

DE-BIAS: Vocabulary – English

This vocabulary was developed as part of the EU-funded project [DE-BIAS - Detecting and cur\(at\)ing harmful language in cultural heritage collections](#) (2023/2024). The project aimed to promote a more inclusive and respectful approach to describing digital collections by developing an AI-based tool to identify and contextualise the outdated or potentially harmful terms in this vocabulary in object descriptions from cultural heritage institutions. The DE-BIAS tool has been integrated into the Europeana environment and is also available as a [standalone application](#) for archives to use directly on their local databases.

This document represents the English version of the DE-BIAS vocabulary, which includes nearly 250 terms. It is also available in Italian, Dutch, French and German, with each version reflecting the linguistic and cultural specificities of its respective language. The terms in the vocabulary are accompanied by contextual information and, where appropriate, suggestions for reflection and alternative wording. These recommendations guide users in dealing with controversial language in metadata and aim to raise awareness of current linguistic sensitivities. While replacing offensive language is not always feasible or advisable, providing context can support more appropriate and respectful displays on online portals.

This vocabulary focuses primarily on migration and colonial history, gender and sexual identity, and ethnicity and ethno-religious identity, with some terms relating to other minority communities. Developed with input from under-represented groups and research into over 100 existing glossaries and (academic) publications, it cites the sources for the description of each term to increase visibility of these sources and support their automated use for the bias detection in archival databases.

This vocabulary captures the discussions surrounding these terms at the time of publication. It is intended to be a living document and will continue to be updated beyond the end of the project as the discourse evolves.

Content note: Readers are advised that this document contains distressing words.

Please note that terms marked with an asterisk (*) are excluded from detection by the DE-BIAS tool as they require contextual information which was often not available, leading to frequent false positives. However, readers may find them useful as a guide for cataloguing work outside the tool.

The contents of this PDF vocabulary are taken from the machine-readable DE-BIAS knowledge graph available on EU Vocabularies in January 2025.

For comments and further information about this document or the DE-BIAS tool, please contact project.debias@gmail.com.

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(((echo)))

Term(s) in this context

(((echo)))*

The (((echo))) is part of the coded antisemitism that occurs online. Used by antisemites, neo-Nazis, and white nationalists, the triple parentheses are applied to Jewish names or topics to identify, mock, and harass Jews in a way that is difficult to find in search engines, yet hiding in plain sight.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

American Jewish Committee, "The Translate Hate Glossary," February 2024, 12,
https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-02/AJC_Translate-Hate-Glossary-2.2024.pdf

Aboriginal

Term(s) in this context

Aboriginal

'Aboriginal' describes the original inhabitants of a place and is primarily used to refer to Indigenous peoples in Australia and Canada (see also 'Indigenous'). The term does not adequately describe the complexity and diversity of Indigenous peoples. Many Indigenous peoples in both countries do not like to be referred to as 'Aboriginal', preferring to emphasise other markers of their identity such as language, land and clan relationships.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Suggested alternatives

First Nation(s) people(s)

Indigenous people(s)

Aboriginal Australians

Aboriginal people(s)

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 90. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Addict / Junkie

Term(s) in this context

Addict

Junkie

The term refers to someone with a compulsive, uncontrollable addiction to substances or behaviors, such as gambling or sex, despite the negative social and health consequences. However, not everyone who misuses substances is necessarily addicted.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Currently, no consensus exists with regard to an appropriate alternative term.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 2 Disability and Mental Health History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MsD6Gi_OJrH9KZL2rn8Dk-bbwH6j_yjFo_8FifZM3Cw/edit

Adventure

Term(s) in this context

Adventure

The term 'adventure' often evokes exciting journeys to distant, 'exotic' places linked to scientific discovery. This can romanticize colonial scientists, traders, and traffickers as innocent explorers, overlooking ties to resource exploitation and empire-building. While 'adventure' is unproblematic when describing curiosity-driven learning, personal growth, or recreation, it becomes problematic when tied to colonial history or imperial conquest.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

"Adventure," The Decolonial Dictionary, January 19, 2021, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://decolonialdictionary.wordpress.com/2019/05/08/adventure/>

Africana

Term(s) in this context

Africana

Term still used by some institutions in the USA and Canada today to refer to materials or collectible objects (books, documents, artefacts) related to the African continent. May be considered outdated.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Afro-American / African American

Term(s) in this context

Afro-American

African American

People of African descent have widely varied cultural backgrounds, family histories, and family experiences. Some American people of African ancestry prefer “Black,” and others prefer “African American”; both terms are acceptable. However, “African American” should not be used as an umbrella term for people of African ancestry worldwide because it obscures other ethnicities or national origins, such as Nigerian, Kenyan, Jamaican, or Bahamian. The terms “Negro” and “Afro-American” are outdated.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against. Use with caution.

Source

“Racial and Ethnic Identity,” *apastyle.apa.org*, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024, <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities>

Albino

Term(s) in this context

Albino

Albinism refers to a group of inherited disorders in people that result in little or no melanin production, affecting skin, hair, and eye color, as well as optic nerve development and vision. While debated, albinism is often considered a disability due to vision problems. The term “albino” when applied to people has been used in hateful ways throughout history. However, in contexts like plants or animals, “albino” is generally seen as a neutral, scientific term and appropriate to use.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Person with albinism

Source

National Center on Disability and Journalism, “Disability Language Style Guide”, 2021.
<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#mentalillnessmentaldisorder>

Amputee

Term(s) in this context

Amputee

Amputation refers to the removal of a bodily extremity, usually during a surgical operation, for a variety of reasons. People who have undergone an amputation are commonly referred to as “amputees,” but the term may be offensive and often is not used correctly. Some people have a physical characteristic that is not a result of an amputation.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Suggested alternatives

Person with an amputation

Source

National Center on Disability and Journalism, “Disability Language Style Guide”, 2021.
<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#mentalillnessmentaldisorder>

Androgyne

Term(s) in this context

Androgyne

A person appearing and/or identifying as neither male nor female, presenting a gender which is either mixed or neutral ; Scientific term used for effeminate homosexual men in the early 20th century. When referring to people, only use this term if it is the person's own self identification. In other contexts, the term "androgyne" can be used to describe organisms with both male and female reproductive organs, such as certain plants and animals. In mythology and literature, it can refer to beings that embody both male and female qualities, like the Greek figure Hermaphroditus. Additionally, in art and design, "androgyne" is used to describe creations or characters that blur gender boundaries, merging masculine and feminine features.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.1 LGBTQIA+ History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BTMAjtMw83GoAPQzAyH7qUTQI-xEj0GtYg9eal4i3dM/edit>

Annamite

Term(s) in this context

Annamite

Annam, meaning “Pacified South” in Sino-Vietnamese, originates from the Chinese term “An Nan.” It historically referred to the Tonkin region of northern Vietnam, from the Gulf of Tonkin to the Red River plains. Under French rule, Annam became a protectorate. Before this, the name Annam was used in the West to refer to all of Vietnam, with its people called Annamites, a term later used derogatorily by the U.S. Army and then more generally in the English language. While the term is therefore problematic when referring to people, it remains uncontroversial in other contexts, such as the Annamite Range or Annamite Mountains, a sanctuary for endangered species.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

“Annam (French Protectorate),” Wikipedia, November 8, 2024, accessed December 2, 2024,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annam_\(French_protectorate\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annam_(French_protectorate))

Ape

Term(s) in this context

Ape
Baboon
Chimp
Chimpanzee
Gorilla
Monkey
Orangutan
Primate
Simian

Racist comparisons of Black and Asian people to apes stem from outdated and false 19th century ideas that these groups were less evolved or the 'missing link' between humans and apes. Cartoons depicting the Japanese and Irish as monkeys were popular in the USA in the 20th century. It is harmful to use the term to insult or dehumanise people. However, it is fine to use it when talking about actual animals, as it is the correct scientific term for certain primates.

Recommendations for use

This term can only be used if it refers to animals.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Bachelor

Term(s) in this context

Bachelor*

The term “bachelor” was occasionally used as a euphemism for a homosexual man during the early 20th century, particularly in contexts where direct references to homosexuality were socially taboo or legally dangerous. This usage stemmed from the perception of lifelong bachelors as men who either avoided traditional heterosexual relationships or exhibited behaviors associated with same-sex companionship.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.1 LGBTQIA+ History,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BTMAjtMw83GoAPQzAyH7qUTQI-xEj0GtYg9eal4i3dM/edit>

Barbarian

Term(s) in this context

Barbarian

In Ancient Greece, 'barbarians' referred to people with an unfamiliar language and/or culture. Then the term 'Barbary' was used for North Africa, for example in 16th century cartography and travel accounts. Its inhabitants were described as 'barbarians'. These words became negatively associated with piracy and the slave trade and the word 'barbarian' increasingly gained the meaning of uncivilized. Nowadays the word is often used to express the idea that someone or something does not meet generally accepted standards, norms and values.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 92. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Basuto

Term(s) in this context

Basuto

An outdated colonial term for the Sotho people – otherwise known as Basotho – who are a Bantu nation native to southern Africa.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Sotho people

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Bent

Term(s) in this context

Bent*

The term “bent” was used as a derogatory slang term for gay men, primarily in British English, starting in the mid-20th century. Its origins stem from the idea of deviation from what was considered “straight” or “normal” in terms of sexual orientation.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.1 LGBTQIA+ History,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BTMAjtMw83GoAPQzAyH7qUTQI-xEj0GtYg9eal4i3dM/edit>

Berber

Term(s) in this context

Berber

The term refers to various groups of people living across several countries in Northern Africa. It dates back to antiquity and appears in Arabic manuscripts by 900 AD. Many people, however, believe it to be a European invention related to the term 'barbarian'. While the term is still used by many people who self-identify as Berber, it is rapidly falling out of favour and more and more people now refer to themselves as 'Amazigh.'

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Suggested alternatives

Imazighen (Plural)

Amazigh (Singular)

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 93. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Bi-racial

Term(s) in this context

Bi-racial

Biracial

The term refers to someone with parents of two different races. For some people of mixed Black and white heritage, this term can be triggering and traumatizing, especially for those who do not see themselves as a mix of different 'races' and prefer not to be labeled that way. Generally, people of mixed race may have differing opinions about which terms are considered derogatory or acceptable, depending on region, country, or personal preference. In any case, such terms are often viewed as homogenising.

Recommendations for use

Always honour a person's self-identity and be specific, when appropriate i.e Person of [x] and [x] heritage. The order in which an individual lists their ethnic identities may be important to them. Do not use word like 'half' or 'quarter' to describe someone's ethnic heritage.

