***N.Y.U. Review of Law & Social Change***

**Style Guide**

**WHAT IS THE STYLE GUIDE?**

The Style Guide is a resource that outlines definitions and information about diverse communities in an effort to guide editors and authors of legal scholarship in the use of language.

**PURPOSE**

Our main goal is to ensure that *N.Y.U Review of Law & Social Change* (RLSC)—and any journal that utilizes this resource—does not engage in erasure or complicity with bigotry, oppression, or hate. This guide is meant to flag terms that communities have described as harmful to them and offer alternative solutions.

**HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

In some communities, there are disagreements about language. More than one term may be preferred or there may be disagreement over which terms are best. In these instances, our authors will have to make a choice about what language they will use. We should encourage them to include a footnote explaining that choice.

At times, this guide will give some information on a particular debate around a term. Our hope is that this will give users additional context to make thoughtful choices. It is not RLSC’s aim to force a particular viewpoint or political ideology, but rather to push authors and editors to be strategic and thoughtful in their decisions.

**METHOD**

All efforts have been made to be holistic and inclusive. In compiling this guide, we relied heavily on information from existing style and media guides and supplemented that information with input from members of the RLSC Community and in certain instances from leaders of diversity student groups from NYU School of Law. However, we acknowledge that this guide is incomplete. It is often those communities who are most marginalized that we overlook. RLSCis committed to remaining vigilant about our failures to be inclusive. Moreover, language is constantly evolving, and RLSC is dedicated to updating the guide regularly to accurately and respectfully reflect communities and community thought. If you know of any issue or community that is not represented but should be, or any issue that you feel is misrepresented, please contact RLSC’s Community Education & Accessibility Coordinator (CEAC).

For more in-depth research about issues covered, or for additional help with terms not covered in this guide, we encourage you to use the Diversity Style Guide,[[1]](#footnote-1) authored by the Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism, to aid journalists covering a “complex, multicultural world.” Many of its entries are taken from style guides created by identity journalism organizations such as the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, and the National Center on Disability and Journalism, among others.

We encourage users of this guide to read the entire section before coming to a conclusion in order to engage in nuanced thinking.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EDITING**

1. When non-preferred language is in a statute or case, or quoted to uncover bigotry or hatred, authors should never perpetuate that language by using it outside of quotation. Even when used in a quotation, authors are encouraged to explain the usage of hateful and harmful terminology. If such explanation is not included in the main text, an explanatory footnote should be used to each and every time a harmful term appears to clearly indicate the term has only been left uncensored to show the bias of the person quoted. When appropriate, we encourage authors to remove offensive language and replace it with preferred language in brackets.
2. Authors should always use the terminology self-identified by the individuals to whom they are referring. If this terminology might be offensive to others, authors should provide explanatory footnotes.
3. RLSC strives to educate our readers about the debates within marginalized communities presented in this guide. It is important to highlight diversity of experience and perspective within tokenized minority groups. As such, we always encourage authors to explain their use of lesser-known terminology.

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# Age

*Authors should consider using language to refer to older adults that is person-centered and avoids harmful stereotypes. Additionally, authors should consider avoiding terms that devalue older individuals or reduce the experience of being an older adult to any actual or perceived loss of capacity or opportunity.*

## Chronological Age

Because of the continuously changing nature of language, some terms that were once in favor are now considered offensive and/or othering. The use of “older” as an adjective (e.g., “older adult” or “older person”) is often preferred.[[2]](#footnote-2) It is also appropriate to describe individuals or groups of individuals based on a specific age, age range, or threshold (e.g., “adults over 65”).[[3]](#footnote-3)

Terms such as “elder,” “elderly,” “senior citizen,” “aging dependents,” and “old” are generally disfavored because of their association with stereotypes of older adults as a drain on resources or lacking capacity or value.[[4]](#footnote-4) Terms should also be self-defined when possible. If an individual or community prefers another term, the author should respect their wishes. In any event, the author is encouraged to explain their choice of language in a footnote.

***A note about the word “senior”*:**

There is an ongoing debate regarding the use of the word “senior” to describe older adults.[[5]](#footnote-5) Increasingly, this is a word that is considered disfavored. However, the use of the word “senior” as a descriptor in the housing context is generally preferred (e.g., “senior living” or “senior housing” are generally considered acceptable).[[6]](#footnote-6)

Other phrases and descriptors that are generally disfavored:[[7]](#footnote-7)

* “Old person”
* “Ancient”
* “Geriatric”
* “Frail”
* “Declining”
* “Deteriorating”
* “Crotchety”
* “Golden years”

Instead, authors are encouraged to consider terms that emphasize the value that older adults contribute to society:[[8]](#footnote-8)

* “Experienced”
* “Wise”
* “Knowledgeable”

Additionally, considerable attention has recently been given to discussion of national and international demographic shifts, where older adults increasingly make up a larger percentage of the population.[[9]](#footnote-9) Terms that equate these population shifts with natural disasters are common, but also perpetuate stereotypes of older adults as unproductive and harmful to society.[[10]](#footnote-10) Authors should avoid terms like population “tsunami,” or “tidal wave,” and frame population shifts in less disparaging terms (e.g., “as individuals continue to live longer and healthier lives…”).[[11]](#footnote-11)

## Caregiving and Senior Housing

Discussions of older individuals are often connected to discussions of senior housing and caregiving for older adults. These conversations are currently of particular interest because of rapidly shifting population demographics and accompanying social changes. Place and community are strongly connected to ideas of identity and belonging. Furthermore, many older adults maintain important aspects of their independence regardless of the setting in which they live. All older adults are deserving of respect regardless of the type of housing they occupy.

As such, terms to be avoided include:[[12]](#footnote-12)

* “Old folks home”
* “Convalescent home”
* “Institution”
* “Facility”

There are many different types of living accommodations for older adults. Authors are encouraged to be specific in the terms they use and avoid conflating terms. Some common types of housing for older adults include:

* **“Nursing home”:** A private institution providing residential accommodations with healthcare services. There are different types of facilities that provide nursing and other medical care, with varying levels of intensity (including, for example, skilled nursing facilities, which provide a high level of specialized medical care).[[13]](#footnote-13)
* **“Assisted living”:** Generally refers to independent, apartment-style living with options for additional assistance with daily living tasks and access to some nursing care.[[14]](#footnote-14)
* **“Independent senior living”** or **“independent retirement community”:** Generally refers to independent, apartment-style or cottage-style living with access to convenient services and activities, but tailored to individuals who do not require daily nursing care or assistance with daily living.[[15]](#footnote-15)

## Older Age and Disability

Older individuals are more likely to experience disability than other age groups[[16]](#footnote-16) and it is important to recognize the overlap between these communities. It is important to recognize that language regarding disability within the context of aging may be interpreted differently by older adults, and the self-defining goals of older individuals with disabilities may not be the same as for the broader disability community. Disability experienced by older adults may be the result of health issues that are associated with older age.[[17]](#footnote-17) Due to harmful and dismissive stereotypes associated with older age, many older adults prefer people-first rather than identity-first language when speaking about age-related disabilities.[[18]](#footnote-18)

In particular, older adults are disproportionately impacted by dementia and associated medical conditions, including Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases.[[19]](#footnote-19) Dementia is an umbrella term that describes a collection of *symptoms* that interfere with an individual’s ability to function and perform everyday activities.[[20]](#footnote-20) It is not a medical diagnosis in and of itself. When speaking about individuals with dementia, authors are encouraged to be specific, accurate, and respectful in their use of language.

Terms to be avoided include:[[21]](#footnote-21)

* “Demented”
* “Senile”
* “Empty shell”
* “Not all there”
* “Fading away”
* “Dotty”
* “A couple of cents short” (and other derogatory euphemisms)
* “Losing their mind”
* “Crazy”
* “Nuts”

Instead, authors should consider:[[22]](#footnote-22)

* “Persons living with dementia”
* “Persons with Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia”
* Descriptions of specific symptoms, when relevant

# Asian and Pacific Islander Communities

*RLSC encourages authors to specify to which Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities they are referring, instead of referring to API itself as a monolithic group. The cultural heterogeneity within these communities reveals diverse experiences have “significant implications for the lived experiences of different members of these many communities, which is why aggregate statistics on their socioeconomic health — and other indicators, for that matter — often mask more than they reveal.”**[[23]](#footnote-23) When referring to a person or specific community, authors should adhere to the self-identification of those individuals. Authors should also be mindful when using the phrase “Asian American” or “Asian-American,” as “hyphenated identities” have varying connotations (see below).*

The following entries are based on information from the Diversity Style Guide and the Asian American Journalists Association’s Handbook.[[24]](#footnote-24)

## Asian

Writers should be cautious when using this term. It is a term as broad as European. In the United States, ethnic groups such as Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and others would be known as South Asians. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean people often prefer to be known as East Asians. Burmese (Myanmars), Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Pilipinx, Rohingya, Singaporean, Thai, and Vietnamese often prefer to be known as Southeast Asians. Whenever possible, authors should specify which region of Asia they are referring to.[[25]](#footnote-25)

## Asian American, Asian-American

Form the noun without the hyphen, as in “French Canadian.” In compound phrases, where the term is used as an adjective, a hyphen may be used, as in “French-Canadian folklore.” So, too, with nationalities, e.g., “Pakistani American.”

Some Asian Americans see a pejorative connotation to Asian-American with a hyphen, in part because of Theodore Roosevelt’s denunciation early in the 20th century of “hyphenated Americans” who do not join the American mainstream.[[26]](#footnote-26) “[H]yphens serve to divide even as they are meant to connect. Their use in racial and ethnic identifiers can connote an otherness, a sense that people of color are somehow not full citizens or fully American: part American, sure, but also something *not* American.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

## East Asian

Ethnic groups from China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia are known as “East Asian.”[[28]](#footnote-28) People of Okinawan and Taiwanese descent also fall within this category.[[29]](#footnote-29)

## Filipino/Pilipinx

“Filipino” refers to an inhabitant of the Philippines, the former Spanish possession and American colony. Some Filipino Americans prefer “Pilipino/x” because Tagalog (pronounced tuh-GAW-lug), the leading dialect of the Philippines, lacks an “F” sound.[[30]](#footnote-30) However, other Philippine languages do contain an F sound.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Filipinos are not part of the Latinx community (unless they are mixed race) and Philippine languages are not gendered[[32]](#footnote-32) like Spanish, in which a person’s gender is based on the last letter of their name. Spain’s rule introduced the idea of gendered terms to Filipinos.

Donna Denina of Gabriela Seattle describes the term Filipino as: “born out of a nationalized unity to fight against a common oppressor. Before Spanish colonization, you were either Cebuano, Papangueno, Ilocano, Aeta, Manobo, Igorot, etc. etc. [Filipinos] were people, living among a cluster of 7,000 islands, with unique dialects, cultures, and experiences. The Philippines, a colony of Spain, named after the late King Philip II, went through a series of naming conventions by colonizers and so called ‘expeditionists’ in search of gold and spice and more lands to extract of their natural resources. It was the ‘indios’, the people themselves, who came together under a common national identity as Filipino, to unite the masses and engage in revolution. It is therefore, revolutionary to identify as Filipino.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

Nevertheless, the term Filipinx has been adopted by a movement to create space for and acknowledge genderqueer members of the Filipin\* diaspora.[[34]](#footnote-34) Authors should be encouraged to use the terminology self-identified by the individuals to whom they are referring and to utilize footnotes to explain their own choice of terms.

## Pacific Islander

The term “Pacific Islander” applies to people with origins from Fiji, Guam, Hawaii, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Samoa, Tahiti, and Tonga. The category can be subdivided into four subsets: Melanesians, Micronesians, Polynesians, and other Pacific Islanders.[[35]](#footnote-35)

While activists have formed coalition movements under the Asian and Pacific Islander (API) header, a common critique of the United States government lumping API communities together is that the category obfuscates the lived experiences of Pacific Islanders because they make up a relatively small percentage of the API category.[[36]](#footnote-36)

## South Asian

Ethnic groups from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are known as “South Asian.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

## South Asian Diaspora

Because of the British colonial legacy and large-scale immigration, there are substantial pockets of people of South Asian heritage outside of South Asia. In some cases—Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago—South Asians make up at least a third of the population. Other countries with large South Asian communities include: Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States.[[38]](#footnote-38)

## Southeast Asian

“Southeast Asian” typically refers to ethnic groups from Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Though the media and scholarly writings often combine Southeast Asians with East Asians and refer to them both as East Asians, this is not ideal practice. East Asian is often colloquially used as shorthand for only the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, not Vietnamese, Cambodians, or people from other countries in Southeast Asia.[[39]](#footnote-39) Therefore, using East Asian to refer to people from Southeast Asia would at best confuse readers as to which ethnic groups the author is referring and at worst, cause ethnic groups from Southeast Asia to be completely missing from the reader’s understanding of the author’s article. Whenever an author alludes to people from the Southeast Asia region, the author should be explicit and refer to them as Southeast Asians.

