

APALA Inclusive Language Guidelines

Created: April 2021

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Updated:

Intention Statement

This document is intended to provide focused guidance and points of consideration for fostering inclusion and solidarity in APALA communications and publications. It is intended to inform and shape APALA's official communications, including, but not limited to, press releases, official statements, announcements by committees, and communications from official APALA liaisons to other professional bodies.

This document also supplements the [APALA Style Guide](#) currently in use by the Media & Publicity Committee.

Introduction

APALA members and APALA communities come from many diasporas, including and not limited to South Asian, Southeast Asian, Kānaka Maoli, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, Central Asian, and East Asian diasporas.

APALA is a member of the Joint Council of Librarians of Color, whose community includes the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), the American Indian Library Association (AILA), REFORMA: The National Association to Promote Library & Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-speaking, and the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA).

In the spirit of encouraging care and critical engagement within APALA's communities, these guidelines aim to:

- Normalize and name stigmatized and marginalized identities within the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, without compromising the safety of APALA community members by disclosure without consent;
- Build and center solidarity within Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, while also distinguishing between the many identities within our community where it is important to affirm intra-community diversity and to highlight inequities;
- Foster solidarity with other racially minoritized communities;
- Center the identities and realities of Asian American, Pacific Islander, and other communities of color, to counter mainstream erasure of these identities and struggles;
- And engage empathy through person-first language.

This document is currently structured to consider different types of marginalized identities, one at a time. We recognize that identities intersect rather than existing singularly in vacuums; all of the guidelines are intended to work together, rather than being taken individually. Each section is structured into two subsections: a bulleted “brief synopsis” section containing recommendations and a free-text “Contextual explanations” section to position the recommendations and inform future editors of the document.

Language changes over time, and what is considered “inclusive” may shift as conversations about identity and politics evolve. While we consider the legal and medical definitions of some terms, many legal and medical frameworks reinforce systems of oppression. Therefore we do not consider them to be definitive for the purposes of inclusion. Because of the nuances and fluid nature of language, this document is intended to be a living document that is edited and improved over time.

Our Community

Brief synopsis

- When primarily referencing collective experiences and cultural practices, use the general terms “Asian American,” “Pacific Islanders,” “API,” “APIA,” etc.
- When referring to cultural practices, experiences, or oppressions that are particular to specific groups within our larger Asian American and Pacific Islander community, be specific about whose practices, experiences, and oppressions they are. Avoid appropriating specific oppressions by characterizing them generally as “APIA experiences.”
 - E.g., when referencing the disproportionate number of Filipinx healthcare workers who have passed from COVID-19, do not characterize this as a general “Asian American” or “APIA” issue.
- When describing or portraying individuals, ask the individual how they should be identified in APALA communications.
- Consider whether communications overall include and represent the diversity of the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, and build or seek new content where there is inequitable representation.
- Consider whether communications overall tend to build up myths and stereotypes about Asian American and Pacific Islander people, and work to dismantle them where possible.

Contextual explanations

We recognize that much of our work walks a fine balance of building collective narratives by and about Asian American and Pacific Islander people, while simultaneously recognizing and celebrating the diversity within our community. For this reason, we seek to characterize our stories with care. We use the terms “Asian American” and “Pacific Islander” and the acronyms, “API,” “APIA,” “AAPI,” “APA,” “APISA,” “APIDA,” etc. consciously when telling collective stories

for community and political solidarity within our professional work. At the same time, we acknowledge that Asian American and Pacific Islander people are not monolithic, and we seek to recognize the many different ethnicities, nationalities, cultural heritages, privileges, and oppressions of our large community. We recognize the harm of appropriating oppressions that are particular to some of our communities, while also recognizing that we share collective and intertwined struggles.

