

## A Guide to Racial and Ethnic Identity: Preferred and Disfavored Terms

- African-American** One of several concepts which typically refer to those citizens of the United States who are of African descent. Its use reflects an emphasis on a connection with the land mass, nations, and cultures of the African continent as a place of origin and core identify. May also refer to those of the West Indies, Caribbean, and Central and South America who are of African descent.
- Afro-American** A popularization of the term, African American. Disfavored by some because “Afro” fails to designate a land or nation of origin.
- American** Generally used to refer to citizens or the nation of the United States. Has been criticized as inaccurate and imperialistic because it excludes all other countries of the North, Central, and South Americas. Some would assert that only the indigenous populations may claim this identity.
- Anglo** Many peoples of color, esp. Native American and Latin peoples, use this term to refer to those of European descent. Other terms include haole and WASP (i.e., white, anglo-saxon, protestant). The term, WASP, is somewhat misleading, because it is used to refer to all those of European descent, regardless of their national origins or religion.
- Asian-American** This self-definition was created in the 1960's to represent the common identity, similar treatment, and shared political goals of such groups as Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean American, et. al. For federal government purposes, those of Indian descent (i.e., the nation of India), the Vietnamese, Filipinos, other Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders are included.
- Black,** The most widely used term to designate those of African descent who are **Black American** United States citizens. Sometimes used to refer to anyone of African descent throughout the diaspora (i.e., the Americas, Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, etc.).
- Chicano** A term of self-definition for many Mexican Americans. Created in the 1960's, *chicanismo* reflects the concern with preserving their cultural heritage and identity as opposed to assimilating into the dominant, Euro-centric culture of the U.S.

<b>Hispanic</b>	The federal government created this term in 1980 as a census category for those persons of Mexican or Spanish descent, those with Spanish surnames, or Spanish as their primary language. Until the 1960's and 1970's, such persons were defined as “white” for governmental purposes.
<b>Indian</b>	A term based on Christopher Columbus’ error in believing that he had reached the Asian continent and India. Widely used to refer to the more than three hundred distinct nations and societies that are recognized by the federal government, plus two hundred that are not so recognized, who comprise the indigenous peoples of North America. Central and South Americans also have hundreds of native peoples.
<b>Latino, Latina</b>	A self-definition created by those of Spanish tongue and descent, including Salvadorans, Brazilians, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Mexican Americans.
<b>La Raza</b>	Literally means “The Race” in Spanish. This concept reflects the centrality of the Mexican American and Chicano heritage which has its roots in the Mexican revolutionary traditions.
<b>Native American</b>	Indigenous peoples created this self-definition to reflect their understandings of a common mistreatment and many shared political goals. The concept embraces many peoples, including Cherokee, Choctaw, Oneida, Iroquois, Yahi, and Arapahoe.
<b>Non-western</b>	A term that refers to peoples of non-European descent and culture, often used in college curricula to designate courses which examine the lives of certain racial and ethnic peoples. Some have argued that the term denies the status of many peoples as inhabitants of the western hemisphere (e.g., Native Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans). It is oppressive because it determines “Western” as the norm.
<b>Oriental</b>	Refers to the people and culture of the so-called Orient or East, commonly known as Asia. The term originated as a comparison to the West and Western (i.e. European) cultures, which were referred to as occidental. The English coined the term to describe those subject to British colonial rule in Asia and Northern Africa. Increasingly less favored as a term for addressing Asians and Asian Americans.

<b>People of color</b>	This concept was created by various racial and ethnic peoples who are distinguished by brown, red, yellow, and black skin hues; origins in Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Americas; and most importantly, a common experience of conquest or subjugation by European nations.
<b>Puerto Rican</b>	One of the major Latin groups recognized in the United States. The people of Puerto Rico are citizens of this country, but are not permitted to vote in U.S. elections nor do they have congressional representation.
<b>Third World</b>	Another concept which reflects the common treatment of peoples of color (see above). Some have challenged this term, asserting that Asia and Africa in particular are the places of origin for the entire human species and consequently, they represent the First World.
<b>Western</b>	A term generally that refers to the peoples and cultures which originated in Europe. This includes the United States and Canada in North American See “Non-western” for critique.

References: Joe Feagin, *Racial and Ethnic Relations* (Prentice-Hall, 1984); Harry Kitano, *Race Relations* (Prentice Hall, 1985); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (Routledge, 1986).

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