## Taiwan

Caution on description. Taiwan is an island off the southeastern coast of China. Officially it is a province of China, but this fact is disputed by the Taiwanese government. Continuing tension exists among China and the rest of the world on how to describe its status (it does not have a permanent representative to the United Nations, for example).[[40]](#footnote-40)

# Black Communities

*It is RLSC policy to capitalize “Black” and keep “white” in lowercase. “Black” and “white” should only be used as an adjective, not a noun. When an individual or group of individuals prefers a term other than “Black,” such as “African American,” that choice should be honored. In any case, authors should provide a footnote to explain their choice of terminology.*

## Capitalize Black, but Don’t Capitalize white

RLSC capitalizes Black and lowercases white in order to subvert and challenge white supremacy. Though other publications do not follow this rule, RLSC does so to follow the will of the community.[[41]](#footnote-41) For reference, below are the policies of other style guides, which may be helpful in discussions with authors.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Publication** | **Policy** |
| Diversity Style Guide | Capitalize both Black and White when used in a racial context |
| Essence Magazine | Capitalize Black |
| Ebony Magazine | Capitalize Black |
| Chicago Defender | Capitalize Black |
| Associated Press Style Guide | Lowercase both white and black |
| New York Times Style Guide | Lowercase both white and black |
| National Association of Black Journalists Style Guide | Lowercase both white and black |
| Chicago Manual of Style | Black is capitalized if it is the author’s preference |

## Black or black as a Noun

People are people, not colors. The term “Black” (and “white” for that matter) should not be used as a noun to refer to a person or group of people. Instead, use “Black person” or “Black people.”

In the National Association of Black Journalists’ (NABJ) Style Guide entry for “African, African America, black,” the association recommends that writers “aim to use black as an adjective, not a noun. Also, when describing a group, use black people instead of just blacks. In headlines, blacks, however, is acceptable.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

## Black vs. African American

Though rare in legal scholarship, efforts should be made to ask any individual person identified in an article—such as a plaintiff or someone involved in a media case—what they prefer. For references to the community, the author is encouraged to explain their choice in a footnote.

In their Style Guide entry for “African, African American, black,” the NABJ recommends that writers:

[h]yphenate when using African American as an adjective. Not all black people are African Americans (if they were born outside of the United States). Let a subjects [sic] preference determine which term to used. In a story in which race is relevant and there is no stated preference for an individual or individuals, use black because it is an accurate description of race. Be as specific as possible in honoring preferences, as in Haitian American, Jamaican American or (for a non-U.S. citizen living in the United States) Jamaican living in America.[[43]](#footnote-43)

The *Diversity Style Guide*’s entry for “African American, African-American, Black, black” directly cites language from the NABJ style guide included above. In addition, it states:

People in the United States who share a lineage that can be traced directly or indirectly to Africa. Black and African American do not necessarily mean the same thing and individuals may prefer one term over the other. It’s best to ask. Gallup has found since 1991 that half to two-thirds of African-American and Black respondents have not had a preference. Some Black people do not identify as African American. This lineage, while collective, contains a diverse array of histories, cultures and experiences. This includes, but is not limited to, Black, African-American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino and African immigrants living in the United States. Jesse Jackson popularized the term African American, which had already existed, in the 1980s. It mirrors hyphenated names for other American groups. Some people may identify themselves as African American to resist Black as a socially constructed category. Others may identify this way to assert their American identity. There are many reasons one might identify as African American. Some people may identify as Black because they do not feel connected to the American state. Others may identify as Black because they do not identify with the African continent. There are various historical, social and political reasons why one might prefer to identify as Black. The term has historically connected people of African descent around the world and was revived during the Black Power Movement. Black and then African American replaced older terms such as Colored and Negro imposed by others. Self-identification might reflect feelings about origin, affiliation, colonialism, enslavement and cultural dispossession . . .[[44]](#footnote-44)

Two essays and a focus group-style video offer individual perspectives:

I don’t see my preference for being called a black American as a way of denying or distancing myself from my genetic African heritage. Rather, I believe it acknowledges the similarities that *do* extend to all black people—in spite of our differences—as black *people*: the prejudices we can face from nonblacks (from police brutality to skewed standards of beauty) to the cultural influences we share with one another, like the aesthetic notion of ‘black cool,’ traced to West Africa and translated more recently into black American art.[[45]](#footnote-45)

From the second essay:

It’s time we descendants of slaves brought to the United States let go of the term “African American” and go back to calling ourselves Black— with a capital B . . .

But we need a way of sounding those notes with a term that, first, makes some sense and, second, does not insult the actual African Americans taking their place in our country. And our name must also celebrate our history here, in the only place that will ever be our home. To term ourselves as part “African” reinforces a sad implication: that our history is basically slave ships, plantations, lynching, fire hoses in Birmingham, and then South Central, and that we need to look back to Mother Africa to feel good about ourselves.

. . . Meanwhile, the special value of “Black” is that it carries the same potent combination of pride, remembrance and regret that “African American” was designed for. Think of what James Brown meant with “Say it loud, I’m Black and I’m proud.” And then imagine: “Say it loud, I’m African American and I’m proud.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

In the focus-group style video,[[47]](#footnote-47) five of the six people featured identified as Black, and one identified as African American (and sometimes as “Ghanaian American”). Participants discussed the tension between African immigrants and U.S.-born Black people, and how that can affect the preferred label:

* “Black is beautiful and I’ve always just found strength in the word.”
* “I mean me personally, I just feel like African American is a label that was created for us.”
* “I’m not from Africa directly so I don’t feel like I should label myself as an African American.”
* “I think for some people it just feels wrong to hearken back to something that they now unfortunately don’t have a connection to.”
* “I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that term. I think it just depends on where you are in finding yourself and your ancestry.”
* “I sometimes refer to myself as Ghanaian American, just because, I mean that is what I am. African American is still such a wide and broad term.”

# Class

*At this time, RLSC does not have a policy on a preferred term among “poor,” “low-income” or measures of income relative to the poverty line (further discussion on this point below). Authors should be encouraged to explain their choice.*

## Tips on Writing About Class

* “*Class*” refers to a group of people: a single person is not a class (but may belong to it). If you cannot avoid using the term ‘class,’ use it as a noun, not an adjective: e.g., Jessica belongs to the upper class NOT Jessica is upper class.
* *Avoid using terms like “high class” or “low class*,” or even “upper class” or “lower class,” because they have been used historically in an evaluative way. Also avoid “low brow” and “high brow.” Instead, when using adjectives like “high” or “low,” it is preferable to use the term “high” or “low socioeconomic status” so as to avoid judgmental language.
* The word “*status*” (without the qualifier of “socioeconomic”) is not interchangeable with “class” because status can refer to other measures, such as popularity.
* *When possible, use specific metrics*: common ones include level of educational attainment, occupation, income. Use specific language that describes what is important to the analysis/discussion: *ex., living below the poverty line NOT poor.*
* *Be aware of numbers*: there are no distinct indicators of “high” and “low,” but there are percentages that make it easy to determine, via income bracket for example, where on a range an individual falls.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Descriptors: Poor vs. Low-Income vs. Income Relative to the Poverty Line

There has been at least some debate over the use of these terms. Some believe that the term “poor” does not properly consider the strengths of economically under-resourced communities. One response has been to use the term “financially poor.” Others have written that desensitizing language from poor to low-income is more to satisfy the author’s discomfort,[[49]](#footnote-49) rather than to address a discomfort with the term poor from individuals who consider themselves to be a member of that class. Still others, some of whom are members of that class, believe the term poor carries a stigma and should be avoided.[[50]](#footnote-50)

“Low-income” is often used when talking specifically about policies or practices that impact people based on their income level, rather than other aspects of poverty (such as access to various institutions). For example, the Southern Poverty Law Center utilizes both “poor” and “low-income” in discussing their economic justice work.[[51]](#footnote-51) Critiques of “low-income” include that it may come across as a classist sanitation and that it does not refer to wealth. Therefore, it may be misleading as wealthy people may qualify as low-income, or it may not capture the effects of wealth on class. Authors might consider discussing net worth too and incorporating the use of the term “low-net worth” into their analysis.

As an alternative to poor or low-income, authors may also consider measures of income relative to the poverty line, a measure which itself is critiqued by many as an arbitrary and outdated measure of poverty, but which is at least quantifiable.[[52]](#footnote-52)

## Socioeconomic Status & Education

In addition to income and wealth, education is an important component of class. Educational opportunity, quality, and achievement interfaces with class and impact aspirations and one’s career.[[53]](#footnote-53)

RLSC encourages authors and editors to critically engage with these concepts, while being mindful not to:

* conflate education with economic situation/occupation or intelligence/ability
  + e.g., “if x person were smarter, they wouldn’t be a mechanic/waitress/porter, etc.”

* suggest that someone work hard to avoid working in certain occupations
  + e.g., secretary, garbage person; etc.
* propose education levels as a measure of success and call individuals “under/uneducated”
* assume that diet, housing or clothing are always a choice
* assume that children need to be rescued from economically blockaded neighborhoods
* pass judgment on those who behave in ways that many academics frown upon or  describe as illogical, e.g., playing the lottery

Instead, distinguish economic worth from other values.

## Racially Motivated Class Descriptions

Racially motivated class descriptions including “white trash” perpetuate harmful stereotypes of people of color and poor white people and should be avoided unless it is in a quotation, and even then, authors are encouraged to explain the use of hateful and harmful terminology.[[54]](#footnote-54)

# Criminal Legal System

*RLSC does not, at this time, have a position on the terms “criminal legal system” or “criminal justice system.” Authors are encouraged to explain their choice of either term in a footnote.*

## Criminal Legal System vs. Criminal Justice System

Some advocates prefer “criminal legal system” to “criminal justice system” because they feel that justice is absent from the current system. RLSC has not formally adopted either usage. It may be worth explaining in a footnote the author’s decision to use either term.

## Person-first Language

It dehumanizes individuals who have been placed in jail or convicted of crimes to refer to them as “inmates,” “convicts,” “prisoners,” “felons,” “offenders,” or “ex-cons.”[[55]](#footnote-55) Avoid these terms in favor of terms such as “people on parole,” “people in prison,” “people with criminal convictions,” or “people recently released from prison.”

# Disability

*When writing about disabilities, authors should do their best to adhere to the self-identification of those individuals and their preference for person-first or identity-first language. When writing about a group of individuals with disabilities, authors should be encouraged to explain their choice in a footnote. Furthermore, people with disabilities are not a monolithic group and authors should carefully consider the scope of their articles and use the most appropriate degree of specificity. Authors should be mindful not to use ableist phrases in euphemistic ways or to employ terminology related to disability that is widely considered offensive by people with disabilities. Authors are also discouraged from writing from a perspective of “them” versus “us,” and to remember that for many people, disability identity is not fixed.*

## Identity-first vs. People-first Language

One of the most significant debates in the disability community is how to refer to a person and their disability. Is it “disabled person” (identity-first language) or “person with a disability” (people-first language)?[[56]](#footnote-56)

Advocates for **people-first language**[[57]](#footnote-57) believe that it maintains the individuality of the person rather than defining them by their disability. They believe that people-first language emphasizes the person’s worth and abilities and puts the person before the diagnosis or the label. In their view, a diagnosis is not an identity, it’s just a helpful tool to find treatment options.

Advocates for **identity-first language**[[58]](#footnote-58) believe that people-first language implies that disabilities are shameful or negative and minimizes the impact they have on people’s lives. Some people believe that person-first language separates people from their disability that they think is a key part of their identity, and indeed feel pride in their belonging to the disability community. Many other identity groups use identity-first language and believe that insistence on using person-first language might separate disability from other social identities.

Whenever possible, the best practice is to ask the person how they prefer to be identified. When referring to a large group of people or a particular community within the disability umbrella, research how the community prefers to identify. For example, the Deaf community uses identity-first language (Deaf with a capital D, as opposed to deaf the medical condition, which they write with a lowercase d). Meanwhile, many mental health advocacy groups encourage people-first language. There is a near consensus that person-first language should be used to describe people with paraplegia, quadriplegia, psychosis or a psychotic condition and schizophrenia. Person-first language should also be used when describing someone with dementia and someone in a comatose state. Identity-first language us often preferred by members of the disability community that believe their disability impacts the way they perceive or interact with the world. When a consensus is not available, authors should explain either choice in a footnote.