Usually more useful when describing large, diverse groups of people than individuals.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network "People of Mixed Black and White Ethnic Heritage Identity," accessed April 3, 2024, <https://www.baatn.org.uk/people-of-mixed-black-and-white-ethnic-heritage-identity/>

Black-skinned / Dark-skinned

Term(s) in this context

Black skin

Black skinned

Black-skinned

Dark*

Dark skin

Dark skinned

Dark-skinned

This term is not necessarily discriminatory, but might be indicative of racially harmful content. We aim to no longer use terms related to origin, ethnicity, skin color or other body characteristics to point to people or communities. Such reductions of individual or cultural identities to a body characteristic has been (and often still is) meant as well as perceived as offensive.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Use with caution in relation to humans. When referring to animals, plants or things the usage of the term is unproblematic.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnp0-94QY/edit

Bombay

Term(s) in this context

Bombay

Bombay is the name given to the Indian city of Mumbai during colonial rule. The name “Bombay” was first used in the 1500s. Changing place names is common and happens throughout history, often due to political changes. This practice was significant during both the colonial era and the process of decolonization. For some people, using names from the colonial period can be a reminder of that difficult history and can be hurtful.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Suggested alternatives

Mumbai

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 96. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Brute

Term(s) in this context

Brute

The term “brute” refers to a large animal or a person who behaves in a cruel or vulgar manner. While it's generally acceptable when referring to animals or even white people, it has a history of being used by Europeans as a dehumanising label for non-white populations, which makes its use in this context offensive.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Brutish

Term(s) in this context

Brutish

The term means rough, unpleasant, and often violent. While it's generally acceptable when using it in connection with animals or even white people, it also has a history of being used by Europeans as a dehumanising label for non-white populations, which makes its use in this context offensive.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Bufter

Term(s) in this context

Bufter

The term that has historically been used as a derogatory slang for a gay man, particularly in British English.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.1 LGBTQIA+ History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BTMAjtMw83GoAPQzAyH7qUTQI-xEj0GtYg9eal4i3dM/edit>

Buggery

Term(s) in this context

Buggery

A term used from the 16th century to describe 'unnatural intercourse' i.e. sex with animals (bestiality) or same-sex intercourse.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.1 LGBTQIA+ History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BTMAjtMw83GoAPQzAyH7qUTQI-xEj0GtYg9eal4i3dM/edit>

Bush Negro

Term(s) in this context

Bush Negro

Originates from the Dutch term 'bosch' meaning 'wild land' and 'neger' (see also 'Negro'). It was a pejorative term for Africans (and their descendants) who escaped from slavery in Suriname and the Guyanas and settled in inaccessible, interior/mountainous regions, from which they fought against colonisation.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used. The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 97. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Bushman / Bushwoman

Term(s) in this context

Bushman

Bushwoman

Derived from 17th-century Dutch 'Bosjesmans' it is a pejorative term for Africans (and their descendants) who escaped from enslavement in Suriname and the Guyanas and settled in inaccessible interior/mountain areas.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

See also

Bush Negro

Butch

Term(s) in this context

Butch

A historical term applied to a 'masculine' gay woman or lesbian. Traditionally, a 'butch' woman would be paired with a 'femme' woman in a lesbian relationship. Outside the LGBTIQ+ community, the term is often used in a derogatory way. At the turn of the 20th century, the term meant 'tough kid' or referred to a man's haircut. It was first used as a term among women who identified as lesbians in the 1940s, where it materialized as an underground term used by working-class women and gay men to describe masculinity in their own communities. In the 1980s, 'butch' and 'femme' re-emerged as sexually empowering terms and remain so for many today.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.1 LGBTQIA+ History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BTMAjtMw83GoAPQzAyH7qUTQI-xEj0GtYg9eal4i3dM/edit>

Them, "InQueery: The REAL Meaning of the Word 'Butch'," August 21, 218. Accessed April 3, 2024, <https://www.them.us/story/inqueery-butch>

Cannibal

Term(s) in this context

Cannibal

The term is derived from the Spanish 'caníbal' or 'caríbal' that was originally used as a name for the Caribs, a people from the West Indies that were said to have eaten human flesh. An alternative is the more neutral term 'anthropophagy', meaning 'eating humans'. Throughout history, European merchants and colonizers brought home many stories of anthropophagy practised by the native peoples they encountered. By associating them with anthropophagy, Indigenous peoples were being dehumanised as part of the justification for the atrocities committed to them during colonisation.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

"Human Cannibalism," Wikipedia, April 1, 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_cannibalism

Caucasian

Term(s) in this context

Caucasian

The term “Caucasian” was introduced in the late 18th century by German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who idealized the Caucasus region as the origin of the “white race” and an aesthetic ideal. In the 19th century, it became a racial category encompassing Europeans, some North Africans, and parts of Western Asia, as part of pseudoscientific theories that hierarchically classified humans based on physical traits. Though later incorporated into Nazi racial ideology, the term was less central than narrower categories like “Aryan.” In the U.S., “Caucasian” became a common term for describing white populations in legal, demographic, and social contexts, often as a synonym for “white.” but it is increasingly criticized for its imprecision and roots in outdated racial theories.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution in the context of people. The term is unproblematic when it refers specifically to people from the Caucasus region.

Suggested alternatives

White

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 98. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Moses, Yolanda, “Why Do We Keep Using the Word ‘Caucasian’?,” SAPIENS, February 1, 2017, accessed December 4, 2024, <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/caucasian-terminology-origin/>

Child marriage

Term(s) in this context

Child marriage

The term refers to when a person is forced to marry against their will, including marriage under the age of consent. Forced marriage is a human rights violation and an important issue in our gender justice work. Do not use the term 'child marriage' as it is never legitimate for a child to marry. Marriage under the age of consent is always a forced marriage.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Forced marriage

Source

"Inclusive Language Guide," Oxfam, March 8, 2023, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.21201/2021.7611>

Chinaman

Term(s) in this context

Chinaman

Archaic term for the Chinese, first used as a racist insult in the 1800s. After the Opium Wars, Britain and France forced the Qing government to allow Chinese labour migration to Western countries to replace enslaved Africans, marking the beginning of the global dispersal of Chinese people. During the gold rush and railway construction era in western North America and Australia (1848-1955), Chinese workers faced poor pay and dangerous conditions. Although widely considered derogatory, some Asian Americans use the term to self-identify.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Chinese person

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Chinaman's nightcap

Term(s) in this context

Chinaman's nightcap

Derogatory term towards Chinese people used to reference opium. It was a negative racist stereotype that Chinese people were addicted to opium and gambling.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Chinky

Term(s) in this context

Ching chong

Chink

Chinki

Chinky

Chonky

Highly offensive ethnic slur towards people of East Asian descent. Regarded as the ‘c-word’ for some Asian Americans today. Its etymology is debated, with some tracing it to the Chinese courtesy ching-ching, and others saying it derived from the name of the Qing (Ch’ing) dynasty. The term ‘chinky’ first appeared in print in 1878.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Clan

Term(s) in this context

Clan*

Depending on the culture, terms such as 'clan', 'band', and 'tribe', when used to convey characteristics of social groupings, can carry negative connotations and are considered less appropriate. Anthropological terms based on Western progress models, they imply notions of societies being less 'advanced' and unstable forms of social organisation. 'Clans' are often understood as being secreted and opaque, in opposition to structured, transparently organised societies, or are simply dismissed as corrupt.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Margaux Vinez, "Division of the Commons and Access to Land on the Frontier: Lessons From the Colonial Legacy in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Paris School of Economics, February 15, 2017, <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/748201495654708183-0010022017/original/B2historyabca.pdf>

Closeted

Term(s) in this context

Closeted

In an LGBTQI+ context, the term refers to not publicly identifying with one's sexuality. Historically, this was often out of fear, as many homosexual practices were illegal. Even today, some individuals choose not to disclose their sexual orientation to avoid prejudice or discrimination.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Source

Queer Glossary Bowling Green State University. Accessed 2 May, 2024.

<https://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/multicultural-affairs/documents/queer-glossary.pdf>

Coloured

Term(s) in this context

Colored

Coloured

Controversial term normally used to describe a person or a group of people with mixed White European and non-White, for example, someone of African or Asian, ancestry. In some cases the term is also used to describe a Black person. The term has different histories of use and meanings within different parts of the world, but is generally regarded as derogatory today.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Suggested alternatives

Person(s) of Color

People of Color

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 99. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Complexion

Term(s) in this context

Complexion

The term “complexion,” when referring to a person's skin, particularly their face, is not inherently discriminatory, but it can suggest racially harmful content. To avoid reducing individual or cultural identities to physical traits, we no longer use terms related to origin, ethnicity, skin color, or other body characteristics to describe people or communities. Such descriptions have historically been, and often still are, offensive and limiting.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution in the context of people. Unproblematic when referring to the general aspect or character of something.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Concubine

Term(s) in this context

Concubine

Often used as a euphemism for sexual slavery.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.2 Women's History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tpZmKNmmNAttixKGKgV2u3suvPgZbTrsiMnNRW9MHsc/edit>

Coolie

Term(s) in this context

Coolie

Kuli

Derived from the Hindi word quli meaning 'day worker' or Mandarin word ku li, a controversial term used to describe untrained contract/indentured labourers from Asia who in the 1850s worked in the Dutch East Indies and Suriname as well as contract labourers, especially from India, working in British colonised regions of the Caribbean and East and South Africa. The term is still used as a term of abuse towards people of Asian or African descent.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against. The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Costume

Term(s) in this context

Costume

The word 'costume' can be problematic when used to describe non-Western clothing, as it can imply that these garments are somehow less authentic or legitimate, reinforcing stereotypes and contributing to an exoticising or 'othering' perspective. In contrast, referring to traditional or cultural clothing as 'clothing' or 'dress' can promote greater respect and understanding. However, the term 'costume' is often appropriate and unproblematic in contexts where it clearly refers to clothing worn for theatrical or film performances, celebrations or specific events, such as Halloween, stage plays or traditional festivals.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Courtesan

Term(s) in this context

Courtesan

Originally used in the 13th century to mean the female equivalent of 'courtier' – someone who attends the court of a monarch. From the 14th century, its meaning shifted to 'a wanton woman, a mistress'.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.2 Women's History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tpZmKNmmNAttixKGKgV2u3suvPgZbTrsiMnNRW9MHsc/edit>

Creature

Term(s) in this context

Creature

The term “creature” has a long history of being used in both neutral and pejorative ways. While it originally referred broadly to any created being, its use to dehumanize non-European people is rooted in colonial, racial, and cultural hierarchies established during the era of European imperialism. Colonial-era writings often described non-European people as “creatures” to emphasize their supposed exoticism, savagery, or subhuman status.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Creole

Term(s) in this context

Creole

The term 'Creole' is contentious due to its complex history and varying regional meanings. Originally referring to people born in colonial territories rather than their ancestral lands, its usage has evolved differently across regions. It becomes particularly problematic in several contexts: when used to categorize mixed-heritage individuals without their consent, when applied as a racial classifier in institutional records and databases, when used to exoticize Caribbean and Latin American cultures in media and tourism, or when employed to make assumptions about someone's background based on appearance.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

"Creole (People) - Citizendium," June 27, 2023, last accessed December 2, 2024, [https://citizendium.org/wiki/Creole_\(people\)](https://citizendium.org/wiki/Creole_(people))

"Free People of Color in Louisiana," Louisiana State University Library, n.d., last accessed December 2, 2024, <https://lib.lsu.edu/sites/all/files/sc/fpoc/terminology.html>

"Creole | History, Culture & Language," Encyclopedia Britannica, October 8, 2024, last accessed December 2, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Creole>

Cripple

Term(s) in this context

Cripple

Crip

Originating from the Germanic word for 'creeping', the term was and is used to describe a person with a physical disability. It developed into a slur and was also appropriated in slang in its shortened form 'crip', meaning 'easy'. This usage reflects the low social expectations held for people with disabilities, as in the phrase 'to give someone the cripple's inch.' Although some disability activists have reclaimed the term, there are many others who consider them offensive.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Source

Disability language guide Stanford University 2024. Accessed May 2 2024.

https://disability.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj26391/files/media/file/disability-language-guide-stanford_1.pdf

"Crip (Disability Term)," Wikipedia, April 11, 2024, accessed May 3, 2024,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crip_\(disability_term\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crip_(disability_term))

Victoria Ann Lewis, "Crip," Keywords (blog), April 27, 2015, accessed May 3, 2024,

<https://keywords.nyupress.org/disability-studies/essay/crip/>

Crone

Term(s) in this context

Crone

In folklore, a crone is an older woman, often portrayed as unpleasant or malicious, with magical or supernatural traits that can be either helpful or obstructive. In feminist spirituality, croning is a rite of passage into wisdom and personal power. Socially, the term is problematic as it reflects patriarchal views that devalue aging women, often portraying them as bitter or evil. The term entered English in the 14th century from Anglo-French *carogne* ("carrion", "unpleasant woman"). Today, the crone is also seen as a woman revered for her judgment and wisdom.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.2 Women's History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tpZmKNmmNAttixKGKgV2u3suvPgZbTrsiMnNRW9MHsc/edit>

"Crone," Wikipedia, October 25, 2024, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crone>

Cross-breed / Inter-racial

Term(s) in this context

Cross breed

Cross-breed

Inter-racial

Interracial

The term refers to someone who has parents, grandparents or great-grandparents of different races. People of mixed race may have different opinions about which terms are considered derogatory or acceptable, depending on region, country or personal preference. In any case, such terms are often seen as homogenising.

