RACISM:**

The oppression of one race by another (i.e. the oppression of blacks by whites). The critical element differentiating racism from prejudice is the back-up of institutional power.

**INSTITUTIONAL RACISM:**

Institutional arrangements of a society used to benefit one race. Institutional racism can be intentional or unintentional.

When one race controls the major institutions of a society, that race has the power to impose its prejudice to the detriment of other races. Because institutions have always been--and still are--controlled by whites, racism in the United States is white racism.

**OPPRESSION:**

The systematic, institutionalized one-way mistreatment of one group pitted against another in an oppressive society.

**INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION:**

Turning the hurts one receives from being a victim of oppression onto oneself or to the members of one's oppressed group (i.e. women refusing to see female doctors and calling members of one's group stereotypical names that if used by an outside group member would be offensive).

**SOCIAL POWER:**

Access and availability to resources needed to get what you want and influence others.

*By Millicent Collins*