## Offensive versus Preferred Terms

Language regarding disabilities has changed over time. Many terms that were once used (and in some cases, are still used) colloquially and by the medical and legal community are now considered offensive. Though language preferences are always evolving, there is a near consensus that the words listed below, partially excerpted from the National Center on Disability and Journalism,[[59]](#footnote-59) are inappropriate outside of direct quotes in most circumstances:

**Offensive: “able-bodied”**

Refers to a person who does not have a disability. The term implies that all people with disabilities lack “able bodies” or the ability to use their bodies well.

* Acceptable use: “Able-bodied” is an appropriate term to use in some cases, such as government reports on the proportion of abled-bodied members in the workforce.

**Preferred: “non-disabled,” “does not have a disability,” or “is not living with disability”**

**Offensive: “abnormal”**

“Abnormal” is inappropriate when used to describe an individual.

* Acceptable use: The words “abnormal” or “abnormality” are acceptable in the medical context when describing scientific phenomena, such as abnormalities in brain function.

**Preferred: “atypical”**

Note that somein the disability community object to its use.

**Offensive: “addict/addicted”**

Substance addiction should be recognized as a medical condition, not a moral one. Authors should therefore avoid terms that reduce people to their struggles with addiction or those that perpetuate stigmas against these individuals. Generally, authors should use person-first language as described above when talking about people with addictions. For example, authors should not refer to someone as a “heroin addict,” but as “someone with a heroin addiction.”

**Preferred: “someone with a drug addiction”**

**Offensive: “afflicted with”; “stricken with,” “suffers from,” “victim of”**

“Afflicted with” implies that a person with a disability is suffering or has a reduced quality of life.

**Preferred: use neutral, specific language to describe the disability**

**Offensive: “alcoholic”**

See description for “addict” above and note that the same preference for person-first language applies.

**Preferred: “someone with alcoholism”**

**Offensive: “confined to a wheelchair” or “wheelchair bound”**

This expression simplistically and inaccurately describes a person only in relationship to a piece of equipment that is designed to liberate rather than confine. For many, wheelchairs offer mobility, freedom, and independence.

**Preferred: “someone who uses a wheelchair,” “wheelchair rider,” or “wheelchair-user”**

Where appropriate, follow this terminology with an explanation of why the equipment is required.

**Offensive: “crazy,” “deranged,” “insane,” “loony,” “nuts,” or “psycho”**

**Preferred: Use neutral language**

If describing someone experiencing“**active psychosis**”say that.[[60]](#footnote-60) Otherwise consider terms such as“**wild**,” “**confusing**,” “**unpredictable**,” “**impulsive**,” “**reckless**,” “**fearless**,” “**lives on the edge**,” “**thrill-seeker**,” “**risk-taker**,”or “**out of control**,”to describe people and their actions without using offensive terms often used to describe someone with a mental illness.

**Offensive: “deaf and dumb/deaf-mute”**

Avoid these terms, as they are often used inaccurately and can be offensive. It is acceptable to refer to someone as deaf/Deaf or hard of hearing. If possible, ask the person which is preferable. Mute and dumb imply that communication is not possible.

**Preferred: Be as specific about the individual’s condition as possible**

If someone uses American Sign Language, lip- reads or uses other means to communicate, state that.

**Offensive: “defect,” “defective,” “birth defect,” “genetic defect”**

Avoid these terms when describing a disability because they imply the person is somehow incomplete or sub-par.

**Preferred: “condition” or state the nature of the impairment.**

**Offensive: “fit” or “epileptic fit”**

**Preferred: “seizure”**

**Offensive: “handicapped”**

Avoid using “handicap” and “handicapped” when describing a person.

**Preferred: Refer to the person’s specific condition**

When describing things, use“**accessible**”—e.g.,“accessible parking.”

**Offensive: “insane/mentally deranged”**

* Acceptable use: in a quote or when referring to a criminal defense.

**Preferred: “mental disorder,” “mental illness,” “neurodiverse”**

**Offensive: “invalid” or “lame”**

“Invalid” is such a general term that it fails to accurately describe a person’s condition and is now widely viewed as offensive in that it implies that a person lacks abilities. Some people object to the use of “lame” to describe a physical condition because it is used in colloquial English as a synonym for weak.

**Preferred: “person with a disability.”**

In the case of a leg injury, explain instead that an injury resulted in difficulty walking.

**Offensive: “mentally retarded,” “retarded,” “idiot,” “imbecile,” and “moron”**

The terms “mentally retarded,” “retard,” and “mental retardation” were once common terms that are now considered outdated and offensive.

* Acceptable use: At times, terms like “mental retard,” idiot,” “imbecile,” and “moron” may be appropriate because of the article’s historical context. In those cases, attribute the term or note’s historic use. For example, “The doctor said he was retarded, a term widely used at the time.”

**Preferred: Always try to specify the type of disability being referenced.**

If the person’s specific disability is unknown, use the terms “person with a mental disability,” “intellectual disability” and “developmental disability” are acceptable. To replace colloquial uses of these terms, consider “**uninformed**,” “**impulsive**,” “**ignorant**,” or “**risky**.”

\*Note, however, that mental disability, intellectual disability, developmental disability and cognitive disability are not interchangeable (though there may be instances in which two or more of those terms apply) and you should make sure the term being used is an accurate description of the disability.

* “**Cognitive disability**” generally refers to any disability that affects mental processing. Often used as a synonym for intellectual disability. Cognitive disabilities may include ADHD, Alzheimer’s, Down Syndrome, learning disabilities, and Traumatic Brain Injuries.
* “**Developmental disability**” can include a long-term physical or cognitive/intellectual disability, or both. These disabilities may be present at birth or appear during childhood before the age of 22. Developmental disabilities include Autism Spectrum Disorders, Cerebral Palsy, and Down Syndrome. While it is acceptable to use the term “developmental disability,” it is preferable to use the name of the specific disability whenever possible.
* “**Intellectual disability**” is a disability involving significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills. There is debate over how significant IQ tests are in making a diagnosis. Intellectual disabilities develop in individuals before the age of 18 and affect cognitive abilities.
* “**Mental disability**” may encompass mental illness, intellectual disability, and developmental disabilities involving the brain.

Please note that it is possible for individuals to have a dual diagnosis of developmental and intellectual disabilities or mental health disorders and intellectual disabilities.

**Offensive: “midget”**

The term was used in the past to describe an unusually short person. It is now widely considered derogatory.

* Note: The terms “**little people**” and “**little person**”refer to people of short stature and have come into common use since the founding of the Little People of America organization in 1957. The appropriateness of the terms is disputed by those within and outside of the organization.

**Preferred: “someone with dwarfism” (when referring to the genetic condition or medical diagnosis[[61]](#footnote-61)) or “someone of short stature”**

* It is acceptable to use the word “**dwarf**” when referring to the genetic condition, but it is often considered offensive when used in a non-medical sense.[[62]](#footnote-62)

**Offensive: “spastic” or a “spaz”**

These offensive terms are sometimes used to describe a temporary loss of physical or emotional control.

**Preferred: “spastic cerebral palsy”**

This is the medical term that should be used to describe anyone with this condition.

**Offensive: “vegetative state,” “vegetable,” and “veg”**

“Vegetative state” is used to describe an unconscious person with little to no awareness of their environment. The term is considered dehumanizing and should be avoided.

**Preferred: “Comatose” or “non-responsive.”**

Always try to use precise medical terminology. It is also acceptable to describe the condition, e.g., “absence of consciousness or responsiveness” or “exhibited no awareness of their surroundings.” Patients may still exhibit some involuntary movements. A patient may also be in a “minimally conscious state.”[[63]](#footnote-63)

## Euphemisms and Disability

Euphemistic language is generally not preferred by the disability community and should be avoided unless the person to whom the author is referring specifically requests such language be used—in which case, the author should explain the language choice in a footnote. Such language is frequently used because of non-disabled people’s discomfort with disability. It is condescending and serves to further stigmatize disabled people.

As Lydia X.Z. Brown states in her blog, Autistic Hoya, when discussing the term differently- abled: “It suggests that the term disability *should* be uncomfortable and therefore should be avoided. What this does is further increase stigma against disabled people by discouraging discussion about disability and what it means to be disabled.”[[64]](#footnote-64)

Some examples of euphemisms to avoid include:

* “Challenged”
* “Differently-abled”
* “Handicapable”
* “Special” (outside of the special education context)
* “Special needs”

## Terms Used as an Alternative to Disability

The following terms are only to be used if requested by the subject themselves. If so, the author should explain that request in a footnote. The terms disabled or disability should not be avoided unless necessary (see above re: euphemisms).[[65]](#footnote-65)

* “Differently-abled”
* “Neurodiversity”- The Oxford dictionary defines neurodiversity as “the range of  differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits, regarded as part of the normal variation in the human population (used especially in the context of autism spectrum disorders).” The word was coined in the late 1990s. While there is an advocacy movement around this concept, see above re: *euphemisms*).
* “(Dis)Ability”
* “Functional Difference”

## Addiction

As with many other conditions discussed in this section, substance addiction should be recognized as a medical condition, not a moral one.[[66]](#footnote-66) Authors should therefore avoid terms that reduce people to their struggles with addiction or those that perpetuate stigmas against these individuals.

Generally, authors should use person-first language as described above when talking about  people with addictions. For example, authors should not refer to someone as a “heroin addict,” but as “someone with a heroin addiction.”

**Phrases to Avoid[[67]](#footnote-67)**

**Offensive: “abuser,” “addict,” “alcoholic,” “drunk,” “junkie,” and “user”**

These terms tend to imply voluntary wrongdoing that can be controlled and perpetuate negative stigmas. Calling someone a “drug user” or “addict” also implies that the whole person can be defined and identified solely by their condition.

**Preferred: “person with a substance/alcohol use disorder”**

Using person-first language suggests that the person has a problem that can be addressed.

**Offensive: “clean, “dirty”**

These terms attach moral judgments to medical conditions and reinforce stigmas toward people with substance use disorders. With regard to drug test results, these terms are also considered derogatory as they equate symptoms of illness to “filth.”

**Preferred: “not currently/actively using substances,” “substance free,” or “currently using substances”**

These are non-problematic ways to describe individuals’ statuses.

**Offensive: “drug problem,” “drug habit”**

These are offensive terms to describe the impairments caused by repeated misuses of a substance.

**Preferred: “Substance use disorder”**

Thisis the clinically accepted term.

**Offensive: “former alcoholic/addict”**

See above under “clean” and “dirty” for similar concerns.

**Preferred: “person in recovery”**

This phrase is usedto describe individuals who are not using substances or who are reducing their substance use to a safe level.

## How to refer to a person with a mental illness

“Person with a mental illness” is not universally preferred. There are some sectors of the mental health community that reject the label “mental illness” altogether. Some accept the diagnosis but prefer other terms. The preferred and not preferred terms are summarized below:

**Offensive: “Patient” (outside of medical settings), “afflicted with,” “crippled with,” “suffers from,” “victim of,” “stricken with”**

These phrases pass a negative judgment on what it is like to have a mental illness.

**Preferred by at least one contingency:**

* “Consumer”
* “Person with lived experience”
* “Person with a mental illness”
* “Mentally ill” (Usually only used if the person identifies this way)
* “Neurodiverse”

**Offensive: “crazy,” “crazed,” “cuckoo,” “deranged,” “lunatic,” “maniac,” “nuts,” “psycho,” “schizo,” or “wacko”**

These are offensive terms often colloquially used to describe someone with a mental illness.

**Preferred: “wild,” “confusing,” “unpredictable,” “impulsive,” “reckless,” “fearless,” “lives on the edge,” “thrill-seeker,” “risk-taker,” or “out of control”**

These and similar terms can be used to describe people and their actions without using offensive terms.

## Crip Pride

The word “cripple” or “crip” has been reclaimed by some members of the disability community.[[68]](#footnote-68) However, it should only be used at the request of a person with a disability who identifies that way or in reference to the community or movement itself.

## Mad Pride

The Mad Pride Movement is a group of people who have been diagnosed with serious mental illnesses but refuse treatment and take pride in their inability to fit within a neurological binary that presents “normal” and “abnormal” as polar opposites.[[69]](#footnote-69)

## Suicide

When talking about suicide, it is important to use language that is non-judgmental and accurate.

**Offensive: “committed suicide” or “killed themselves”**

Some believe that the term “committed suicide” suggests a criminal intent. “Kill” and “murder” are triggering and judgmental and therefore should be avoided.

**Preferred: “death by suicide,” “died by suicide,” “suicide,” or “suicide death”**

Mental health advocates prefer the terminology “died by suicide” in order to remove the culpability from the person who has lost their life. This is non-judgmental and consistent with how we describe other types of death—e.g., died from cancer, died in a car accident.