Recommendations for use

Always honour a person's self-identity and be specific, when appropriate i.e Person of [x] and [x] heritage. The order in which an individual lists their ethnic identities may be important to them. Do not use word like 'half' or 'quarter' to describe someone's ethnic heritage.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Crossdresser

Term(s) in this context

Crossdresser

Individuals who wear clothes stereotypical to or associated with a gender other than their predominantly-identified gender. Crossdressers often develop a persona while crossdressing.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Source

*"Crossdressers," homosaurus.org, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024,
<https://homosaurus.org/v3/homoit0000316>*

Curiosities

Term(s) in this context

Curiosities

The term has historically been used to describe collections of unusual or exotic objects, sometimes including living people. This term is still used today to talk about objects, exhibitions and collections, often suggesting that museums hold 'curious', 'strange' or 'exotic' objects for visitors to explore. While not always problematic, this language can make certain people and cultures seem 'strange' or 'other', creating a divide between the dominant culture and those who are seen as different.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

"Curiosities," The Decolonial Dictionary, January 19, 2021, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://decolonialdictionary.wordpress.com/2019/06/24/curiosities/>

Dark Continent

Term(s) in this context

Dark Continent

Centuries ago, Africa was dubbed the “Dark Continent” by European explorers, who saw it as mysterious and unexplored. Welsh journalist Sir Henry Morton Stanley popularized the term to market his books. However, historians argue that the idea of Africa being unknown was a colonial myth, as Africans had long traded with Middle Eastern and Asian nations. European exploration and colonization were driven by the desire to exploit Africa's resources, while obscuring its rich civilizations. This narrative of savagery helped justify colonization, with Christian missionaries and anti-slavery campaigns further demonizing African cultures and religions.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Suggested alternatives

Africa

Source

Oyindamola Depo Oyedokun, “The Real Reason Why Africa Was Called the Dark Continent,” *Africa Rebirth*, October 31, 2023, accessed December 3, 2024, <https://www.africarebirth.com/the-real-reason-why-africa-was-called-the-dark-continent>

Degenerate

Term(s) in this context

Degenerate

The term is derogatory and is used to criticise someone for behaviour or morals that are considered low or unacceptable, or if their sexual behaviour doesn't conform to society's accepted norms. It can also be used in a derogatory way to denigrate a person's contributions to art or work in general. Historically, the term has been used in a racist, classist or ableist way to denigrate certain groups, especially those who are or have been marginalised or stigmatised in society. Acceptable uses of the term include medical contexts, referring to a person, animal or organism whose physical or mental condition is considered to be declining, weak or less capable, often due to some kind of inherited defect or disease.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

"Degenerate," in Collins Dictionary, n.d., accessed November 6, 2024, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/degenerate>

Descent

Term(s) in this context

Descent*

The term refers to the group or place where someone comes from or was born. It is not a controversial term in and of itself. However, because it is often used to ask someone where they are from, assuming that they are from somewhere else because of their appearance, it can be perceived as othering and therefore as offensive.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 101. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Disabled

Term(s) in this context

Disabled

“Disability” is an umbrella term for various impairments, both mental and physical. It has largely replaced “handicap” in Western Europe and the United States. In the early 20th century, “handicap” referred to a person's inability to function “normally,” but this view was challenged from the 1970s onward. Activists argued that disability is a social construct, not an individual problem. Referring to “the disabled” is generally seen as offensive; “disabled person” or “person with a disability” are preferred, emphasizing the individual over their condition.

Recommendations for use

When possible, refer to a person's specific condition. When describing individuals, do not reference disabilities unless it is relevant to the context.

Suggested alternatives

People with disabilities

Differently abled

Disabled people

Disabled person

Person with a disability

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 102. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

National Center on Disability and Journalism, “Disability Language Style Guide”, 2021, accessed September 15, 2024. <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#D>

See also

Handicapped

Discover

Term(s) in this context

Discover

Discovery

The term can be used neutrally, such as when referring to discovering information or understanding how something works. However, when used in the context of the “discovery” of a country, it becomes problematic. The term implies that a place did not exist, was unknown to Europeans, or was uninhabited before European contact. This perspective erases the fact that thriving societies had long populated the continent before Europeans arrived, and it suggests that art, culture, and people only existed after, for example, Columbus’ “discovery.”

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Phrases like ‘was the first European to reach...’ would be more appropriate.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 103. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Disfigured

Term(s) in this context

Disfigured

Disfigurement refers to physical changes resulting from burns, trauma, disease, or congenital conditions and is generally considered a derogatory term.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against. Refer specifically to the physical changes.

Source

National Center on Disability and Journalism, "Disability Language Style Guide", 2021.
<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#mentalillnessmentaldisorder>

Drag

Term(s) in this context

Drag

Wearing clothes considered appropriate for someone of another gender. Originally used in Shakespeare's Globe Theatre to mean Dressed As Girl (or Dress Resembling A Girl) referring to male actors who played female roles.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

*"Queer Glossary," Bowling Green State University, n.d., accessed June 7, 2024,
<https://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/multicultural-affairs/documents/queer-glossary.pdf>*

Dwarf

Term(s) in this context

Dwarf

Dwarfism is a condition where people are shorter than average due to medical or genetic reasons. Outside of a medical context, the term is offensive. In European art, literature, and film, people of short stature have often been portrayed in a satirical way. In the 1800s and early 1900s, dwarfism was displayed in colonial exhibitions, “freak shows,” and circuses, where people with this condition were treated as abnormal, like other racialized or colonized groups. However, the term is acceptable when referring to characters in fairy tales or fantasy stories.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Applicable only in a medical diagnosis.

Suggested alternatives

Person of short stature

Little person

Someone with dwarfism

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 104. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Dyke

Term(s) in this context

Dyke

The word “dyke” is a slang term that has been historically used as a derogatory insult toward lesbian women. However, in recent decades, it has been reclaimed by some within the LGBTQ+ community, particularly by lesbians, as a term of empowerment and self-affirmation. When used in this positive context, “dyke” can refer to a woman who identifies as a lesbian, often with an emphasis on strong, bold, and unapologetic aspects of lesbian identity. The term’s reclamation reflects broader themes of empowerment within marginalized communities, where slurs are reappropriated as symbols of pride. Despite this, it is still considered offensive and harmful when used by individuals outside the community or in a derogatory manner. As with many reclaimed terms, the meaning and tone of “dyke” depend on context, the intent behind its use, and the identity of the person using it.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Only use to describe people who self-identify with the term.

Source

“Dykes,” *homosaurus.org*, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024, <https://homosaurus.org/v3/homoit0000384>

“Dyke”, *PFLAG - Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays*, n.d., accessed September 15, 2024, <https://pflag.org/glossary/>

Effeminate

Term(s) in this context

Effeminate

Effete

(With reference to a man) having characteristics and ways of behaving traditionally associated with women and regarded as inappropriate for a man.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

"Effeminate" Oxford English Dictionary. 2024. Accessed May 2, 2024.

https://www.oed.com/dictionary/effeminate_adj?tl=true

"Effete (figurative)". Oxford English Dictionary. Accessed May 2, 2024.

https://www.oed.com/dictionary/effete_adj?tab=meaning_and_use#5759411

Encounter

Term(s) in this context

Encounter*

This is a term often found in commemorative anniversary language, particularly referring to both the 'moment' of first contact between cultures and the longer processes of colonialism in which cultures encountered one another. However, when used to describe often violent events, the word takes on a passive tone, eliding the complicated and contested and continuing nature of colonialism.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

"Encounter," The Decolonial Dictionary, July 10, 2019, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://decolonialdictionary.wordpress.com/2019/07/10/encounter/>

Eskimo

Term(s) in this context

Eskimo

The term refers to the diverse Indigenous peoples of Arctic and sub-Arctic North America, Greenland and Northeastern Siberia. It has never been widely used by these communities, who prefer their own indigenous terms. While its linguistic origins are debated - some regard the term as a French (Esquimaux) or English version of an indigenous term - the term is more accepted in Alaska than in Canada or Greenland, where it is often seen as pejorative. It has largely fallen out of official use, and while 'Eskimo-Aleut' describes the linguistic group, finding a broad, accepted term for all circumpolar peoples remains challenging.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Suggested alternatives

Iñupiat peoples of northern Alaska

Inuit peoples of Canada

Kalaallit of Greenland

Yup'ik (I.e. the Central Alaskan people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta, Kuskokwim River, and coastal Bristol Bay in Alaska)

Alutiiq people of the Alaska Peninsula and coastal and island areas of southcentral Alaska

Suq'piaq people of the Alaska Peninsula and coastal and island areas of southcentral Alaska

Yupighyt Inuit of Siberia

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 105. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Ethnicity

Term(s) in this context

Ethnicity

The term “ethnicity” refers to the shared social, cultural, or historical experiences and practices of a group of people, such as language, religion, or dress, often linked to a national or regional background. An “ethnic group” describes people who share these characteristics. While the term may seem neutral, it is often used to describe something or someone considered different or foreign, as seen in phrases like “ethnic food” or “ethnic music.” When applied to people, the term is typically associated with minority groups, even though everyone has an ethnic identity.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

The term should not be confused with ‘race’.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 106. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Exchange

Term(s) in this context

Exchange*

This term is sometimes used to denote the meeting of peoples, ideas and cultures that necessarily accompanied the colonial project. 'Exchange' implies balance, equity and is defined as the 'act of giving one thing receiving another (especially of the same kind or equivalent value) in return'. It also connotes an idea of a benign and even desirable cosmopolitanism. Using a term like 'exchange' without qualification obscures these power relations in favour of an uncritical mutuality, not accounting for the negative aspects of colonialism.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

"Exchange," The Decolonial Dictionary, August 7, 2019, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://decolonialdictionary.wordpress.com/2019/08/07/exchange/>

Exotic

Term(s) in this context

Exotic

This term comes from the Ancient Greek word *exōtikós*, which means “from the outside.” Over time, it has become linked to ideas about people being seen as different or “other,” often in ways tied to race or sexuality. While it is commonly used to describe plants and animals, it’s also used for people, usually People of Color. When applied to people, it often implies they are different from what’s considered “normal,” especially in their appearance or name (like saying, “What an exotic name!”). Sometimes, it also carries a sensual undertone.

Recommendations for use

This term can be used if it refers to animals or plants; the use when referring to people is advised against.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 107. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Explore

Term(s) in this context

Explore

While the term itself is not inherently problematic and is suitable in many contexts, it should sometimes be used with caution. In museums, it is often used to describe bold adventurers who traveled to distant places in the name of science and knowledge. However, such narratives often adopt a triumphant tone that overlooks discussions about power dynamics and their lasting impacts.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

"Explore," The Decolonial Dictionary, August 21, 2019, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://decolonialdictionary.wordpress.com/2019/08/21/explore/>

Eyetic

Term(s) in this context

Eyetic

The term first appeared in the U.S. after World War I as an offensive slang word for Italians or people of Italian descent, who were often seen as outsiders. It's a mocking version of the word "Italian," sounding similar but used in a negative way. This pattern is common in xenophobic nicknames.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Ghiselli, Serena. 2024. "A Quantitative Analysis of Racist Epithets Referring to Italians and Their Translations in Movie Subtitles: The Case of Wop, Eyetic and Goombah". Cadernos De Tradução 44 (esp. 2):1-18. <https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-7968.2024.e99464>

Faggot

Term(s) in this context

Fag*

Faggot

The term “faggot” (shortened to “fag”) has historically been used to demean and belittle gay men. Its origins date back to the early 1900s, when it referred to a bundle of sticks or twigs, often associated with burning at the stake. Over time, it evolved into a slur targeting gay men, carrying connotations of weakness, worthlessness, and inferiority. The word is deeply rooted in homophobia and is widely regarded as extremely hurtful and disrespectful. Its use perpetuates harmful stereotypes and reinforces negative attitudes toward the LGBTQ+ community.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

“Faggots,” *homosaurus.org*, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024, <https://homosaurus.org/v3/homoit0000418>

Features

Term(s) in this context

Features*

This term is not discriminatory, but might be indicative of racially harmful content. We aim to no longer use terms related to origin, ethnicity, skin color or other body characteristics to point to people or communities. Such reductions of individual or cultural identities to a body characteristic has been (and often still is) meant as well as perceived as offensive.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

First World

Term(s) in this context

First World

The term First World originated from European and North American systems and refers to non-Communist nations like those in Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and North America. It's a misleading term that ties capitalism and Western countries to wealth and superiority. It suggests a racist idea of hierarchy, where some countries are considered "first" and others as less advanced. This ranking of countries is rooted in colonialist and racist thinking.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against. Choose a term that fits the specific context, avoiding language that implies a hierarchy of value or progress.

Source

Themrise Khan et al., "How We Classify Countries and People—and Why It Matters," BMJ Global Health 7, no. 6 (June 1, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2022-009704>

Fritz

Term(s) in this context

Fritz*

Fritz was a popular male name in Germany and among Ashkenazi Jews. It started as a short form of the German names Friedrich or Frederick. Fritz can also be a short version of other names like Fridolin or even Francis, though less often. During World War I, the Entente powers used "Fritz" as a derogatory nickname for German soldiers, similar to how British soldiers were called "Tommy."

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXjnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqjZ0F9Q/edit>

Frog

Term(s) in this context

Frog*

The term “frog” is a pejorative nickname for French people, commonly used in Great Britain. It likely originated in the late 1600s. While its exact origins are unclear, the most widely accepted theory is that it refers to the French tradition of eating frog legs, which are considered a delicacy in French cuisine.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

*Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXJnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqJZ0F9Q/edit>*

Garb

Term(s) in this context

Garb

The term “garb,” while generally neutral in its meaning of clothing, dress, costume, attire, can sometimes carry discriminatory undertones when used to describe non-Western clothing. In such contexts, it may contribute to othering or exoticizing these styles, reinforcing cultural stereotypes.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Gay

Term(s) in this context

Gay

The term “gay” refers to someone who has enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to people of the same gender. For women, the term “lesbian” is sometimes preferred. People of all genders, including men, women, and non-binary individuals, may use this term to describe themselves. It is best to avoid the outdated and sometimes derogatory term “homosexual,” as it is considered offensive by many in the LGBTIQ+ community. Additionally, the term “gay” is still in use as a slur by non-LGBTIQ+ individuals in certain contexts.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Source

“Glossary of Terms: LGBTQ,” GLAAD, May 1, 2023, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://glaad.org/reference/terms/>

“Glossary of Terms,” Human Rights Campaign, May 31, 2023, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

See also

Homosexual

Greed

Term(s) in this context

Greed

Greed refers to a selfish and excessive desire for more of something, such as money, than is necessary. When linked to Jews, the stereotype of greed becomes an antisemitic trope, forming the basis of persistent and harmful falsehoods. This association has fueled antisemitism throughout history and continues to affect Jews today. Therefore, connecting the term “greed” with Jews and Jewish culture is considered derogatory.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

American Jewish Committee, “The Translate Hate Glossary,” February 2024, 17,
https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-02/AJC_Translate-Hate-Glossary-2.2024.pdf

Guinea

Term(s) in this context

Guinea*

Derogatory term for Italian people, likely deriving from the term 'Guinea negro'. Dates back to World War Two.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXJnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqjZ0F9Q/edit>

Gypsy

Term(s) in this context

Gypsy

The term is generally used to refer to members of a traveling or itinerant group, specifically the Romani people, who are made up of various subgroups. Due to their history of (often forced) migration, negative stereotypes of Roma as thieves and vagabonds persist to this day. When used by people outside the community, “Gypsy” can be seen as offensive or a racial slur. However, some Romani groups, particularly in Europe, have reclaimed the word, including many individuals in the UK who proudly identify as “Gypsy.”

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

In general, ‘Roma’ can be used. Groups and subgroups, however, have their own preferred names (e.g., Sinti) so it is advised to use these when known.

Suggested alternatives

Roma

GRT community

Sinti

Source

Sami McLaren, “Frequently Asked Questions - Friends, Families and Travellers,” Friends, Families and Travellers, October 8, 2024, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/about-us/frequently-asked-questions/>

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 109. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Hag

Term(s) in this context

Hag

The term “hag” is used to describe an older woman, usually in a negative way, suggesting she is unattractive, unpleasant, or mean. This characterization is rooted in misogynistic and ageist stereotypes that degrade and diminish women as they age.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.2 Women’s History,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tpZmKNmmNAttixKGKgV2u3suvPgZbTrsiMnNRW9MHsc/edit>

Half breed

Term(s) in this context

Half breed

The term “half breed” is used for mixed-race individuals, and many similar terms are considered offensive because they imply that these people are “less than whole.” This term, along with “full-blood” and “half-blood,” originated in the 18th and 19th centuries, when people believed that races were biologically different and that certain “bloodlines” were superior to others. “Halb breed” was often used to describe individuals of mixed White European and Non-White descent, particularly those with Native American and white ancestry, and is considered derogatory.

Recommendations for use

Always honour a person’s self-identity and be specific, when appropriate i.e Person of [x] and [x] heritage. The order in which an individual lists their ethnic identities may be important to them. Do not use word like ‘half’ or ‘quarter’ to describe someone’s ethnic heritage.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Half-blood

Term(s) in this context

Half-blood

Half blood

The term “half-blood” originally referred to individuals with one common parent, such as a half-sister or half-brother. However, it was most commonly used in a derogatory way to describe people of mixed White European and Non-White descent, particularly those with Native American and white ancestry.

Recommendations for use

Always honour a person’s self-identity and be specific, when appropriate i.e Person of [x] and [x] heritage. The order in which an individual lists their ethnic identities may be important to them. Do not use word like ‘half’ or ‘quarter’ to describe someone’s ethnic heritage.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

“half-blooded”, in: Collins Dictionary, n.d., accessed December 2024,

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/half-blooded>.

Half-caste

Term(s) in this context

Half-caste

The term is used for mixed-race individuals, and many similar terms are considered offensive because they imply that these people are “less than whole.” Historically, it was often used to refer to people of mixed White European and Non-White descent, particularly those with European and Hindu or European and Muslim parentage, and is considered derogatory.

Recommendations for use

Always honour a person’s self-identity and be specific, when appropriate i.e Person of [x] and [x] heritage. The order in which an individual lists their ethnic identities may be important to them. Do not use word like ‘half’ or ‘quarter’ to describe someone’s ethnic heritage.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

“half-caste”, in: Collins Dictionary, n.d., accessed December 2024,

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/half-caste>

Handicapped

Term(s) in this context

Handicapped

The term “handicap” originally came from gaming and racing, where it referred to adjusting the values or speeds to level the playing field, often by a neutral judge. When used to describe a person’s physical or mental disability, or in terms like “handicapped parking space,” it is considered a euphemism. The idea behind the term suggests that a person with a handicap is carrying a heavier burden than others. This view reinforces the idea that disability is a personal burden, rather than a societal issue.

Recommendations for use

When possible, refer to a person’s specific condition. Regulations or places like “handicapped parking” are generally acceptable. However, it’s more preferred to use the terms like “accessible parking.”

Be as specific as you can instead of using generalising terms that are not appropriately representative.

Suggested alternatives

People with disabilities

Differently abled

Disabled people

Disabled person

Person with a disability

Source

Disability language guide Stanford University 2024. Accessed May 2 2024.

https://disability.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj26391/files/media/file/disability-language-guide-stanford_1.pdf

University of Bristol, “Inclusive writing: Disability,” accessed May 3, 2024,

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/style-guides/writing/inclusive/disability/>

“Disability,” Wikipedia, April 29, 2024, accessed May 3, 2024, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disability>

Harlot

Term(s) in this context

Harlot

The term refers to a female prostitute or promiscuous woman and historically carries negative moral judgments about women's sexuality. It reflects a gendered double standard, shaming women for behaviors that might be more socially accepted in men. Outdated and offensive, the term reinforces harmful stereotypes, objectifies women, and perpetuates societal pressures surrounding sexual purity.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.2 Women's History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tpZmKNmmNAttiXKGKgV2u3suvPgZbTrsiMnNRW9MHsc/edit>

Headhunter

Term(s) in this context

Headhunter

Headhunting

Headhunting refers to the practice of taking a human's severed head or other body parts as trophies, a ritualistic tradition historically practiced in various regions worldwide. Scholars generally agree that it was primarily ceremonial, serving to structure and reinforce social hierarchies, with some believing the head held spiritual significance. However, the portrayal of headhunting in popular culture often misrepresents it as a barbaric, bloodthirsty practice, reinforcing stereotypes of "primitive" peoples. This reduces complex rituals to simplistic and harmful portrayals of certain cultures as static and uncivilized.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 111. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

"Headhunting," Wikipedia, November 14, 2024, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Headhunting>

Hermaphrodite

Term(s) in this context

Hermaphrodite

The word comes from Latin and Greek, named after Hermaphroditus, the child of Hermes and Aphrodite, who in mythology had both male and female traits. It entered English in the late 14th century. From the Victorian era to the 21st century, medical experts used strict definitions: “true hermaphrodites” had both ovarian and testicular tissue, while “pseudohermaphrodites” had mismatched external and internal traits. These terms are now regarded as outdated and stigmatizing.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against. This term can be used if it refers to animals or plants; the use when referring to people is advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Intersex

Intersex condition

Intersex person

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 112. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

“Hermaphrodite,” Wikipedia, December 2, 2024, accessed November 21, 2024, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermaphrodite>

Hispanic / Latino

Term(s) in this context

Hispanic

Latino

“Hispanic” and “Latino” are terms used to refer to people in the US who are from Spanish-speaking or Latin American countries, or whose ancestors were. While they are often used interchangeably, some make a distinction, with “Hispanic” referring to people from Spanish-speaking countries and “Latino” referring to people from Latin American countries. All Latin American countries are included in both terms, except Brazil. “Hispanic” is controversial among some Latinos, who see it as a government-imposed label. Both terms are ethnic labels, not racial ones.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

‘Hispanic’, ‘Latino’ and ‘Latinx’ have different connotations. Ideally, use the term that a person self-identifies with. Be mindful that some prefer to identify themselves as ‘Hispanic,’ while others call themselves ‘Latino’. In general, naming a nation or region of origin is preferred (e.g., Bolivian, Salvadoran, or Costa Rican).