**Offensive: “failure,” “unsuccessful,” or “incomplete”**

These terms are inaccurate, and the terms below more accurately reflect the nature of the event.

**Preferred: “non-fatal suicide attempt” or “suicide attempt”**

Both of these terms more accurately and appropriately reflect that event.

Right to Die/Death with Dignity/Physician-Assisted Death**[[70]](#footnote-70)**

There is significant debate regarding the appropriate terms to use when discussing this issue within the disability rights context, and RLSC takes no position on this issue. Authors are encouraged to explain language choices in a footnote. It is important to note, however, that while attitudes surrounding this issue are evolving and many people with disabilities now support the right to die, the majority view within the disability rights community is that such legislation encourages the view that disabled lives are not worth living and because of that, many oppose such legislation. While proponents of the right to die typically prefer to use the terms “right to die” or “death with dignity,” many disability advocates may prefer terms like “physician-assisted suicide” or “physician-assisted death.”

## Using Disability Language to Describe Non-Disability Experiences

Lydia X.Z. Brown notes that “ableist language is utterly pervasive both in everyday colloquy and formal idiom with hardly any notice or acknowledgement.”[[71]](#footnote-71) Words with a history specific to disability should not be used to describe non-disability experiences. Authors should avoid these kind of microaggressions in an effort to dismantle causal ableism.

**Offensive: “blind to\_\_\_/turn a blind eye to\_\_\_,” “blinded by ignorance/bigotry/etc.,” “blindsided by,” or “double blind review”**

Refers to blind, low-vision, or sight-limited people. Often used as a metaphor.

**Preferred: “willfully ignorant,” “deliberately ignoring.,” “turning their back on,” “had every reason to know,” or “feigned ignorance”**[[72]](#footnote-72)

**Offensive**: “**deaf to \_\_\_/turn a deaf ear to\_\_\_**”

Refers to Deaf or hard of hearing people. Often used as a metaphor.

**Preferred**: “**willfully ignorant**,” “**deliberately ignoring**,” “**turning their back on**,” “**had every reason to know**,”or “**feigned ignorance**”[[73]](#footnote-73)

**Offensive**: “**psychopath(ic)**”

Refers to people with psychiatric illness. Often used metaphorically.

**Preferred**: “**self-centered**,” “**selfish**,” “**callous**,” “**toxic**,” “**manipulative**,” “**egotistical**,” “**abusive**,” “**wild**,” “**confusing**,” “**unpredictable**,” “**fearless**” or “**thrill-seeker**”

**Offensive**: “**spaz(zed)**”

Refers to people with cerebral palsy or other similar neurological disabilities.

**Preferred**: “**klutz(y**),” “**clumsy**,” “**forgetful**” or “**impulsive**”

# Gender

*RLSC’s policy is to use either “she” or the singular “they” as the generic pronoun. Pronoun choice should be consistent throughout articles when possible.*

*When applicable, we encourage authors to acknowledge that the issue they are discussing does not just affect cisgender individuals, either through the use of gender-neutral pronouns when gender-identity is not relevant to the particular sentence, or through a footnote. RLSC also asks authors to think critically before using “woman” or “female” as a modifier. Finally, the journal requires proper usage of the terms described in the introduction of this section. We encourage authors to explain these terms in text or in a footnote.*

*The following entries are a conglomeration of information from resources provided by GLAAD and the UC Davis LGBTQIA+ Resource Center.[[74]](#footnote-74)*

## Glossary

**“Cisgender”**

A term used by some to describe people who are not transgender.

**“Gender Expression”**

External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person’s name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, and/or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to align their gender expression with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.[[75]](#footnote-75)

**“Gender Fluid”**

An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identification and presentation shifts, whether within or outside of societal gender-based expectations, fluidly in motion between two or more genders.

**“Gender Identity”**

A person’s internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Some people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices. For example, there are people who identify as non- binary and/or genderqueer. Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not visible to others.

**“Gender Non-conforming”**

An adjective used to describe a person whose gender expression differs from traditional general expression/stereotypes. Note that not all gender non-conforming people are transgender, and not all transgender people are gender non-conforming.

**“Genderqueer or Non-binary”**

An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity and/or gender expression falls outside of the dominant societal norm for their assigned sex, is beyond genders, or is some combination of them. People who are genderqueer or non-binary may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. These terms are not synonyms for transgender or transsexual.

**“Sex”**

The classification of a person as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy (this is what is written on the birth certificate). A person’s sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics that include chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics. People may use the term “gender” distinctly from the term “sex.” It is important that our articles reflect the differences in these terms.[[76]](#footnote-76)

## Using the Singular “They” as the Default Pronoun

RLSC’s policy is to use either “she” or the singular “they” as the generic pronoun. Pronoun choice should be consistent throughout articles when possible.

Using they as the default pronoun conforms with common English usage and as the *Washington Post*’s Bill Walsh explained, the singular they is “the only sensible solution to English’s lack of a gender-neutral third-person singular personal pronoun.” When referring to a specific person, use that person’s preferred pronouns.[[77]](#footnote-77) When using the singular they, it is appropriate to use a plural verb.[[78]](#footnote-78)

A growing number of style guides and dictionaries are now supporting the use of they as a singular pronoun in at least some capacity. *The Associated Press Stylebook* now approves the usage of “they” as a singular pronoun in certain situations as does *The Chicago Manual of Style*, the *AMA Manual of Style*, and the *Oxford Dictionary*.[[79]](#footnote-79)

Lal Zimman provides a good overview of the debate surrounding usage:

Some language activists would like to see English do away with gender pronouns entirely, many of whom advocate for the use of *they* as the singular third person pronoun for everyone, regardless of what they want to be called. This is a fairly logical extension of historical usage and the way most English speakers already use singular *they*. From this perspective, referring to someone as *they* doesn’t imply anything about that person’s self-identified pronouns.

From another perspective that is more common among trans people, everyone deserves to be referred to with the correct pronouns, including those with binary identities. For trans people (or cis people) whose pronouns are *she/her/hers* or *he/him/his*, being called *they* may feel like being misgendered, even if *they* is intended to be gender-inclusive. People who take this perspective may use *they* for people whose gender is unknown, but will switch to binary pronouns once someone has identified their pronouns as *she/her/hers* or *he/him/his*.[[80]](#footnote-80)

## Gender-neutral Language

For examples of gender-neutral language, see the following AMA chart:[[81]](#footnote-81)



## Alternative Spellings of “Women”: Wimmin, Wimyn, Womin, Womxn and Womyn

The above are alternative spellings primarily used by feminists in order to challenge the notion that women’s identities are reliant on men.[[82]](#footnote-82)

Female vs. Woman**[[83]](#footnote-83)**

RLSC asks authors to think critically before using “woman” or “female” as a modifier. As an introduction to the debate in this area, we first point to an article from the *Guardian* in defense of using female as a modifier:

“Erin McCann, who works for the Guardian’s US office, said: ‘The comparable male version sounds so ridiculous . . . ‘man cyclist,’ ‘man politician’, ‘man writer.’”[[84]](#footnote-84)

However, many prefer woman as a modifier because, as Deborah Tannen explains to William Safire of the *New York Times*: “Female connotes a biological category. . . . I avoid female in my own writing because it feels disrespectful, as if I’m treating the people I’m referring to as mammals but not humans.”[[85]](#footnote-85)

While there is debate over the appropriate usage of the terms “female” and “woman” in describing careers and other roles taken on by women, RLSC encourages authors to avoid the use of such modifiers whenever possible, as they can reinforce the notion that women do not belong in those roles. The same articles mentioned above highlight this view. In the *Guardian*:

There would be no real problem if we used both “woman” and “man” as modifiers, but we don’t, so the implication is that a “woman manager” is a modification of the standard or natural form, or something slightly less than the full version. . . . “Woman doctor” and the like have a whiff of discomfort and nervousness, carrying with them a sense of grudging acceptance and a quiet bewilderment that women, those delicate creatures, can and do occupy the same jobs as men.[[86]](#footnote-86)

And the *New York Times*:

The use of either woman or female with terms such as “president, speaker, doctor, professor” . . . suggests that a woman holding that position is marked — in some way unnatural, and that it is natural for men to hold it (so we never say “male doctor,” still less “man doctor”). When I first began in my job, people like me were often referred to as “woman” or “female” professors, but thankfully no more, as we have become a more normal (unmarked) part of the academic landscape. In time I trust that women presidents and female speakers will vanish in the same way. . . . Since we feel so strongly (still) that a president is necessarily male, every time we say “woman president,” we reinforce that view: that only a man can be commander in chief, symbolize the U.S. (which is metonymically Uncle Sam and not Aunt Samantha, after all) and make it harder to conceive of, and hence vote for, a woman in that role.[[87]](#footnote-87)

# Immigration

*RLSC’s policy is to use “undocumented,” “without status,” and “non-citizen” immigrant/migrant instead of dehumanizing terms like “illegal” or “alien.” We also encourage authors to consider the differences and distinguish between “migrant” and “immigrant” communities.*

## Offensive and Preferred Terms

Below is a list of offensive and preferred terms taken from *Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation’s Style Book*:[[88]](#footnote-88)

**Offensive: “illegal immigrant,” “illegal alien,” and the shorthand i-word used as a noun, “illegals” are inaccurate by legal and journalistic standards**

“Unauthorized immigrant” might also carry negative connotations especially for those who subscribe to a philosophy of “no more borders,” understand borders as a colonial construct, or come from an indigenous background where they should not have to seek “authorization” from a foreign government to access their ancestral lands.

**Preferred: “undocumented immigrant,” “immigrant without papers,” “non-citizen” and “without status”**

Authors should be careful to distinguish between “migrant” and “immigrant” workers, as not all workers identify as “immigrants”—especially if they hope to return to their country of origin. It is acceptable to use migrant or foreign national; when possible, use a specific reference to nationality (e.g., Briton, Cambodian, Canadian, Jamaican, Mexican, Pakistani).[[89]](#footnote-89)

**Offensive: “anchor baby”**

**Preferred: “citizen child of undocumented immigrants”**

**Offensive: “illegal worker”**

**Preferred: “undocumented worker”**

**Offensive: “undocumented alien”**

**Preferred: “undocumented immigrant” or “immigrants entering without inspection,” “immigrant seeking status”**

Use accurate and nuanced descriptors that are specific to the stories of the people you are writing about.

The *Diversity Style Guide* notes in discussing the use of “illegal immigrant” and other similarly offensive terms that:

“Illegal immigrant” is a term used to describe the immigration status of people who do not have the federal documentation to show they are legally entitled to work, visit or live here. People who are undocumented according to federal authorities do not have the proper visas to be in the United States legally. Many enter the country illegally, but a large number of this group initially had valid visas, but did not return to their native countries when their visas expired. . . . The term criminalizes the person rather than the actual act of illegally entering or residing in the United States without federal documents. Terms such as “illegal alien” or “illegal immigrant” can often be used pejoratively in common parlance and can pack a powerful emotional wallop for those on the receiving end. Instead, use “undocumented immigrant” or “undocumented worker,” both of which are terms that convey the same descriptive information without carrying the psychological baggage.[[90]](#footnote-90)

## Family Reunification or Family-Based Immigration

The term “chain migration” is increasingly being used in place of terms like “family reunification” or “family-based immigration” to describe immigration of family members of a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident. RLSC’s policy is to avoid the use of the term “chain migration,” which is often used in a derogatory manner and associated with a lax immigration policy pertaining to family members of citizens and legal permanent residents—a characterization that is simply not true. Family-based immigration is restricted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service to family members who fall within certain categories.[[91]](#footnote-91)

## “Alien” in Legal Statutes

Many laws still use the term “alien.” Authors should only utilize the term when citing these laws. The preferred term is “non-citizen,” “noncitizen,” or “non-U.S. citizen.” If the author is concerned about confusing readers, they should be encouraged to include a footnote explaining why “alien” is not a preferred term.

# International

*RLSC encourages authors to name the specific countries or geographic regions they are referring to whenever possible. We also encourage authors to avoid descriptors inherited from Cold War paradigms, such as “third world,” or that centers capitalism as the main comparator between countries, such as “developing” or “developed.” This language can erase the long history and sophisticated development of culture and ideas within a country by prioritizing income or production, thus feeding into capitalist narratives.*

## Developing Country, Third World Country, and Global South

RLSC does not publish articles on international law. However, if the terms “developing country,” “third world country,” or “global south,” come up in an article, authors should write a footnote explaining their choice. Critics of the terms “developing country” and “third world country” explain that both terms, to varying degrees, promote hierarchy between the nations and reinforce problematic power dynamics. Critics of the term “global south” highlight that the term is essentially devoid of meaning beyond literally describing geographic location. Some publications prefer the use of economic terms, such as “low-income” or “middle-income,” to describe countries but these terms require a certain amount of data and may be too simplistic to describe the true complexity of the nations that are being referenced.[[92]](#footnote-92)

## Using the term America to refer to the United States

Technically, all people who live in North, South, and Central America are “Americans.” Using the term “Americans” to describe people from the United States is seen as self-centered. In fact, in Spanish, the official or formal term for U.S. Americans is “estadounidenses,” which roughly translates to “United Statesers.” RLSC encourages our authors to reconsider the use of “American” to describe people, resources, or products from the United States. If one of our authors is interested in using a more specific term such as “U.S. Americans,” the journal encourages them to explain it in a footnote.