Source

“Racial and Ethnic Identity,” [apastyle.apa.org, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024, https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities)

“Latino Glossary Terms: A Guide for Journalists,” [Nieman Reports, November 3, 2020, accessed April 3, 2024, https://niemanreports.org/articles/caution-words-have-meaning/](https://niemanreports.org/articles/caution-words-have-meaning/)

“Hispanic and Latino (Ethnic Categories),” [Wikipedia, November 18, 2024, accessed December 2, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic_and_Latino_\(ethnic_categories\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic_and_Latino_(ethnic_categories))

Homosexual

Term(s) in this context

Homosexual

'Homosexual' is a medical and legal term to refer to non-heterosexual sexualities. The term as such was invented in the mid-19th century as an abnormal identity category to distinguish a person who engaged in sexual acts with another of the same sex. Homosexuality has been and continues to be considered sinful, a mental illness or even criminal in several places across the world. The term, and its abbreviated form homo is sometimes used as derogatory or curse word.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

To avoid stigmatization of non-heterosexual identities and to do justice to the plurality of sexual diversity, using community-derived descriptors like 'lesbian,' 'gay' and 'bisexual' is preferred. Choose culturally specific names such as Two-Spirit.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 113. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Hottentot

Term(s) in this context

Hottentot

This term refers to the Khoikhoi people, who live in the western part of South Africa. It is a Dutch colonial term, first used in the 17th century, and was based on an imitation of the sound of the Khoikhoi language. The term 'Hottentot' connoted culturally backward or primitive, stereotypes that were created in the early colonial period. In the 19th century, Khoikhoi people were violently exploited.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Khoisan

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 114. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Hun

Term(s) in this context

Hun

The Huns were a nomadic people originating from Central Asia who invaded Eastern Europe and Caucasia, who were typically portrayed as unattractive and immoral. The term 'Hun' was later used for the Germans in British propaganda in the First World War. 'Hun' is also an offensive term for a Protestant in Northern Ireland or historically a member of the British military in Ireland i.e. 'Britannia's huns'.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXJnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqJZ0F9Q/edit>

Hussy

Term(s) in this context

Hussy

Originally, the term meant a female head of a household and came from the 13th-century word husewif. In the 17th century, its meaning shifted to describe a “disreputable woman of improper behavior.” Since then, it has been used to refer to a woman who acts in ways considered immoral or improper and is now viewed as a sexist term.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.2 Women’s History,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tpZmKNmmNAttixKGKgV2u3suvPgZbTrsiMnNRW9MHsc/edit>

Illegal immigrant

Term(s) in this context

Illegal immigrant

Illegal migrant

Illegal migration

People are not illegal. Crossing an international border without the legal status for it is an administrative fault. Avoid language which reinforces the concept of migration and refugees as a problem or implies criminal activity.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Immigration

Undocumented immigrant

Undocumented worker

Irregular migrant/migration

Undocumented migrant/migration

People seeking protection

People seeking asylum

People seeking refuge

Refugee

Source

"Inclusive Language Guide," Oxfam, March 8, 2023, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.21201/2021.7611>

Illuminati

Term(s) in this context

Illuminati

The Order of the Illuminati was originally a secret society founded in 18th-century Bavaria by Adam Weishaupt to promote secularism. In the 1900s, fascist propaganda portrayed the Illuminati as a tool of Jewish elites, allegedly behind global capitalism, Soviet communism, and plans for a New World Order. Conspiracy theorists continue to claim that 'Illuminati Jews' are behind major conflicts to further wealthy Jewish interests. These ideas, which often focus on Jewish bankers such as the Rothschilds, are rooted in classic antisemitic stereotypes.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

American Jewish Committee, "The Translate Hate Glossary," February 2024, 19,
https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-02/AJC_Translate-Hate-Glossary-2.2024.pdf

Impotent

Term(s) in this context

Impotent

In its early English sense referred to people considered unable to look after themselves for reasons of age, infirmity, or disability. The 'impotent poor' were distinguished from the 'able bodied' poor in legislation.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 5. Working Class History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dz6XNajbO1v85OAlCeyL6HXO27__S7e3jOnC8YG-8Zo/edit

Indian

Term(s) in this context

Indian

In the 16th century, when Christopher Columbus reached the Americas, he mistakenly called the inhabitants “Indians,” believing he had arrived in India. This misnomer was soon used to describe the Indigenous peoples of North America. Because of the term's complicated and divisive history, those who are not part of the First Nations should avoid using it. When used to refer to people from the land of India, the term is appropriate.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

There is no consensus on the use of the term. In the U.S., “American Indian” has a complicated history but is still used for self-identification by some individuals and communities, as well as by the U.S. and Canadian Federal Governments. In Spanish-speaking Central and South America, “indio” is generally seen as problematic and rarely used by Indigenous people. In Brazil, however, “índio” is less contested and more commonly accepted.

This term can be used if it refers to animals or plants; the use when referring to people is advised against.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 116. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Indigenous

Term(s) in this context

Indigenous

Originally applied to plants and animals, in recent decades it has become a legal term for people who have been colonised by Europe. It refers to specific groups who identify with a place as their original homeland, have deep-rooted traditions there, and who have been displaced from their land by colonisation, often resulting in (cultural) genocide. The term is now seen as empowering, partly due to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), but it is broad and should be used carefully when referring to specific groups.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Use with caution.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 117. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Indo

Term(s) in this context

Indo*

Abbreviation for Indo-European. The term emerged during the colonial period to describe people of Indonesian and European descent (not restricted to the Netherlands). Arguably, the first known example of its use in the Netherlands dates to 1898. The term rapidly lost favor due to its ethnic and colonial connotations, but has recently been adopted as a term of pride and empowerment by people identifying as being of Indo-European heritage living in the Netherlands.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Suggested alternatives

Indo-European (Do not confuse with Indonesian.)

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 119. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Insane

Term(s) in this context

Insane

The terms ‘insane,’ ‘insanity’ and ‘mentally deranged’ are commonly used informally to denote mental instability or mental illness but can be considered offensive. The medical profession favors use of the terms ‘mental disorder’ or ‘psychopathology.’

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Suggested alternatives

Mental illness (Except in a quote or when referring to a criminal defense.)

Mentally ill

Source

National Center on Disability and Journalism, “Disability Language Style Guide”, 2021.
<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#mentalillnessmentaldisorder>

Invalid

Term(s) in this context

Invalid

Term for people who have been made weak or have a disability through illness or injury. Today it is widely viewed as offensive as it suggests a person is 'less than' their contemporaries and that they are weak, inferior or useless.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Suggested alternatives

Disabled people

Source

"Terminology and Language," Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People, August 2, 2017, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://gmcdp.com/terminology-and-language>

Inversion / Invert

Term(s) in this context

Inversion*

Invert*

Sexual inversion is discussed in early sexology, specifically the theories of Kraft-Ebbing and Havelock Ellis and indicates an innate inversion of gender traits. This was in the 19th century associated with homosexuality. The term can be used both for male and female inversion, but is no longer used today.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Oxford English Dictionary. "Inversion I, 10. Accessed 2 May, 2024.

https://www.oed.com/dictionary/inversion_n?tab=meaning_and_use#191120

Homosaurus Vocabulary Site. Accessed 2 May, 2024. <https://homosaurus.org/v3/homoit0000677>

Jerry

Term(s) in this context

Jerry*

Derogatory term for Germans, especially soldiers. Used in the World Wars.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXJnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqjZ0F9Q/edit>

Jock

Term(s) in this context

Jock*

Terms referring to Scottish people, although their derogatory connotation is debated. 'Jock' was slang for a Scottish soldier or sailor, dating back to the 18th century. In contemporary usage the term indicates (toxic) heteronormative masculinity in a school context.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXjnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqjZ0F9Q/edit>

update on contemporary meaning added by KU Leuven

John Chinaman

Term(s) in this context

John Chinaman

“John Chinaman” was a common term for Chinese men in the early to mid-19th century and often appeared as a stereotype in cartoons. He was usually shown with a long braid and a cone-shaped hat, and the name was used in books and songs of the time. After the Opium Wars in the mid-19th century, Britain and France had forced China to allow Chinese workers to move to Western countries to replace enslaved Africans. These workers were often paid very little, faced dangerous conditions, and experienced racism.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

“Chinaman,” Wikipedia, November 3, 2024, accessed December 2, 2024,

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinaman>

Kaffir

Term(s) in this context

Kaffir

The term comes from the Arabic word kafir, meaning “one without religion.” In both Afrikaans and English, it evolved into a label for Black people of African descent. The term became particularly derogatory during the apartheid era and is now considered hate speech. However, a group of Sri Lankan people, descended from Portuguese traders (or more broadly Europeans) and enslaved Bantu peoples, use the term “Kaffir” to refer to themselves.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Only appropriate when used to refer to the Sri Lankan Kaffirs, as it is a term with which the group self-identifies.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 121. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

See also

Kaffer

Khazars

Term(s) in this context

Khazars

The Khazars were a group from what is now Kazakhstan who fought in the 6th century AD for land that eventually became southern Russia and Ukraine. They are known to have been among the first groups to adopt Judaism. In the late 1800s theories emerged that modern Ashkenazi Jews descended from a Khazarian diaspora. No linguistic and genetic evidence supports this. Antisemitic groups have used the Khazar myth to question the legitimacy of Ashkenazi Jews, falsely suggesting that they came from the Caucasus rather than the Land of Israel.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

American Jewish Committee, "The Translate Hate Glossary," February 2024, 26,
https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-02/AJC_Translate-Hate-Glossary-2.2024.pdf

"Khazars," Wikipedia, November 9, 2024, accessed December 2, 2024,
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khazars>

Kraut

Term(s) in this context

Kraut*

Derogatory slang term for German people used in the US, used mostly during World War II.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXJnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqjZ0F9Q/edit>

Latinx

Term(s) in this context

Latinx

'Latinx' is a gender-neutral term used in lieu of "Latino" or 'Latina' to refer to a person of Latin American descent. Using the term 'Latinx' to refer to all people of Latin American decent has become more common as members in the LGBTQ community and its advocates have embraced the label. The gendered structure of the Spanish language has made 'Latinx' both an inclusive and controversial term.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

'Hispanic', 'Latino' and 'Latinx' have different connotations. Ideally, use the term that a person self-identifies with. Be mindful that some prefer to identify themselves as 'Hispanic,' while others call themselves 'Latino'. In general, naming a nation or region of origin is preferred (e.g., Bolivian, Salvadoran, or Costa Rican).

Source

"Racial and Ethnic Identity," apastyle.apa.org, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024, <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities>

Adrianna Rodriguez, *"Latinx' Explained: A History of the Controversial Word and How to Pronounce It,"* USA TODAY, June 29, 2019, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/06/29/latina-latino-latinx-hispanic-what-do-they-mean/1596501001/>

Limp-wrist

Term(s) in this context

Limp-wrist

The expression 'limp-wrist' comes from the stereotyped behaviour of women and effeminate men, who let their hands fall with their arms are raised. It is a derogative expression to name homosexual and effeminate men.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.1 LGBTQIA+ History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BTMAjtMw83GoAPQzAyH7qUTQI-xEj0GtYg9eal4i3dM/edit>

Maroon

Term(s) in this context

Maroon

As a noun, the term is used to refer to Africans (and their descendants) who escaped from slavery in the Americas, and settled in the inaccessible, interior/mountainous regions. The term itself derives from the 16th-century Spanish word 'cimarrón,' meaning runaway cattle and is, thus, regarded by some as derogatory.

Simultaneously, however, the term is used as one of empowerment as the Maroons have been celebrated as a symbol for the continuous resistance to colonialism.

Recommendations for use

Generally acceptable to use the term. In the context of Suriname, however, it is better to use the specific names for each Maroon group: such as Saamaka, Matawai, Aluku, Kwinti, Paamaka.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 122. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

See also

Bush Negro

Bushman / Bushwoman

Medicine man

Term(s) in this context

Medicine man

The term is used to describe traditional or spiritual healers among some indigenous peoples in different parts of the world. The figure of the 'medicine man' has been represented in numerous films, novels and other popular media often in sensational and eroticising terms. Such representations have denied the complexity of the knowledge associated with healing, as well as the important role traditional healers played in many societies. Within the last few decades the term has been regarded by many as pejorative.

Recommendations for use

Where known use the term that the group to which the traditional healer belongs regard as acceptable and respectful.

Suggested alternatives

Spiritual healer

Traditional healer

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 123. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Midget

Term(s) in this context

Midget

The term was never officially coined to describe people with dwarfism, but was historically used to describe people of short stature who were exhibited for public curiosity and entertainment. Today, when the word is applied to a person, it is considered to be a derogatory slur.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Refer to a person's short stature only when it is relevant. It is best to ask people which term they prefer to describe them.

Suggested alternatives

Person of short stature

Little person

Someone with dwarfism

Source

National Center on Disability and Journalism, "Disability Language Style Guide", 2021.
<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#mentalillnessmentaldisorder>

Little People of America, "LPA Issues Statement to Abolish the 'm' Word - Sep 2015", accessed September 15, 2024, <https://www.lpaonline.org/assets/documents/Adv-Articles/LPA%20statement%20abolish%20M-Word.pdf>

Little People of America. "Resources for Advocating Against the 'M' Word", accessed November 7, 2024, <https://www.lpaonline.org/m-word-resources>

See also

Dwarf

Minority

Term(s) in this context

Minority

A minority group is a smaller group within a population with different ethnic, religious, or linguistic traits from the majority. Members often feel united and work to protect their culture, traditions, religion, or language. In academia, “minority” and “majority” often refer to power differences, not just numbers. For example, during apartheid in South Africa, black Africans were considered a “minority” despite outnumbering white Europeans, as they were socially, economically, and politically disadvantaged. The term is also used for groups that are generally disadvantaged or oppressed by a more powerful group.

Recommendations for use

When it is necessary to compare a dominant racial group with a nondominant racial group, use a modifier like ‘racial,’ ‘ethnic,’ or ‘racial-ethnic.’ Otherwise, other terms may be preferred, such as ‘people of color’ to refer to non-White racial and ethnic groups or more generally, ‘underrepresented people.’

Suggested alternatives

Historically minoritised people

Historically marginalised group

Historically marginalised population

Source

“Racial and Ethnic Identity,” [apastyle.apa.org](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities), n.d., accessed April 3, 2024, <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities>

Sironi, A. C. Bauloz and M. Emmanuel (eds.), 2019. “Glossary on Migration. International Migration Law”, No. 34., 143, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/IML_34_Glossary.pdf

Missing link

Term(s) in this context

Missing link

A “missing link” refers to a hypothetical extinct creature that is thought to be halfway between modern humans and their ape ancestors. In the late 1800s, many misunderstood Charles Darwin's work, thinking that humans directly evolved from existing species of apes. Racist comparisons of Black and Asian people to apes stem from outdated and false 19th century ideas that these groups were less evolved or the ‘missing link’ between humans and apes.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

*Riley Black, “What’s a ‘Missing Link’,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, March 2, 2018, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/whats-missing-link-180968327/>*

Mixed heritage

Term(s) in this context

Mixed heritage

The term refers to having two or more different racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural backgrounds. It is one of many labels used to describe multiracial people in English-speaking countries. However, many of these terms are considered derogatory, implying that such individuals are not “whole”—a notion often reinforced by the use of the word “half” to describe their background. Additionally, these labels are frequently criticized for being homogenising.

Recommendations for use

Always honour a person’s self-identity and be specific, when appropriate i.e Person of [x] and [x] heritage. The order in which an individual lists their ethnic identities may be important to them. Do not use word like ‘half’ or ‘quarter’ to describe someone’s ethnic heritage.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

“Mixed Heritage,” in: Cambridge Dictionary, November 27, 2024,

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/mixed-heritage>

Mohammedan

Term(s) in this context

Mohammedan

“Mohammedan” was a term commonly used in the past to refer to someone who worshipped the Prophet Muhammad. Many Muslims object to this term because Islam teaches the worship of God alone. Today, “Muslim” and “Islamic” are the preferred terms. “Mohammedan” is more likely to be found in museum databases than in everyday language.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Suggested alternatives

Muslim

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 124. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Mongoloid

Term(s) in this context

Mongoloid

An outdated and offensive term used to describe a person with the genetic condition Down Syndrome due to the presumed similarity in facial features to the so-called Mongolian race. In modern day usage the term is used as a curse word to describe someone regarded as retarded.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Suggested alternatives

Person with Down Syndrome

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 125. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Mongoloid

Term(s) in this context

Mongoloid

An outdated and offensive term used to describe a so-called racial type. As racial type, the terms emerged from 18th and 19th century studies of racial difference. The 'Mongoloid' or Mongolian race was the umbrella term used to describe diverse indigenous peoples from East Asia, South East Asia, and the Arctic region of North America. Like the other two presumed large racial groups, 'Caucasoid' (Caucasian) and 'Negroid' (Negro), this term is outdated and in general regarded as derogatory.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Be as specific as you can instead of using generalising terms that are not appropriately representative.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 125. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Mongrel / Mutt

Term(s) in this context

Mongrel

Mutt

The term is used to refer to dogs of mixed or uncertain breed, or any cross between different things, especially if inharmonious or indiscriminate. When applied to people with a mixed-race background, it is highly offensive.

Recommendations for use

This term can be used if it refers to animals or plants; the use when referring to people is advised against.

This term can be used if it refers to animals. The use when referring to people is inappropriate.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Moor

Term(s) in this context

Moor

This is a controversial term. Its meaning has changed over time. While it has been used to describe different groups of people, it is generally understood to refer to Muslim people of Arab and Amazigh descent from North Africa and Southern Europe. At the same time, the term is said to derive from a Greek term meaning 'black, blackened or charred' and has been used in Europe since antiquity to describe Black people from Africa. It is considered a derogatory term for Muslims from North Africa or for a Black person.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against. The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 126. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Mudlark

Term(s) in this context

Mudlark

Someone, especially a young child, who is poorly or raggedly dressed.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 5. Working Class History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dz6XNajbO1v85OAlCeyL6HXO27__S7e3jOnC8YG-8Zo/edit

Muladi

Term(s) in this context

Muladi

Derogatory term for mixed-race people, especially a descendant of an Arab and non-Arab parent.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXJnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqjZ0F9Q/edit>

Mulatto

Term(s) in this context

Mulatto

Since the 17th century, “mulatto” has referred to the first-generation offspring of a non-White person and a White person, derived from the Latin word *mulus* (mule). Historically, mulattos were seen as the product of “miscegenation” and viewed as more intelligent—and sometimes more attractive—than Black people due to their “White blood.” These terms are now considered offensive due to their ties to slavery and Black disenfranchisement. While still occasionally used in historical or demographic contexts, particularly in relation to Latin America and its diasporic population, “mulatto” is largely outdated.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 127. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

“Multiracial Person / Persona Multiracial,” National Archives, May 14, 2024, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog/lcdrg/appendix/multiracial-person>

Multi-racial

Term(s) in this context

Tri-racial

Triracial

Mixed race

Mixed-race

Multi-racial

Multiracial

The term refers to someone who has parents, grandparents or great-grandparents of different races. Multiracial people may have different opinions about which terms are considered derogatory or acceptable, depending on region, country or personal preference. In any case, such terms are often seen as homogenising, some claim it aligns with a narrative of a 'pure race'. If someone identifies themselves in this way it should be respected.

Recommendations for use

Always honour a person's self-identity and be specific, when appropriate i.e Person of [x] and [x] heritage. The order in which an individual lists their ethnic identities may be important to them. Do not use word like 'half' or 'quarter' to describe someone's ethnic heritage.

Usually more useful when describing large, diverse groups of people than individuals.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

"Biracial, Multiracial," University Marketing & Communications, November 26, 2024, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://marcomm.washu.edu/style-guide-entries/biracial-multiracial/>

"Inclusive Language Guide," Oxfam, March 8, 2023, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.21201/2021.7611>

Native

Term(s) in this context

Native

The term derives from the Latin word *natus* and was historically used to describe people born in a particular place. It has been criticized for reinforcing colonial hierarchies, where natives were seen as inferior to the colonizers, and (contradictorily) for implying an exclusionary racial or ethnic right to a place by a specific group. Today, some groups, such as Native Americans, use the term in political claims for sovereignty. In Europe, this concept is increasingly employed in xenophobic politics.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution in relation to humans. When referring to animals, plants or things the usage of the term is unproblematic.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 128. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Negro

Term(s) in this context

Negro

The term originates from the Latin word 'niger,' meaning black. In the 20th century, "Negro" was used to reinforce stereotypes about Black people, yet - spelled with a capital "N" - it was also reclaimed and was used among northern African Americans and Black leaders such as Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. It was in this context also commonly used in anti-colonial movements and efforts to raise awareness of Black identity. Today, however, the term is widely regarded as offensive, including by many Black people and activists.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

This term is not recommended for use in contemporary context. Specify region or nation of origin when possible to avoid the impression that all people of African descent have the same cultural background, family history, or family experiences. Note that 'Black' is appropriate rather than 'African American' to describe people of African descent from various national origins (e.g., Haitian, Nigerian).

Suggested alternatives

Black

Source

"Racial and Ethnic Identity," *apastyle.apa.org*, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024, <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities>

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 129. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Octoroon

Term(s) in this context

Octoroon

An outdated term that white people used in the nineteenth and throughout the early twentieth century to refer to people who had one great-grandparent that was perceived as Black or African American and the rest of their parentage was white (in cruder terms, someone who was “one-eighth” Black)

Recommendations for use

Always honour a person’s self-identity and be specific, when appropriate i.e Person of [x] and [x] heritage. The order in which an individual lists their ethnic identities may be important to them. Do not use word like ‘half’ or ‘quarter’ to describe someone’s ethnic heritage.

Source

“CHM Research Guides - LibGuides at Chicago History Museum,” August 20, 2021, accessed December 2, 2024. <https://libguides.chicagohistory.org/blog/African-American-and-Black-Identity-and-Research-Terms>

Oriental

Term(s) in this context

Oriental

This term derives from the Latin word 'Oriënt', meaning east. Historically, the term came to be used in Europe to describe people or things from Asia. 'Oriental' gained widespread critique after the 1978 publication of Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism*, which critiqued Euro-American patronising representations of the (Middle) East. While the term is contested for being geographically Eurocentric, and especially for its romanticising and stereotypical image of Asian people as mysterious, 'exotic' and foreign, it is still widely used.

Recommendations for use

The use of more specific terms for the countries, languages and cultures from Asia and the Middle East is suggested.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 130. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Paki

Term(s) in this context

Paki

The term “Paki” is derived from “Pak,” meaning “purity” in Persian, Urdu, and Pashto, and is part of the exonym Pakistan, which was coined by Rahmat Ali in 1933 as a name for the new state. While “Paki” originally referred to the people of Pakistan, it has since become a derogatory slur in the UK, directed at individuals of Pakistani, South Asian, or Muslim descent. The term is now increasingly replaced by the euphemism “the P-Word” due to its offensive nature.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXJnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqjZ0F9Q/edit>

“Paki (Slur),” Wikipedia, November 22, 2024, accessed December 1, 2024,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paki_\(slur\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paki_(slur))

Paraphilia

Term(s) in this context

Paraphilia

Term denoting sexual preferences that are regarded as abnormal or perverted because they do not involve orientation towards an adult heterosexual partner, including zoöphilia, fetishism, pedophilia and SM. The term was quite common in early sexology and psychoanalysis but is no longer used today.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Oxford English Dictionary. "Paraphilia"/ Accessed 2 May, 2024.

https://www.oed.com/dictionary/paraphilia_n?tab=meaning_and_use#31902899

Paraplegic

Term(s) in this context

Paraplegic

Paraplegia is defined as the loss of movement in the lower extremities and torso. It is typically caused by a spinal cord or brain injury. Referring to someone as “a paraplegic” is offensive to some people as it implies that their condition defines them.