# Latinx Communities

*RLSC encourages authors to be mindful of the nuances of terms related to Latinx communities, including “Chicano” and “Hispanic.” Authors are encouraged to explain their choice between “Latinx,” “Latino/ Latina,” “Hispanic,” or other terms from the Spanish language in a footnote. When referring to a person or specific community, authors should adhere to the self-identification of those individuals. Additionally, where applicable, authors should refer specifically to the pertinent country or region of Latin America instead of referring generally to the region at large.*

## Latinx

The term “Latinx,” pronounced “La-teen-ex”, is a gender-neutral alternative to the usual gendered designation of Latino/a and Latin@. While many have found that the term is a more accurate and inclusive description of their identity, others have criticized it for promoting imperialism by imposing English on the Spanish language. One response to the latter critique is that Spanish itself was imposed on the people of the Americas through imperialism.[[93]](#footnote-93)

## Latina/Latino

Latina and Latino are umbrella terms referring to people living in the United States with Latin American ancestry. “Latina” is the feminine form of “Latino,” used to describe a woman or girl. Use Latina(s) for a woman or women; use Latino(s) for a man or men. Latino is principally used west of the Mississippi, where it has displaced Chicano[[94]](#footnote-94) and Mexican American. In 2011, the *Los Angeles Times* amended its style guide to advise journalists to use Latino over Hispanic in virtually all circumstances “in keeping with the practices and sensibilities of residents of our region.” Federal policy defines Latino not as a race, but as an ethnicity; it notes that Latinos can be of any race. The U.S. Census Bureau uses terms such as “Hispanic or Latino” and “non-Hispanic or Latino” in its survey questions on ethnicity.[[95]](#footnote-95)

Hispanic**[[96]](#footnote-96)**

An umbrella term referring to a person whose ethnic origin is in a Spanish-speaking country, as well as residents or citizens of the United States with Latin American ancestry, except for those not from a Spanish-speaking country. Federal policy defines Hispanic not as a race, but as an ethnicity; it notes that Hispanics can be of any race.

The term Hispanic is often use by some within the community as an attempt to associate themselves more closely with European or Spanish ancestry to the exclusion of indigenous and afro-latinx communities. This was a common practice inherited by the Spanish colonial caste system which still affects people today.

The term “Hispanic” is more commonly used in the Eastern United States and is generally favored by those of Caribbean and South American ancestry or origin. According to a 2013 Pew Research Center survey of Hispanic adults, 50% of respondents said they had no preference for either term. But among those who did express a preference, “Hispanic” was preferred over “Latino” by a ratio of about two to one. Among Hispanic Texans, however, 46% said they preferred the term “Hispanic,” while just 8% said they prefer the term Latino.[[97]](#footnote-97)

## Chicano/Chicana/Chicanx

Chicano/Chicana/Chicanx is specifically used to refer to people of Mexican origin living in the United States. It was historically used as a pejorative term but has since been reclaimed by some members of the Mexican American community while other more conservative members still find it offensive. The Chicano movement during the 1960s adopted these names in response to discrimination against Mexican Americans working under unfair labor and social conditions. These terms announce pride in indigenous ancestry, which was a significant ideological element of the Chicano movement. The term “Chicano” should not be considered a placeholder or alternative to Latinx, Mexican, or Mexican American or generally applied to Latinx people from other Latinx countries, as they may not identify with the specific political movement that Chicanx identity represents.[[98]](#footnote-98)

# LGBTQIA Communities

*The LGBTQIA community is not a monolith, and specific terminology should be used where appropriate. RLSC’s policy is to use the terms “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” and “trans” or “transgender” as adjectives. Authors should refrain from using “homosexual” or other terms similarly associated with homophobic and transphobic speech. We do not have a policy on using the term “queer” as a catch-all term, though authors are encouraged to explain their use of the term, given its historically derogatory usage.*

## What acronym should I use?

There are many different acronyms used to describe the community, and these are often changing. RLSC has opted for LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender including genderqueer, gender non-conforming & non-binary people, Questioning or Queer, Intersex and Asexual).[[99]](#footnote-99) Authors should be encouraged to include a footnote that explains their choice of acronym.

Another commonly used acronym adds a “-GNC” to encompass people who are gender non-conforming.[[100]](#footnote-100) Sometimes a “+” is added to encompass all other groups not explicitly included in the acronym (e.g. pansexual and GNC people). However, there are debates over many of the different letters, and often most acronyms do not include all of the letters listed above.

For example, while some include an “A” for “allies” in the acronym they select, many members of the LGBTQIA community criticize this approach, arguing that the experiences and leadership of directly impacted people should be centered, allies are not oppressed in the same way, allyship is best understood as an action rather than an identity, and including allies erases asexual or aromantic people more commonly reflected by the “A.”[[101]](#footnote-101)

The inclusion of “I” for “Intersex” is also debated.[[102]](#footnote-102) As PFLAG explains:

Many in the intersex community have shared that they don't believe they belong in the LGBTQ movement. While some “I” activists/advocates feel that intersex people have a similar history of being ignored or erased as the LGBTQ community, many feel that to add the “I” conflates two different issues: some intersex people may be LGBT, but many are young children who don't identify with any of the other distinguishers. PFLAG has always been the organization that has included parents, family members and allies together with people who identify as LGBT. There does not seem to be unanimity within the intersex community nor within the asexual community, about wanting to be included in or directly linked to the community that identifies as LGBTQ.[[103]](#footnote-103)

Lastly, it is worth noting that the term “queer” is not universally accepted. Once considered derogatory, it has been reclaimed by many in the LGBTQIA community and is now widely used, especially among young people. However, not all have embraced the new usage, and some are still sensitive to the word’s pejorative history. Authors are encouraged to explain usage in a footnote.

The following sections were derived from GLAAD’s Media Reference Guide with additional input from RLSC’s editorial board.[[104]](#footnote-104)

## Additional Guidance on Transgender Communities

**Gender Confirmation Surgery (GCS)**

Also called Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). If “SRS” is used, authors should explain that choice in text or in a footnote, as GCS is a more transition-positive term. These terms refer to doctor-supervised surgical interventions, which some transgender people seek as part of their transition. Avoid the phrase “sex change operation.” Do not refer to someone as being “pre-op” or “post-op.” Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to, undergo medical surgeries. Authors should avoid overemphasizing the role of surgeries in the transition process.

**Gender Dysphoria**

In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association released the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), which replaced the outdated entry “Gender Identity Disorder” with “Gender Dysphoria” and changed the criteria for diagnosis. The necessity of a psychiatric diagnosis remains controversial, as both psychiatric and medical authorities recommend individualized medical treatment through hormones and/or surgeries to treat gender dysphoria. Some transgender advocates believe the inclusion of Gender Dysphoria in the DSM is necessary in order to advocate for health insurance that covers the treatment recommended for transgender people. A gender dysphoria diagnosis is not necessary in order for a person to be transgender or gender non-conforming.

**Gender Identity Disorder (GID)**

This phrase is outdated. See “Gender Dysphoria” above.

**Sexual Orientation**

Describes a person’s enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. For example, a transgender woman who is attracted solely to men would typically identify as a straight woman.

**Trans**

Used as shorthand to mean “transgender” or “transsexual,” or sometimes to be inclusive of a wide variety of identities under the transgender umbrella. Because its meaning is not precise or widely understood, be careful when using it with audiences who may not understand what it means. To address this ambiguity, we encourage authors to clarify their use of the word where necessary.

**Transgender (adj.)**

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms—including “transgender.” Use the descriptive term preferred by the person.

While RLSC wants to avoid enforcing and reinforcing gender binaries, some members of the transgender community identify as female-to-male and male-to-female.

Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to bring their bodies into alignment with their gender identity. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures.

**Transition**

Transitioning is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time, and can include some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one’s family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. **Avoid the phrase “sex change.”**

**Transsexual (adj.)**

An older term that originated in the medical and psychological fields. It is still preferred by some people in the trans/gender non-conforming community. Unlike “transgender,” “transsexual” is **not** an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word “transgender.” It is best to ask which term a person prefers. If preferred, use as an adjective: “transsexual woman” or “transsexual man.”

## Defamatory and Derogatory Language to Avoid

**Offensive: Associating gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people with pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest**

Being LGBTQIA is neither synonymous with, nor indicative of, any tendency toward pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest. Such claims, innuendoes, and associations often are used to insinuate that LGBTQIA people pose a threat to society, to families, and to children in particular. Such assertions and insinuations are defamatory and should be avoided, except in direct quotes that clearly reveal the bias of the person quoted.

**Offensive: “deceptive,” “fooling,” “pretending,” “posing,” “trap,” or “masquerading”**

Gender identity is an integral part of a person's identity. Do not characterize transgender people as “deceptive,” as “fooling” or “trapping” others, or as “pretending” to be, “posing” or “masquerading” as a man or a woman. Such descriptions are inaccurate, defamatory, and insulting (see “passing” and “stealth” as problematic terms above).

**Offensive: “deviant,” “disordered,” “dysfunctional,” “diseased,” “perverted,” “destructive” and similar descriptions**

The notion that being LGBTQIA is a psychological disorder was discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Today, words such as “deviant,” “diseased” and “disordered” often are used to portray LGBTQIA people as less than human, mentally ill, or as a danger to society. Words such as these should be avoided in stories about the gay community. If they must be used, they should be quoted directly in a way that clearly reveals the bias of the person being quoted.

**Offensive: “Sexual minorities”**

The term “sexual minorities” (a more academic term) tends to draw too much focus to the word “sexual.” As Michael Hulshof-Schmidt explains, “[m]embers of the LGBT[QIA] community don’t want to be defined strictly by possible behavior, but as complex, fully realized human beings. In an America with a strong puritanical streak – even today – the word ‘sexual’ still has too much power to stigmatize.”[[105]](#footnote-105) Furthermore, some members of the LGBTQIA community are included as such because of their gender identity rather than their sexual orientation.

**Offensive: “faggot,” “sodomite,” and similar epithets**

The criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to vulgar epithets used to target other groups: they should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. To avoid legitimizing such slurs, it is preferred that authors say, “The person used a derogatory word for a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person.”

**Offensive: “tranny,” “she-male,” “he/she,” “it,” “shim”**

These words dehumanize transgender people and should not be used. The criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to vulgar epithets used to target other groups: they should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. To avoid legitimizing such slurs, it is preferred that authors say, “The person used a derogatory word for a transgender person.” Please note that while some transgender people may use “tranny” to describe themselves, others find it extremely offensive. In general, do not use these words at all, unless someone specifically self-identifies that way.

**Offensive: “Dyke,” “Fag,” “Homo” and “It” and other reclaimed terms with the potential for being derogatory**

In general, do not use these words, unless someone specifically self-identifies that way.

These phrases have traditionally been used as derogatory terms directed at LGBTQIA individuals. Therefore, when the context makes clear that any of these phrases are being used as a slur they should receive the same treatment as vulgar epithets used to target other groups: they should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. To avoid legitimizing such slurs, it is preferred that authors say, “The person used a derogatory word for a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person.”

However, more recently these phrases have also been reclaimed by members of the LGBTQIA community who choose to identify with these terms. When used in that context, we encourage authors to explain their choice in using the terms.

## Alternatives to Offensive Language

**Offensive: “homosexual” (n. or adj.)**

**Preferred: “gay” (adj.); “gay man” or “lesbian” (n.); “gay person/people”**

Use the words “gay” or “lesbian” to describe people attracted to members of the same sex. Because of the clinical history of the word “homosexual,” it is aggressively used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered—notions discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association as early as in the 1970s. Avoid using “homosexual” except in direct quotes. Avoid using “homosexual” as a style variation simply to avoid repeated use of the word “gay.” The Associated Press, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* restrict use of the term “homosexual.”

**Offensive: “homosexual relations/relationship,” “homosexual couple,” “homosexual sex,” etc.**

**Preferred: “relationship,” “couple” (or, if necessary, “same-sex couple” or “same-gender couple”), “sex,” etc.**

Identifying a same-sex or same-gender couple as “a homosexual couple,” characterizing their relationship as “a homosexual relationship,” or identifying their intimacy as “homosexual sex” is offensive and should be avoided. These constructions are frequently used by anti-gay extremists to denigrate gay people, couples, and relationships.

As a rule, try to avoid labeling an activity, emotion, or relationship “gay,” “lesbian,” or “bisexual” unless you would call the same activity, emotion, or relationship “straight” if engaged in by someone of another orientation. In most cases, your readers will be able to discern people’s sexes and/or orientations through the names of the parties involved, your depictions of their relationships, and your use of pronouns.

**Offensive: “sexual preference”**

**Preferred: “sexual orientation” or “orientation”**

The term “sexual preference” is typically used to suggest that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice and therefore can and should be “cured.” “Sexual orientation” is the accurate description of an individual’s enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex and is inclusive of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, as well as straight men and women.

**Offensive: “gay lifestyle” or “homosexual lifestyle”**

**Preferred: “sexual orientation”**

There is no single lesbian, gay, or bisexual lifestyle. Lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are diverse in the ways they lead their lives. The phrase “gay lifestyle” is used to denigrate lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals suggesting that their orientation is a choice and therefore can and should be “cured.”

**Offensive: “admitted homosexual” or “avowed homosexual”**

**Preferred: “openly lesbian,” “openly gay,” “openly bisexual,” or simply “out”**

These are dated terms used to describe those who openly identify as LGBTQIA in their personal, public, and/or professional lives. The words “admitted” or “avowed” suggest that being gay is somehow shameful or inherently secretive. You may also simply describe the person as being out, for example: “Ricky Martin is an out pop star from Puerto Rico.” Avoid the use of the word “homosexual” in any case.

**Offensive: “gay agenda” or “homosexual agenda”**

**Preferred: Accurate descriptions of the issues (e.g., “inclusion in existing non- discrimination and hate crimes laws,” “ending the ban on transgender service members”)**

Notions of a so-called “homosexual agenda” are rhetorical inventions of anti-gay extremists seeking to create a climate of fear by portraying the pursuit of equal opportunity for LGBTQIA people as sinister.[[106]](#footnote-106) LGBTQIA communities are not monolithic and have many different concerns, so specifying which issues are being discussed clarifies the issue.

**Offensive: “special rights”**

**Preferred: “equal rights” or “equal protection”**

Anti-gay extremists frequently characterize equal protection of the law for LGBTQIA people as “special rights” to incite opposition to such things as relationship recognition and inclusive non-discrimination laws.[[107]](#footnote-107)

**Offensive: “transgenders,” “a transgender”**

**Preferred: “transgender people,” “a transgender person”**

“Transgender” should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Do not say, “Tony is a transgender,” or “The parade included many transgenders.” Instead say, “Tony is a transgender man,” or “The parade included many transgender people.”

**Offensive: “transgendered”**

**Preferred: “transgender”**

The adjective “transgender” should never have an extraneous “-ed” tacked onto the end. An “- ed” suffix adds unnecessary length to the word and can cause tense confusion and grammatical errors. It also brings transgender into alignment with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer. It would be incorrect to say that someone is “gayed” or “lesbianed;” similarly, it is incorrect to say a person is “transgendered.”

**Offensive: “transgenderism”**

**Preferred: “being transgender”**

This is not a term commonly used by transgender people. This is a term used by anti- transgender activists to dehumanize transgender people and reduce who they are to “a condition.” Refer to “being transgender” instead, or refer to “the transgender community.” You can also refer to “the movement for transgender equality and acceptance.”

**Offensive: “sex change,” “pre-operative,” “post-operative”**

**Preferred: “transition”**

Referring to a “sex-change operation,” or using terms such as “pre-operative” or “post- operative,” inaccurately suggests that a person must have surgery in order to transition. Avoid overemphasizing surgery when discussing transgender people or the process of transition.

**Offensive: “biologically male,” “biologically female,” “genetically male,” “genetically female,” “born a man,” “born a woman”**

**Preferred: “assigned male at birth” (AMAB), “assigned female at birth” (AFAB) or “designated male at birth,” “designated female at birth”**

Phrases like these are reductive and problematic. They suggest that a person’s sex or gender is determined by their chromosomes or genitals, rather than their own sense of identity. They also ignore substantial scientific literature complicating the notion of “biological sex.”

**Offensive: “passing” and “stealth”**

**Preferred: “perceived as transgender” or “not perceived as transgender”**

While some transgender people may use these terms among themselves, it is not appropriate to repeat them in publications unless it’s in a direct quote. The terms refer to a transgender person’s ability to go through daily life without others making an assumption that they are transgender. However, the terms themselves are problematic because “passing” implies “passing as something you’re not,” while “stealth” connotes deceit. When transgender people are living as their authentic selves, and are not perceived as transgender by others, that does not make them deceptive or misleading.

**Offensive: “transvestite”**

**Preferred: “cross dresser” or “drag queen,” depending on the situation. These two terms are not interchangeable.**

Transgender women are not cross-dressers and may or may not identify as drag queens. Be aware of the differences between transgender women, cross-dressers, and drag queens. “Drag queens” has traditionally referred to cisgender men who dress like women for the purpose of entertainment and performance. The term “cross-dresser” is typically used to refer to cisgender men who occasionally wear clothes, makeup, and accessories culturally associated with women. This activity is a form of gender expression and not done for entertainment purposes. Cross-dressers typically do not wish to live permanently as another gender. Use the term preferred by the person. Do not use the word “transvestite” at all, unless someone specifically self-identifies that way.

# Native / Indigenous Communities

The following terms are often used to describe Native and Indigenous People: “Indigenous People,” “First Nations,” “Native American,” “American Indian,” and “Indian.” There is not an agreement, even among Native and Indigenous Communities about which terms are preferred. Authors should explain their choice in a footnote.

Two excerpts below explain the debate and offer context.

The first excerpt comes from *Antiques Roadshow’s* analysis of the terminology featured in their program to describe indigenous people and items they crafted:

In the 1960s, many people, both non-Indians as well as Indians, challenged the use of the word “Indian.” Some argued that it was a term coined by oppressors, and also a misnomer — they were not, after all, the Indians of the East Indies that Columbus thought he had met in the Caribbean. The critics argued further that over the centuries the word had gained a pejorative meaning, often conjuring up images that were simplistic, romanticized and often disparaging that were reinforced by TV serials and Hollywood westerns ...

These cultural critics suggested substituting the term Native American for Indian. They maintained that Native American was also more accurate, as one meaning of native was “being the original inhabitants of a particular place,” as Native Americans were.

But despite the supposed political correctness of Native American, it has not become the preferred term. “The acceptance of Native American has not brought about the demise of Indian,” according to the fourth edition of the American Heritage Book of English Usage, published in 2000. ...

Nor did the word Indian fall out of favor with the people it described. A 1995 Census Bureau survey that asked indigenous Americans their preferences for names (the last such survey done by the bureau) found that 49 percent preferred the term Indian, 37 percent Native American, and 3.6 percent “some other name.” About 5 percent expressed no preference.

Moreover, a large number of Indians actually strongly object to the term Native American for political reasons. In his 1998 essay “I Am An American Indian, Not a Native American!”, Russell Means, a Lakota activist and a founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM), stated unequivocally, “I abhor the term 'Native American.’” He continues:

It is a generic government term used to describe all the indigenous prisoners of the United States. These are the American Samoans, the Micronesians, the Aleuts, the original Hawaiians, and the erroneously termed Eskimos, who are actually Upiks and Inupiaqs. And, of course, the American Indian.

I prefer the term American Indian because I know its origins. ... As an added distinction the American Indian is the only ethnic group in the United States with the American before our ethnicity.

At an international conference of Indians from the Americas held in Geneva, Switzerland, at the United Nations in 1977 we unanimously decided we would go under the term American Indian. “We were enslaved as American Indians, we were colonized as American Indians, and we will gain our freedom as American Indians and then we can call ourselves anything we damn please.”

Yet others argue that neither term should be used, because they both blur the differences between various Indian peoples. In her essay “What's in a Name? Indians and Political Correctness,” Christina Berry, a Cherokee writer, argues that people should avoid the terms Indian and Native American:

In the end, the term you choose to use (as an Indian or non-Indian) is your own personal choice. ... Very few Indians that I know care either way. The recommended method is to refer to a person by their tribe, if that information is known. The reason is that the Native peoples of North America are incredibly diverse. It would be like referring to both a Romanian and an Irishman as European. It's true that they are both from Europe, but their people have very different histories, cultures, and languages. The same is true of Indians. The Cherokee are vastly different from the Lakota, the Dine, the Kiowa, and the Cree, but they are all labeled Native American. So whenever possible an Indian would prefer to be called a Cherokee or a Lakota or whichever tribe they belong to. This shows respect because not only are the terms Indian, American Indian, and Native American an over simplification of a diverse ethnicity, but you also show that you listened when they told what tribe they belonged to. ... What matters in the long run is not which term is used but the intention with which it is used.[[108]](#footnote-108)

In her book, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz made the following note about terminology:

I use “Indigenous,” “Indian,” and “Native” interchangeably in the text. Indigenous individuals and peoples in North America on the whole do not consider “Indian” a slur. Of course, all citizens of Native nations much prefer that their nations’ names in their own language be used, such as Diné (Navajo), Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), Tsalagi (Cherokee), and Anishinaabe (Ojibway, Chippewa). I have used some of the correct names combined with more familiar usages, such as “Sioux” and Navajo.” Except in material that is quoted, I don’t use the term “tribe.” “Community,” “people,” and nation” are used instead and interchangeably. I also refrain from using “America” and “American” when referring only to the United States and its citizens. Those blatantly imperialistic terms annoy people in the rest of the Western Hemisphere, who are, after all, also Americans. I use “United States” as a noun and “US” as an adjective to refer to the country and “US Americans” for its citizens.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Of course, we must always strive to use the language communities prefer. An article by Amanda Blackhorse published in Indian Country Today featured six indigenous people’s responses as to which terms they prefer. The following are quotes from the piece, alongside each respondent’s preferred terms:[[110]](#footnote-110)

**Radmilla Cody**

*Diné/Navajo, Indigenous and Native*

I used to refer to myself as ‘Native American,’ but over time I have learned more about colonization and the colonial terms that came with the assimilation process which continues today. We are original people of this so-called USA, therefore we should be acknowledged as such, but also to ourselves as indigenous, as the indigenous backgrounds we identify with; indigenous, or Native of our own territories.. Not the European settlers’ or colonial settlers’ identification of who they think we should be. We must reclaim our identity and stop allowing the settler-colonialists to define who we are.

**Bobby Wilson**

*Native or American Indian*

When I say Indian it doesn’t take anything away from me. For some people it may. I’m comfortable with myself and with it.

**Roxanne Thomas**

*Diné and Numa-Fallon Paiute/Shoshone Tribe*

It’s about going back to our original self. Why use names that are given to us?

**Douglas Miles**

*American Indian, Native American, or First Americans*

We are also Americans, and we love America. Natives serve at a higher rate in the military because Native people know in their heart this is their country and it will always be. They will stand up and fight for the land. It’s not really about American patriotism, but it’s for the love of the land.

**Chase Iron Eyes**

*Oyate Ikce (and at times the translation “Sioux”), Original People, or Indigenous*

“Naming is very important because we are the archetypes of our reality, but now we do that in the English language. For those of us who learned English as a first language, things are different because we speak English.”

**Kyle Blackhorse**

*Tribal names (Diné, Tlingit, and Yurok) and names of his clans of his tribes. But prefers Native American over American Indian.*

India is on the other side of the world. It is very important to identify ourselves in our way...

The *Diversity Style Guide* and its sources offer the following suggestions:

## American Indian

Indigenous people in the United States were first referred to as Indians because [Christopher] Columbus believed he had reached the East Indies when he touched the shores of North America. Today, many Native people prefer to call themselves American Indian to avoid stereotypes. . .[[111]](#footnote-111)

## Disambiguation: Indian, Indian American

Use *Indian* or *person from India* to refer to a person with ancestral ties to India. Use Indian American to refer to a U.S. permanent resident or citizen with ancestral ties to India. Do not confuse this term with *American Indian*. Do not use it to refer to indigenous peoples of the United States.[[112]](#footnote-112)

## First Nations

This is a “term used to describe Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are ethnically neither Métis nor Inuit.”[[113]](#footnote-113)

## Indigenous

“Indigenous is a term used to encompass a variety of Aboriginal groups,” according to a list of terms compiled by the First Nations Studies Program at the University of British Columbia.