Recommendations for use

Avoid referring to an individual as a paraplegic. Instead, say the person has paraplegia. Sometimes people with paraplegia refer to themselves as a “para.” In those cases, use the word in quotes.

Suggested alternatives

Person with paraplegia

Source

National Center on Disability and Journalism, “Disability Language Style Guide”, 2021, accessed November 4 2024, <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#mentalillnessmentaldisorder>

Pederasty

Term(s) in this context

Pederast

Pederasty

Pederasty refers to a sexual relationship between an adult man and an adolescent boy, often in the context of a mentor-protégé dynamic. This practice was socially accepted in Ancient Greece, Rome, and some other cultures, such as Pre-Meiji Japan. Today, the legality of such relationships is determined by the age of consent, with adult involvement with minors considered abusive in most countries due to the psychological and physical harm it can cause. Historically, the term has also been misused to falsely describe gay men.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

"Pederasts," homosaurus.org, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024, <https://homosaurus.org/v3/homoit0001094>

"Pederasty," Wikipedia, November 1, 2024, accessed December 4, 2024, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pederasty>

Perversion

Term(s) in this context

Pervert

Perv

Perversion

The term “perversion” comes from psychology, where it refers to a deviation from a norm. In Freud's work and early sexology, perversion described sexual preferences that didn't lead to adult heterosexual intercourse as the ultimate goal. In a broader, non-sexual sense, perversion can also refer to behaviors like sociopathy or psychopathy, which psychoanalysis views as difficult to treat. Today, alternative sexual preferences are no longer seen as deviant, but rather as variations of human sexuality.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Oxford English Dictionary “Pervert”. Accessed 2 May, 2024. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/pervert_n?tab=meaning_and_use#31012459

Primitive

Term(s) in this context

Primitive

Primitive derives from the Latin word *primitivus*, meaning the first-born or first of its kind. In European thought, it became synonymous with the racialised and temporal 'Other' and was applied to cultures that were imagined as existing in a distant past that lacked qualities that were seen as European, specifically progress and rationality. The term is before still used today to denote someone or something as simple and uncivilised.

Recommendations for use

The term is not recommended for use. The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested. For example: There was an artistic movement called 'primitivism'.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 132. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Promiscuous

Term(s) in this context

Promiscuous

Of a person or animal: indiscriminating in sexual relations. Also (of sexual intercourse, relationships, etc.): casual, characterized by frequent changes of sexual partner.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Oxford English Dictionary "Promiscuous". Accessed 2 May, 2024. <https://www.oed.com/dictionary>

Prostitute

Term(s) in this context

Prostitute

A person who sell sexual acts.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Sex worker

Source

Homosaurus Vocabulary Site. Accessed 2 May, 2024. <https://homosaurus.org/v3/homoit0001136>

Prostitution

Term(s) in this context

Prostitution

The selling of sexual acts.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Sex worker

Source

Homosaurus Vocabulary Site. Accessed 2 May, 2024. <https://homosaurus.org/v3/homoit0001136>

Pygmy

Term(s) in this context

Pygmy

Pygmy' is a term used in anthropology to describe diverse peoples, especially from (Equatorial) Africa and Asia (i.e. New Guinea), the adult males of whom are regarded as of unusually short stature. Beyond the term's use to refer to the physical features of these diverse ethnic groups (and which in part makes it derogatory for some) the term is also used negatively as an insult to critique someone's intellectual capacities. Some indigenous peoples, for example in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have reclaimed the term as neutral and therefore non-problematic.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 133. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Quadroon

Term(s) in this context

Quadroon

An outdated term that white people used in the 19th and throughout the early 20th century to refer to people who had one grandparent that was perceived as Black or African American and the rest of their parentage was white (in cruder terms, someone who was “one-quarter” Black).

Recommendations for use

Always honour a person’s self-identity and be specific, when appropriate i.e Person of [x] and [x] heritage. The order in which an individual lists their ethnic identities may be important to them. Do not use word like ‘half’ or ‘quarter’ to describe someone’s ethnic heritage.

Source

“CHM Research Guides - LibGuides at Chicago History Museum,” August 20, 2021, accessed December 2, 2024. <https://libguides.chicagohistory.org/blog/African-American-and-Black-Identity-and-Research-Terms>

Queen

Term(s) in this context

Queen*

(With reference to a man) slang term used to refer to a person as having characteristics and ways of behaving traditionally associated with women and regarded as inappropriate for a man. Usually associated with homosexuality.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Source

<https://homosaurus.org/v3/homoit0001148>

Queer

Term(s) in this context

Queer

Particularly since the 1980s, 'queer' has served as an umbrella term for sexual identities that challenge social norms, including not just LGBTQIA+ but also people with sexual fetishes or those who practice polyamory. Reclaimed as a proud identity, the term contrasts with its earlier meanings of strange or curious. However, not everyone under this umbrella term actively uses it; many prefer to identify with other LGBTQIA+ terms. Despite its reclamation, 'queer' is still sometimes used as a slur against those seen as sexually deviant.

Recommendations for use

Use terms and pronouns that people find acceptable and respectful for describing themselves.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 134. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Race

Term(s) in this context

Race

'Race' refers to the categorisation of humans based on physical features, including skin colour. This is regarded as a sign of incommensurable difference between groups, including a hierarchy in aptitude, abilities, behaviour and development. According to 18th and 19th century racial sciences, humans were divided into groups, arranged hierarchically. These typologies reinforced colonial ideologies of difference. While race is not a biological fact, it has social consequences. Racism, therefore, should be understood as a form of prejudice and discrimination based on the presumed superiority of one group over another.

Recommendations for use

This term can be used if it refers to animals or plants; the use when referring to people is advised against.

There is no easy alternative for this term. The term is used by some in quotation marks to acknowledge the controversy surrounding the term. Racism is a valid term to use, as it acknowledges the discriminatory practices of racial thinking.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 135. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Racial features

Term(s) in this context

Racial features

This term is not necessarily discriminatory, but might be indicative of racially harmful content. It refers to the racist pseudoscientific of criminologist Cesare Lombroso, who in the beginning of the 20th century linked facial features to criminality. The theories of biological determinism were widespread but have been controversial since the very beginning, most notably from the angle of sociology which links criminal behaviour to social background and societal structures.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Ragamuffin

Term(s) in this context

Ragamuffin

Refers to a dirty, shabbily-dressed child.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 5. Working Class History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dz6XNajbO1v85OAlCeyL6HXO27__S7e3jOnC8YG-8Zo/edit

Retarded

Term(s) in this context

Retarded

The terms 'mentally retarded,' 'retard' and 'mental retardation' were once commonly used to refer to people with intellectual disabilities. They are now considered outdated and offensive.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Do not use the term retarded or other iterations. If you are going to use it in a quote, consider that decision carefully, as the word is particularly charged. Instead, always try to specify the type of disability being referenced. Otherwise, the term 'intellectually disabled' is acceptable. Consider using people-first language, as in 'a person with an intellectual disability' rather than 'an intellectually disabled person.' If known, use the term the described person prefers.

Suggested alternatives

Intellectually disabled

Person with an intellectual disability

Source

National Center on Disability and Journalism, "Disability Language Style Guide", 2021. Accessed 7 November 2024, <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#mentalillnessmentaldisorder>.

Root

Term(s) in this context

Root*

'Roots' has become popular as a way of describing one's identity, the place from where one originally comes. 'Roots' is often tied to feelings of displacement or loss, especially associated with diasporic communities. In recent years, the term has received criticism because it references a stable and fixed identity. To ask someone about their roots may be problematic, as it presupposes that they don't belong or their roots are the defining factor for their identity. This is compounded by the fact that the question is mostly asked of non-White people.

Recommendations for use

Generally, it is not considered problematic if people choose to speak of roots when referring to themselves. Some people, however, experience it as an intrusion. It might be more useful to refer to routes (the cultural and social biography of people).

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 136. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Sapphic

Term(s) in this context

Sapphic

Women and, in some definitions, non-binary people of any sexual identity or sexuality who are attracted to women. Some but not all sapphics use the term 'sapphic' to describe their sexual identity or sexuality. The term "Sapphic" originates from the ancient Greek poet Sappho and also refers to her poetic style and meter, as well as themes of love and desire between women found in her work.

Recommendations for use

Adopt the terminology used and accepted as respectful by people from the community themselves.

Suggested alternatives

Lesbian

Gay

wlw (women loving women)

Source

"Sapphics," *homosaurus.org*, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024, <https://homosaurus.org/v3/homoit0002277>

Savage

Term(s) in this context

Savage

This term has long been used to dehumanize and harm Native Americans and Indigenous people, labeling them as uncivilized or primitive.

Recommendations for use

This term can be used if it refers to animals. The use when referring to people is inappropriate.

Source

"Inclusive Language Guide," Cal State East Bay, n.d., accessed December 3, 2024, <https://www.csueastbay.edu/universitycommunications/inclusive-language-guide.html>

Scapegoat

Term(s) in this context

Scapegoat

A scapegoat refers to someone who takes the blame for others. The term originates from the story in the Book of Leviticus in the Torah, where the Hebrew word 'ăzāzêl translates to “absolute removal.” According to Jewish tradition, on Yom Kippur, the collective sins and grievances of the community are symbolically transferred onto a goat, which is then sent away or sacrificed, representing the removal of wrongdoing. For centuries, antisemites have used Jews as “scapegoats,” blaming them for societal problems and injustices.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

American Jewish Committee, “The Translate Hate Glossary,” February 2024, 36,
https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-02/AJC_Translate-Hate-Glossary-2.2024.pdf

Senile

Term(s) in this context

Senile

Senility

The terms 'senility' and 'senile' denote conditions in people brought on by aging and often are used incorrectly to denote dementia.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against. Refer to someone as having dementia only if the information is relevant and you are confident there is a medical diagnosis. When possible, reference the specific disease, such as 'someone with Huntington's disease.'

Suggested alternatives

Person with dementia

Source

National Center on Disability and Journalism, "Disability Language Style Guide", 2021.
<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#/mentalillnessmentaldisorder>

Servant

Term(s) in this context

Servant

'Servant', like other terms such as 'Page', 'Footmen' and 'Baboo', are frequently occurring terms in many museums' databases. These interrelated terms describe a person employed in another's household to do diverse domestic duties such as cooking and cleaning, or to be someone's attendant. The terms do not in themselves suppose gross exploitation, even if they describe a hierarchical relation in class and power, sometimes marked by exploitation. Referring to someone as a servant or page today is regarded as demeaning or insulting in some circles.

Recommendations for use

Use the person's name if known. The use of "servant" can be a transparent representation of power relation. Maintaining the term in object descriptions may be recommended in some situations, especially when the person's name is not known, since it conveys power relations transparently.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., *Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector*, 2018, 137. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Skin colour

Term(s) in this context

Skin*

Skin colour

Skin color

The term is not necessarily discriminatory, but may be indicative of harmful content. Especially, when it is used to reinforce racial categories, promote stereotypes or justify discrimination. Historically, it has been used to divide people, often in the context of colonialism, slavery and racism, creating hierarchies that dehumanise certain groups. It can reduce people to physical characteristics, perpetuating colourism and excluding the complexity of personal and cultural identities.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.6 Empires and Imperialism," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qCKze8kPN69b12mejnUk7_ZJ2ny14le0E-jnpo-94QY/edit

Slave

Term(s) in this context

Slave

The term is used to describe someone who is forced to perform labor or services against their will under threat of physical mistreatment, separation from family or loved ones, or death. The term refers to different forms of un-freedom, with different meanings and consequences over time and place. Today, the term is more generally used to describe people from Africa who were bought/captured by Europeans. Today, the term is seen as normalising the category 'slave' as an inherent identity of a person, ignoring that this identity was created through force.

Recommendations for use

The term "enslaved person" emphasizes an individual's humanity within a slaveholding society, highlighting that their identity centers on personhood while acknowledging they were forcibly subjected to slavery by others.

Suggested alternatives

Enslaved

Enslaved person

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 138. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

"Language of Slavery - Underground Railroad (U.S. National Park Service)," May 16, 2024, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/language-of-slavery.htm>

Special needs

Term(s) in this context

Special needs

This term is often used for people who may have requirements to support them with a disability. Many people consider the term 'special needs' offensive because of the social stigma associated with this phrase.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

People who have particular requirements

People who require specific accommodations

Source

"Inclusive Language Guide," Oxfam, March 8, 2023, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.21201/2021.7611>

Spic

Term(s) in this context

Spic*

Derogatory word used for all Latinos. Highly pejorative, offensive term. The word is a racial slur.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

"Latino Glossary Terms: A Guide for Journalists," Nieman Reports, November 3, 2020, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://niemanreports.org/articles/caution-words-have-meaning/>

Taff

Term(s) in this context

Taff*

Derogatory term for Welsh people.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXjnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqJZ0F9Q/edit>

Tart

Term(s) in this context

Tart

19th century contraction of “sweetheart”, a term of endearment, especially for women. From 1887, however, it is recorded as meaning “a woman of immoral character; a prostitute.”

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.2 Women’s History,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tpZmKNmmNAttixKGKgV2u3suvPgZbTrsiMnNRW9MHsc/edit>

The Goyim Know

Term(s) in this context

The Goyim Know

'The Goyim Know,' sometimes followed by "Shut It Down,' is a popular antisemitic meme based on conspiracy theories of manipulative Jews with plans of world domination and in control of the media, economy, and governments. While 'goyim' is a term used by some Jews to refer to non-Jews, antisemites and white supremacists have weaponised the word to mock and accuse Jews of promoting a prejudiced support for their own community.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

American Jewish Committee, "The Translate Hate Glossary," February 2024, 16,
https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-02/AJC_Translate-Hate-Glossary-2.2024.pdf

Third World

Term(s) in this context

Third World

The term 'Third World' is seen as a relic of Cold War politics, when the world was divided into three groups based on political and economic orientations or alliances. Since then, the term has largely been used to refer to countries and regions considered 'underdeveloped' from a Western perspective. The 'Second World' thus included the so-called emerging economies, while the 'First World' included the highly developed industrialised countries. This hierarchy has been criticised, not least because it obscures power structures and reinforces a division of the world into Western superiority and non-Western inferiority.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against. 'Developing nations' as well as 'low-income countries' have been suggested as alternatives. These terms, however, are also contested, for the same reasons as 'Third World'. It is preferable to name the countries and thus be as specific as possible.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 139. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Traditional

Term(s) in this context

Traditional

The term “traditional” itself is not necessarily problematic, but it can have a negative meaning when contrasted with terms like 'modern' or 'progress.' Several scholars have argued this contrast was part of a Eurocentric, colonial mindset that portrayed non-European cultures as stuck in the past, while Europe was seen as modern and forward-thinking. This divide still exists today, especially when referring to “traditional arts and cultures,” a term often linked to ethnographic museums.

Recommendations for use

When writing about traditions, or objects understood by their makers to represent traditions or traditional styles, be as specific as possible about time, place and intention. For example: “In the 18th century people used this, in 2018 they use that...” In some cases the term can be replaced with “historic.”

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, 140. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Trans

Term(s) in this context

Trans*

An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms including transgender, transsexual, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, agender, nongender, third gender, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine and neutrois. Trans people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity.

Recommendations for use

Use terms and pronouns that people find acceptable and respectful for describing themselves.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 141. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

"Trans/Transgender", TransActual UK, Glossary, accessed September 15, 2024, <https://transactual.org.uk/glossary/>

See also

Transsexual

Transsexual

Term(s) in this context

Transsexual

Individuals who transition from female to male or male to female. Generally refers to individuals who transition their physical bodies to align with their gender identities. Though this term was popular in the 20th century and is still in use today, it has been largely replaced by 'transgender people' and 'trans people.' Some but not all people regard this term as outdated and offensive.

Recommendations for use

Only use to describe people who self-identify with the term.

Source

"Transsexual people," homosaurus.org, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024, <https://homosaurus.org/v3/homokit0001381>

Transvestite

Term(s) in this context

Transvestite

U.S. historical term used to describe individuals who wear clothes associated with a gender other than their gender assigned at birth; generally considered to be a derogatory term.

Recommendations for use

The term can be used in a descriptive or historical context, in which case the use of quotation marks is suggested.

Only use to describe people who self-identify with the term.

Suggested alternatives

Crossdresser

Source

*"Transvestites," homosaurus.org, n.d., accessed April 3, 2024,
<https://homosaurus.org/v3/homoit0001470>*

Tribe

Term(s) in this context

Tribe

The term 'tribe' is often associated with so-called non-complex societies with simple political organisation. While this is itself not contested, the term has come to connote 'primitive,' 'simple' and even 'wild,' and is predominately associated with non-European peoples and cultures. The complexity of the term emerges because some cultural groups have come to embrace the term as a legal and group identity.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

When the people themselves find it an acceptable and respectful term for describing themselves, it is appropriate. It can be used in the context of fashion and popular culture, but only when referring to oneself.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 142. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Trollop

Term(s) in this context

Trollop

Prostitute or a woman who has many casual sexual encounters or relationships.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 3.2 Women's History," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024,

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tpZmKNmmNAttixKGKgV2u3suvPgZbTrsiMnNRW9MHsc/edit>

Urchin

Term(s) in this context

Urchin

“Urchin” is an outdated term that commonly referred to a young child, often one who was poorly or raggedly dressed.

Recommendations for use

This term can be used if it refers to animals. The use when referring to people is inappropriate.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, “Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 5. Working Class History,” 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dz6XNajbO1v85OAlCeyL6HXO27_S7e3jOnC8YG-8Zo/edit

Voodoo

Term(s) in this context

Voodoo

“Voodoo” is a Western term that comes from 19th and early 20th-century views of Haitian culture. It is linked to racist ideas about Black people's religious practices, often seen as primitive or uncivilized. The term reflects colonial attitudes toward African and African-influenced rituals in the New World, viewed as wild and untamed.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Vodou

Source

Danielle N. Boaz: “How the word ‘voodoo’ became a racial slur”, *The Conversation*, 23 January 2024, accessed 20 August 2024, <https://theconversation.com/how-the-word-voodoo-became-a-racial-slur-220205>

Leslie G. Desmangles, “Replacing the Term ‘Voodoo’ with ‘Vodou’: A Proposal.” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 18, no. 2 (2012): 26–33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41949201>

Wench

Term(s) in this context

Wench

More generally, it is an outdated term used to describe a sex worker or 'ordinary' woman. However, it was also used by white enslavers to refer to black enslaved women in the mid-1700s. This reinforced a racialised notion of womanhood that contrasted black women with the idealised, privileged image of white women. This concept became a foundation of slavery in Virginia and the American South.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Oxford English Dictionary. "Wench". Accessed 2 May, 2024. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/wench_n?tab=meaning_and_use#14621327

"CHM Research Guides - LibGuides at Chicago History Museum," August 20, 2021, accessed December 2, 2024. <https://libguides.chicagohistory.org/blog/African-American-and-Black-Identity-and-Research-Terms>

Western

Term(s) in this context

Western

The West is an ideological, historical, economic and geographical concept, the meaning of which has shifted over time. The term represents both a mental and physical division of the world that categorizes and contrasts people, cultures, religions and regions, placing them in a hierarchy.

Recommendations for use

Be as specific as possible in terms of country, population etc. If the term is used to contrast the western part of a country or region with the eastern part, it is acceptable.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 143. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf

Wetback

Term(s) in this context

Wetback

“Wetback” is a derogatory and highly offensive term used to refer to individuals of Mexican descent. It originates from the idea of crossing the Rio Bravo/Rio Grande into the United States. The term is considered one of the most harmful racial slurs.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

“Latino Glossary Terms: A Guide for Journalists,” Nieman Reports, November 3, 2020, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://niemanreports.org/articles/caution-words-have-meaning/>

Wheelchair-bound / Confined to a Wheelchair

Term(s) in this context

Wheelchair-bound

Confined to a Wheelchair

Phrases like this are outdated and should be avoided, as they imply limitation and confinement. In reality, a wheelchair is a tool for mobility and freedom, enabling users to move around and engage in various activities. Instead of being restrictive, it offers independence.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Suggested alternatives

Person who uses a wheelchair

Wheel-chair user

Source

Disability language guide Stanford University 2024. Accessed May 2 2024.

https://disability.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj26391/files/media/file/disability-language-guide-stanford_1.pdf

University of Bristol, "Inclusive writing: Disability," accessed May 3, 2024,

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/style-guides/writing/inclusive/disability/>

White

Term(s) in this context

White*

This term has long been used to describe a racial identity, based on skin colour, and usually describes certain groups of Europeans and their emigrant population across the world. The term is associated with the racial sciences of the 18th and 19th centuries. Since the latter part of the 20th century there has been sustained critique of the social construction of Whiteness as norm, arguing that it is an identity category that emerged to justify or reinforce discrimination against non-White people.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Tropen Museum et al., eds., "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," 2018, 144. https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2018-08/words_matter.pdf.pdf

Whore

Term(s) in this context

Whore

A woman who engages in sexual activity in return for payment, esp. as a means of livelihood; a female prostitute.

Recommendations for use

This term is highly offensive or derogatory and should not be used.

Source

Oxford English Dictionary. "Whore". Accessed May 2, 2024. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/whore_n?tab=meaning_and_use#14422151

Wilderness

Term(s) in this context

Wilderness

The term “wilderness” itself isn't inherently problematic, but during colonial times, it took on a more troubling meaning. By labeling areas as “wilderness” and describing them as “wild,” “empty,” “barren,” or “uninhabitable,” colonial powers portrayed these lands as vacant, making it easier to justify taking them over. In this way, the concept of “wilderness” became tied to racism, serving to reshape and erase Indigenous territories.

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

Tracey Banivanua Mar, “Carving Wilderness: Queensland’s National Parks and the Unsettling of Emptied Lands, 1890–1910,” in Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks, 2010, 85, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230277946_5

Wog

Term(s) in this context

Wog

A term originally used by the British Army in North Africa in World War II, mainly against dark-skinned Arabs. After the war, it came to be used as a slur in the UK against anyone with dark skin. In Australia, it is used to refer to southern European immigrants.

Recommendations for use

This term is outdated. Using it in a contemporary context is hence advised against.

Source

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, "Inclusive Terminology Glossary. 1.8 Contemporary Slurs," 2024, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WxghXjnuJNOBePuVlhQhw9WiDLpEiu4jUxiCqjZ0F9Q/edit>

Zionist

Term(s) in this context

Zionist

A Zionist is someone who supports Zionism, a person who believes in the development and protection of a Jewish nation in its historic homeland of Israel. Traditionally, Zionism refers to the Jewish desire to reestablish a state in the Biblical Land of Israel. However, today 'Zionist' and anti-Zionist language are often used pejoratively. Antisemites often use "Zionist" or "Zio" as a substitute for "Jew," while many try to disguise their antisemitism by claiming to be merely "anti-Zionists."

Recommendations for use

Use with caution.

Source

American Jewish Committee, "The Translate Hate Glossary," February 2024, 43,
https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-02/AJC_Translate-Hate-Glossary-2.2024.pdf