It is most frequently used in an international, transnational, or global context. This term came into wide usage during the 1970s when Aboriginal groups organized transnationally and pushed for greater presence in the United Nations (UN). In the UN, “Indigenous” is used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others.[[114]](#footnote-114)

“Under international law, there is no official definition of Indigenous, although the United Nations generally identifies Indigenous groups as autonomous and self- sustaining societies that have faced discrimination, marginalization and assimilation of their cultures and peoples due to the arrival of a larger or more dominant settler population.”[[115]](#footnote-115) There are an estimated 370 million Indigenous peoples worldwide, living in 70 different countries, according to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.[[116]](#footnote-116)

## Native American, Native

“Native American,” “Native,” and “American Indian” are all generally acceptable, although individuals may have a preference. It is usually best to refer to Native people by their specific tribe or nation,[[117]](#footnote-117) or to ask which term they prefer. “Native American gained traction in the 1960s for American Indians and Alaska Natives. Over time, Native American has been expanded to include all native peoples of the continental United States and some in Alaska.”[[118]](#footnote-118)

# Rape & Sexual Violence

*Individuals who have experienced sexual violence may choose to self-identify as victims or survivors, and RLSC encourages authors to respect those choices and explain the decision behind their chosen terminology in writing on this topic. Likewise, RLSC allows authors latitude beyond restrictive statutory definitions in categorizing sexual violence as rape.*

## A Note on Gender Pronouns

Rape and sexual violence are not solely the experiences of ciswomen. While RLSC recognizes violence against women as an important issue, it is important that we, and our authors, use language that recognizes the experiences of trans, genderqueer, nonbinary, gender non-conforming, and/or male-identifying people. When speaking about rape and sexual violence generally, authors should use gender-neutral pronouns, such as “they,” and not “she/her/hers.”

## Victim vs. Survivor

There is debate within the community about which term to use to identify people who have experienced sexual violence: “victim” or “survivor.”[[119]](#footnote-119) It is best practice to let the person who experienced sexual violence self-identify. Authors should include a footnote explaining their choice of which term to use.

Some reasons cited by those who prefer the term “survivor” include:

* Gives the person agency and power
* Emphasizes their growth and overcoming
* Avoids painting them as helpless and damaged
* Keeps the focus on the person who has experienced rather than on the perpetrator
* Distinguished from “victim” which is most often used by law enforcement, the legal  system, and government bureaucrats

Some reasons cited by those who prefer the term “victim” include:

* More accurately places the blame on the perpetrator of the violence
* By placing the action on the perpetrator, it pushes back on the notion that people who are experiencing sexual violence should be expected to be active during acts of sexual  violence and “fight back”
* Recognizes the systems that cause sexual violence
  + “Compulsory survivorship depoliticizes our understanding of violence and its effects. It places the burden of healing on the individual, while comfortably erasing the systems and structures that make surviving hard, harder for some than for others.”[[120]](#footnote-120)

## Rape: Legal Term vs. Common Usage

Many acts commonly considered to be rape do not fit within statutory definitions of the word. Many activists believe that calling sexual violence “rape,” regardless of whether a particular act fits the governing statutory definition, recognizes the severity of the act and calls attention to what they see as flaws in the criminal legal system’s effectiveness at prosecuting these crimes.

## Carceral Feminism

Among anti-rape activists, opinions diverge regarding the appropriate way to address acts of violence committed. Some advocate for restorative justice models and community-led responses; others call on schools and employers to intervene, and still others want more aggressive prosecution by law enforcement. Those who prefer criminal legal solutions (such as increasing the length of prison sentences or policing) are sometimes criticized and described as “carceral feminists”:

This carceral variant of feminism continues to be the predominant form. While its adherents would likely reject the descriptor, carceral feminism describes an approach that sees increased policing, prosecution, and imprisonment as the primary solution to violence against women . . . This stance does not acknowledge that police are often purveyors of violence and that prisons are always sites of violence. Carceral feminism ignores the ways in which race, class, gender identity, and immigration status leave certain women more vulnerable to violence and that greater criminalization often places these same women at risk of state violence. Casting policing and prisons as the solution to domestic violence both justifies increases to police and prison budgets and diverts attention from the cuts to programs that enable survivors to escape, such as shelters, public housing, and welfare. And finally, positioning police and prisons as the principal antidote discourages seeking other responses, including community interventions and long-term organizing.[[121]](#footnote-121)

# Reproductive Justice

*RLSC prefers to use the term “anti-abortion” over “pro-life” to describe persons who oppose abortion and “pro-reproductive rights” to describe supporters of abortion access. Use “pregnant person” instead of mother to avoid assumptions that all pregnant persons choose to carry their pregnancy to term and raise a child and to acknowledge that not all pregnant persons identify as women. Use medically accurate terms such as “embryo” and “fetus” rather than “unborn baby/child” so as not to grant “personhood” at the expense of the pregnant persons’ rights.*

## Understanding the Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice Frameworks

There are multiple frameworks through which to view and discuss reproductive topics, including the reproductive health framework, the reproductive rights framework, and the reproductive justice framework. RLSC supports the reproductive justice framework. RLSC encourages authors to use language that best comports with the focus of their argument, be it reproductive health, rights, or justice, while finding ways to emphasize the unique burden on women of color and gender non-conforming people in the reproductive context. According to Forward Together:

The *reproductive health framework* centers around healthcare service delivery. The focus is on providing services for historically marginalized communities through the creation of reproductive health clinics that provide low- or no-cost care, as well as culturally competent services. Underserved communities face a lack of access, not only to reproductive health services, but also to all healthcare. For many women, reproductive healthcare is their first and perhaps only encounter with the healthcare system.

The *reproductive rights framework* is a legal and advocacy-based model that serves to protect an individual woman’s legal right to reproductive healthcare services with a focus on keeping abortion legal and increasing access to family planning services. Groups fight for a woman’s “right to choose” and “right to privacy” through various legal, advocacy, and political means.

The *reproductive justice framework* is rooted in the recognition of the histories of reproductive oppression and abuse in communities of color. This framework uses a model grounded in organizing women, girls, and gender non-conforming (GNC) people to change structural power inequalities. The central theme of the reproductive justice framework is a focus on naming and eliminating the control and exploitation of women’s bodies, sexuality, and reproduction as an effective strategy of controlling people, particularly women of color, trans and GNC people of color, and their communities. In response to transphobia and specifically transmisogyny within the reproductive health and rights movements, reproductive justice advocates have been making an effort to expand the framework to include trans and GNC people.[[122]](#footnote-122)

## Abortion

Abortion is a legal and safe way to end a pregnancy. First-trimester abortions are particularly safe medical procedures, where less than 0.05% of major complications lead to hospitalization.[[123]](#footnote-123) There are two common abortion methods: a procedure performed in a clinic (“in-clinic abortion”), by aspiration or dilation-and-evacuation, or the abortion pill (“medical abortion”). According to Planned Parenthood, 3 in 10 women will have an abortion by the age of 45.[[124]](#footnote-124)

Choosing the terms “pro-reproductive rights” and “anti-abortion” leaves ample room for a variety of beliefs while focusing specifically on abortion access.[[125]](#footnote-125) The more common “pro-life” and “pro-choice” labels create a binary that does not reflect reality, where most people’s beliefs on abortion and other reproductive rights are complex and not accurately captured by such vague terms.

## “Pro-Reproductive Rights,” not “Pro-Choice”

Persons who describe themselves as “pro-reproductive rights” or “pro-choice” generally believe that each person has a basic human right to decide whether and when to have children. “Pro-reproductive rights” is a more inclusive term that recognizes that access to abortion means more than just the ability to choose to end a pregnancy legally. Full access to abortion includes many factors such as ability to afford an abortion and to find a physician or clinic that provides abortion services. Supporting the full scope of reproductive rights includes support for legal and accessible abortion, access to contraception methods, and comprehensive sex education, alongside opposition to laws that ban abortion or keep it out of reach by shutting down health centers that provide abortion services or enacting barriers like mandatory waiting periods.[[126]](#footnote-126)

## “Anti-Abortion,” not “Pro-Life”

The term “anti-abortion” is the most accurate way to describe people that think abortion should be illegal under all or most circumstances. They believe that “life begins at conception,” and that a pregnancy has begun once an egg is fertilized. Anti-abortion advocates want the Supreme Court to overturn its landmark 1973 case *Roe v. Wade*. *Roe* recognized that the right to choose to have an abortion is protected by the U.S. Constitution and that the procedure must therefore be legal in all 50 states.[[127]](#footnote-127) Nevertheless, anti-abortion advocates have successfully created a hostile atmosphere for pregnant persons seeking an abortion in the United States. The vast majority of counties in the U.S. have no abortion-providing clinic at all, and in recent years, upwards of 80% of existing clinics reported harassment, including picketing and even bomb threats.[[128]](#footnote-128) Through the 1976 Hyde Amendment, Congress banned nearly all Medicaid funding for abortion care.[[129]](#footnote-129) Since then, anti-abortion advocates have successfully pushed multiple states to pass laws to restrict access to abortion.

The term “pro-life” is problematic and should not be used. Laws passed in some states at the behest of anti-abortion advocates that effectively ban abortion in all but a very narrow set of circumstances do not promote the sustaining of life—“[m]ore accurately, they should be seen as ‘pro-birth’—perhaps even ‘forced-birth’—and ‘anti-women’ laws.”[[130]](#footnote-130) For anti-abortion laws to truly be pro-life measures, they would need to include guarantees for healthcare, education, and other necessities and not cut funding to providers of preventative care like Planned Parenthood or Medicaid.

The use of pro-life language is unmistakably a calculated public relations decision to tap into the value system of conservatives and evangelicals who view abortion as exclusively about protecting the “life” (according to their opinion) of an unborn—and not about the larger issue of the health and wellbeing of women, and certainly not that of their children.

…

This strategy permits and empowers anti-abortion advocates rhetorically to assume a higher moral ground by erroneously framing the debate as “pro-life” versus “pro-abortion.” This not only distorts the argument but makes it far easier to convince state legislators to adopt extreme policies prohibiting almost all cases of abortion and to harshly punish doctors and women who violate the restrictive new laws.[[131]](#footnote-131)

Even where some anti-abortion advocates might also actively support access to adequate healthcare and other life-sustaining and affirming policies, we still oppose the use of the term “pro-life” to describe anyone opposed to safe, legal abortion, because this ideology minimizes the lives and health of pregnant persons, valuing certain lives over others.

## “Embryo” and “fetus,” not “unborn baby/child”

Only use the term “baby” or “child” when referring to a newborn existing outside of the womb to avoid emotionally-charged implications of “personhood” prior to birth.[[132]](#footnote-132) Medically accurate terms include “embryo,” from the implantation of a fertilized egg in the uterine wall until 8 weeks after conception,[[133]](#footnote-133) and “fetus” from 8 weeks pregnant until birth.[[134]](#footnote-134) After fertilization but before implantation in the uterine wall, the joined pair of gametes (cells commonly called the “egg” and “sperm”)[[135]](#footnote-135) is called a “zygote.”[[136]](#footnote-136)

***A note on “personhood”***

“Personhood” is a legally muddled concept and should be put in quotations if used. Generally, “personhood” advocates seek to enact laws and policies that apply human rights to an embryo or fetus by altering the legal definition of a person. “Two distinct legal persons with absolute rights to self-sovereignty cannot occupy the same body.”[[137]](#footnote-137) “No state interest described by fetal rights advocates has enough force to override a woman’s fundamental rights of privacy, bodily integrity, and self-determination. . . . Until the child is brought forth from the woman’s body, our relationship with it must be mediated by her.”[[138]](#footnote-138) Fetal “personhood” is not constitutionally recognized under *Roe*.

Self-described “fetal personhood laws” are sometimes touted as protecting pregnant people who are victims of a violent crime. However, such laws are often used to criminalize the legally-protected or involuntary actions of pregnant persons, in cases of self-induced abortion, miscarriage, or even the use of certain types of contraception.[[139]](#footnote-139) Similarly, referring to the most extreme attempts by state legislatures to restrict access to abortion as “heartbeat bills” should also be avoided, as this language evokes misleading imagery that erases the harm done to pregnant people by such laws.[[140]](#footnote-140)

## Medically accurate terms, not “late/late-term/partial-birth abortion”

Referring to abortions performed after a certain amount of time has passed should not be done using generalized and politically charged phrases like “late,” “late-term,” or “partial-birth” abortions. Instead, use medically accurate terminology specifying the amount of time that has passed, such as an abortion “after 12 weeks.”[[141]](#footnote-141)

***A note on “viability”***

The Court in *Roe* implied that a fetus was considered legally “viable” at 28 weeks by the development of its trimester framework for gestational age. However, this legal definition is actually delegated to individual states, resulting in a range of statutory definitions from 19 to 28 weeks. Often, states allow the physician to determine viability.[[142]](#footnote-142) It is preferable to avoid such unscientific assertions and instead focus on medically accurate terminology, such as describing the number of weeks a person has been pregnant.

## “Pregnant person,” not “mother”

Using the term “mother” implies that all pregnant persons will carry their pregnancy to term and elect to raise the child. A pregnant person will not necessarily become a mother or a parent, and implying that one begets the other invalidates the choices pregnant people are legally free to make. The term “pregnant person” is medically accurate and does not prejudge the outcome of the pregnancy.

Additionally, RLSC encourages authors to remain gender neutral, using “pregnant person” instead of “pregnant woman,” as anyone with a uterus is capable of becoming pregnant.[[143]](#footnote-143) Acceptable gender-inclusive terms for a person that has decided to carry a pregnancy to term include “parent” with modifiers like “expectant,” “laboring,” “birthing,” or “gestational.”[[144]](#footnote-144)

# Sex Work

*RLSC prefers the term “sex work” over prostitution. It is important to distinguish between sex work and sex trafficking, and to be particularly mindful of framing the discussion of either when minors are involved.*

## Use “sex work,” not “prostitution”

According to Open Society Foundations, the term “sex work” is preferred to “prostitution.” “Sex work” and “sex worker” recognize that sex work is work.[[145]](#footnote-145) Many people who sell sexual services prefer the term “sex worker” and find “prostitute” demeaning and stigmatizing, which contributes to their exclusion from health, legal, and social services.

The Urban Justice Center’s Sex Workers Project notes that:

Sex workers were the first to use the terms sex work and sex worker. The terms have been adopted by numerous international health, labor and human rights organizations, including the United Nations and its affiliated agencies. The term sex worker is neutral, descriptive and informative without being judgmental. It recognizes sex work as a reality, whatever the speaker’s opinion about the work itself. It does not distinguish by gender, race, ethnicity or creed. It allows the possibility of the worker’s dignity and ability to make decisions. Most of all, it affirms the humanity of the person.[[146]](#footnote-146)

## The Difference Between Sex Work and Sex Trafficking

These two terms should not be used interchangeably. Sex trafficking refers to the use of abduction, violence, coercion, and/or trickery to force a person to engage in sex or sexual favors for the monetary gain of their traffickers. Sex work is the voluntary exchange of sexual favors or performances for goods or money. Sex workers “are not coerced or tricked into staying in the business but have chosen this from among the options available to them,” as Melissa Ditmore explains further below:

A key goal of sex worker activists is to improve sex-working conditions, but self-organization is impossible when sex work is regarded as merely another form of slavery. Then authorities and laws trying to stop true slavery — trafficking — get misapplied to sex workers, clients and others involved in the sex industry. Law enforcement raids in the U.S. and abroad, for example, have led to little success identifying trafficked persons but instead have driven sex work underground. This exposes sex workers to an increased risk of violence and denies them any protection of laws against assault or access to medical, legal and educational services. It denies them their human rights.[[147]](#footnote-147)

The Urban Justice Center’s Sex Workers Project similarly notes that:

The key element of trafficking in persons is the existence of some coercive measure that creates a climate of fear. These measures include threats of harm to the trafficked person or their loved one, taking travel documents, debt bondage, withholding wages, or physical or sexual assault. In contrast, sex workers engage in a commercial exchange of sexual services or performances (i.e. dancing) for money.... Confusing sex workers with trafficked persons erases the voices of sex workers, worsens their working conditions, adds to their general stigmatization and impedes discussions on ways to end human trafficking.[[148]](#footnote-148)

**Note:** Children, by definition, cannot consent to sex work, regardless of whether they are trafficked persons or decided for themselves to engage in sex work. The *AP Stylebook* discusses this in its recommendation that “writers avoid using the word ‘prostitute’ when a child is involved, as in ‘child prostitute,’ ‘teenage prostitute,’ and so forth, because it implies that the child ‘is voluntarily trading sex for money’ . . . and a child, by definition, cannot do so.” For this reason, in articles regarding sex work that may refer to children, it is important to note the inability of children to legally provide consent.[[149]](#footnote-149)

1. The Diversity Style Guide, <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/> [<https://perma.cc/C27A-NCVQ>] (last visited Oct. 8, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Judith Graham, *‘Elderly’ No More*, N.Y. Times: The New Old Age Blog (Apr. 19, 2012, 12:38 PM), <https://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/19/elderly-no-more/> (“Personally, I tend to use the term ‘older people’ because it’s the least problematic. Everyone is older than someone else.”) (*quoting* Harry Moody, Director of Academic Affairs at AARP). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Nancy E. Lundebjerg, Daniel E. Trucil, Emily C. Hammond, & William B. Applegate, *When It Comes to Older Adults, Language Matters:* Journal of the American Geriatrics Society *Adopts Modified American Medical Association Style*, 85 J. of the Am. Geriatrics Soc. 1386, at 1386-87 (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Elevating Aging Through Language: A Usage and Style Guide*, California Assisted Living Association, <http://caassistedliving.org/publications/elevate-aging/> [<https://perma.cc/F2PM-J63G>] (last accessed Mar. 4, 2020); Graham, *supra* note 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Elevating Aging Through Language*, *supra* note 4 (“The word ‘senior’ appeared frequently in both the data set for disliked words and preferred words.”). *See also* Lundebjerg, *supra* note 3; Ina Jaffe, *Times Have Changed; What Should We Call 'Old People' ?*, Nat’l Pub. Radio (Feb. 6, 2016), <https://www.npr.org/2016/02/06/465819152/times-have-changed-what-should-we-call-old-people> [<https://perma.cc/M6LH-BTDQ>] (“Seniors was tolerable,” but also “senior is on its way out”); Christine Burke, *It's Time to Stop Using the Term 'Senior Citizen'*, AARP: Disrupt Aging Blog (Jul. 10, 2019), <https://www.aarp.org/disrupt-aging/stories/info-2019/stop-using-term-senior-citizen.html> [<https://perma.cc/M3EQ-YP4Z>]. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Elevating Aging Through Language*, *supra* note 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Id.*; Jaffe, *supra* note 5; Burke, *supra* note 5.  [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Elevating Aging Through Language*, *supra* note 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Lundebjerg, *supra* note 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Elevating Aging Through Language*, *supra* note 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Residential Facilities, Assisted Living, and Nursing Homes*, Nat’l Inst. on Aging (May 1, 2017), <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/residential-facilities-assisted-living-and-nursing-homes> [<https://perma.cc/C578-654Y>]; *Find the Right Care for Your Loved One*, AARP (Jan. 13, 2020), <https://www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/info-2014/caregiving-assisted-living-options-tool.html> [<https://perma.cc/87WA-WUMY>]. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Aging and Disability*, United Nations Dep’t of Economic and Social Aff., <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/disability-and-ageing.html> [<https://perma.cc/9JTQ-58GA>] (last visited Mar. 4, 2020).  [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Elevating Aging Through Language*, *supra* note 4. *See also infra* “Identity-first v. People-first Language” entry for more information about these terms.  [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *What Is Dementia?*, CDC Alzheimer’s Disease and Healthy Aging Program (Apr. 5, 2019), <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/dementia/index.html> [<https://perma.cc/FS6L-TZ3P>]. Notably, although older adults are disproportionately impacted by dementia, individuals under 65 may also experience dementia and related conditions. *See* *Dementia Language Guidelines*, Dementia Australia (May 2018), <https://www.dementia.org.au/files/resources/dementia-language-guidelines.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/DZC5-7YM9>]. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Dementia Language Guidelines*, *supra* note 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Christian Edlagan & Kavya Vaghul, *How Data Disaggregation Matters for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders*, Washington Ctr. for Equitable Growth (Dec. 14, 2016) [https://equitablegrowth.org/how- data-disaggregation-matters-for-asian-americans-and-pacific-islanders/](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-%20data-disaggregation-matters-for-asian-americans-and-pacific-islanders/) [<https://perma.cc/Q53M-RJSA>].  [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The Diversity Style Guide, *supra* note 1; *Guide to Covering Asian America*, Asian American Journalists Ass’n, <https://www.aaja.org/aajahandbook> [<https://perma.cc/9NA4-LME2>] (last visited Oct. 2, 2018) [hereinafter *Guide to Covering Asian America*]. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Guide to Covering Asian America*, *supra* note 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Henry Fuhrmann, *Drop the Hyphen in* Asian American, Conscious Style Guide (Jan. 23, 2018), <https://consciousstyleguide.com/drop-hyphen-asian-american/> [<https://perma.cc/YME4-DXFS>]. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *Guide to Covering Asian America*, *supra* note 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Edlagan & Vaghul, *supra* note 23.  [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Guide to Covering Asian America*, *supra* note 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Mishka Sumbungero, Tumblr (Dec. 22, 2015, 23:49 GMT+8), <http://sumbungero.tumblr.com/post/136447700453> [<https://perma.cc/NKE3-DRUB>] (“[P]lease do not blindly make the assumption that the use of P over F ‘decolonizes’ the term! There are, in fact, Philippine languages that have been using the letter F (like Ivatan and Ibanag) before the Spaniards set foot on our land and ‘introduced’ the letter to our orthography!”). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. AnneMarie, *The Conversation Around “Filipinx”*, Formation of a Filipinx American, (Jun. 4, 2017) <http://www.formationofafilipinxamerican.com/the-conversation-around-filipinx/#more-897> [[https://perma.cc/QB6F-CVR7](https://perma.cc/NKE3-DRUB)].  [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *See* Conrad Lihlihi*, Dear Asian Americans: Stop Erasing Pacific Islanders,* Reappropriate (May 16, 2017), <http://reappropriate.co/2017/05/dear-asian-americans-stop-erasing-pacific-islanders>/ [[https://perma.cc/22YF- XXJJ](https://perma.cc/22YF-%20XXJJ)]. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *See* Kawika Riley*, Pacific Islanders: a Misclassified People,* Chron. of Higher Educ., (Jun. 3, 2013), <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Pacific-Islanders-a/139577> [<https://perma.cc/TPT7-RAP3>] (describing the educational attainment gap between Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States).  [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *Guide to Covering Asian America*, *supra* note 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. For additional discussion about why to capitalize the B in Black, see Aly Colón, *Black, black, or African American*, Poynter (Oct. 14, 2003), <https://www.poynter.org/news/black-black-or-african-american> [[perma.cc/TF4M-YRKD](https://perma.cc/TPT7-RAP3)]; Merrill Perlman, *Black and White: Why Capitalization Matters*, Columbia Journalism Rev. (June 23, 2015), <https://www.cjr.org/analysis/language_corner_1.php> [[perma.cc/93YH- NFEQ](file:///Users/efosaakenzua/Downloads/perma.cc/93YH-%20NFEQ)]; Lori Tharps, *The Case for Black with a Capital ‘B’*, N.Y. Times (Nov. 18, 2014) <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/19/opinion/the-case-for-black-with-a-capital-b.html> [[perma.cc/MTP4- TQ7S](file:///Users/efosaakenzua/Downloads/perma.cc/MTP4-%20TQ7S)]; Luke Visconti, *Why the ‘B’ in ‘Black’ Is Capitalized at DiversityInc*, Diversityinc (Aug. 10, 2009), <https://www.diversityinc.com/why-the-b-in-black-is-capitalized-at-diversityinc> [[perma.cc/9LQG-DXER](file:///Users/efosaakenzua/Downloads/perma.cc/9LQG-DXER)]. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. *NABJ Style Guide A*, Nat’l Ass’n of Journalists, <https://www.nabj.org/page/styleguideA> [<https://perma.cc/WH8B-VACP>] (last visited Oct. 9, 2018) [hereinafter *NABJ Style Guide A*]. *See also* Dylan Byers, *‘An African American,’ or ‘a black’?,* Politico (Apr. 3, 2013), <https://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2013/04/an-african-american-or-a-black-160773> [<https://perma.cc/C9FJ-BEFG>] (describing the policies of several publications). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. *NABJ Style Guide A*, *supra* note 42.  [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *African American, African-American, Black, black*, TheDiversity Style Guide (Nov. 15, 2015), <http://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/african-american-african-american-black-2/> [[perma.cc/VU65-2LH5](file:///Users/efosaakenzua/Downloads/perma.cc/VU65-2LH5)]. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Aisha Harris, *Where I’m From*, Slate (July 29, 2014), [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2014/07/black\_american\_versus\_african\_american\_why\_i\_prefer \_to\_be\_called\_a\_black.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2014/07/black_american_versus_african_american_why_i_prefer%20_to_be_called_a_black.html) [<https://perma.cc/FKS6-BU3C>].   [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
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