Many of our communities are underrepresented in APIA spaces, especially South and Central Asian, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander people, often due to global cultural practices of colorism, or discrimination that privileges lighter skin tones. We seek to make room for all of our communities within APALA, and to recognize that we are made not just of one collective experience, but also of many. When referring to experiences of particular communities, we aim to use more specific descriptors (such as “Gujarati,” “Pakistani,” or “Kānaka Maoli”) over less specific ones (such as “API” or “Asian”). We will avoid using collective terms like “Asian American,” “Pacific Islander,” and “API/AAPI” in ways that claim or appropriate experiences of oppression that are not experienced widely among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, nor to erase or reduce the multiplicity of experiences and struggles among our communities.

In keeping with the practices of consent and recognizing that identity descriptors may differ within communities, when describing an individual or individuals, we will consult with them to ensure that they and their communities are represented in APALA communications by the language that they use. We further acknowledge that individuals in the APALA community may identify with one or more racial identities. We commit to name the identities as used by the individuals and will not edit or otherwise modify this descriptor.

We commit to consider critically who is represented as “APA” in APALA communications and to provide equitable space and representation within our content about Asian American communities. We recognize that East Asian cultures are often overrepresented in Asian and Pacific Islander spaces generally. South Asian, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, Central Asian, and East Asian Indigenous and minority cultures and heritages are often underrepresented. We seek to correct this in our organization’s public communications.

We also seek to contribute toward dismantling myths and stereotypes about Asian and Pacific Islander people through APALA communications, including but not limited to stereotypes of people within our communities as “perpetual foreigners,” “terrorists,” “dragon ladies,” “model minorities,” as well as vectors of disease, or as having bodily “abnormality” to be policed by the white gaze (including weight, sexuality, etc.). Within the scope of our goals to promote racial justice and to curate content that portrays the diversity of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities well, we aim to dismantle and push back against such myths. Additionally within our goal is to work toward solidarity with other communities of color, we also seek to dismantle myths that create wedges between our communities and other BIPOC communities. For example, the model minority myth is used in mainstream media to deny or downplay financial, academic, and health impacts of racism on Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities. Within

the scope of our goals to promote racial justice and to curate content that portrays the diversity of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities well, we also aim to dismantle and push back against the model minority myth.

Solidarity with Other Communities of Color

Brief synopsis

- “People of color” (POC) and “Black and Indigenous people of color” (BIPOC) should be primarily used when referring to or describing experiences shared across all people of color.
 - If describing or referring to experiences that are common to specific groups of POC or BIPOC, e.g., Black people or Native people, use the names of those specific groups, instead of ascribing the experiences to the entire community.
- The terms POC or BIPOC should not be used to imply that Asian Americans experience the same oppression as other communities of color, such as Black, Indigenous, or Latinx people.
- Be conscious of terminology and expressions that originate from other communities of color, and avoid appropriating them.
- Generally, capitalize the names of ethnic and racial groups; where whiteness or Whiteness is concerned, capitalization is at the discretion of the author
- Recognize the differences and intersections between race, ethnicity, and nationality.

Contextual explanation

When we use the terms “people of color” (POC) and “Black, Indigenous, and People of Color” (BIPOC), we seek to remain true to the original use of the term “people of color” by late 1970s racial justice advocates to emphasize the connectedness of struggles faced by different non-white racial groups. We use POC and BIPOC when describing shared issues and advocacy work.

We aim to avoid misuse of the collective terms POC and BIPOC to claim experiences of oppression that are specific to our Black, Latinx, Chicanx, Native American, Indigenous, and First Nations colleagues, friends, and family. When referring to or discussing experiences that are more specific to Black, Latinx, Chicanx, Native, First Nations and/or Indigenous communities, we aim to avoid claiming those experiences when they are not our own. We also recognize that although communities of color share many struggles, many of the most egregious forms of white supremacy have been enacted upon Black, Native American, First Nations, and Indigenous people. Many Asian Americans, especially of East Asian descent, benefit from colorism and the model minority myth, both of which are used in mainstream communication to drive wedges between communities of color. We strive to recognize collective privilege, and to use the terms POC and BIPOC **only** for the purposes of solidarity in shared struggle with other communities of color.

We seek to avoid perpetuating cycles of cultural appropriation and wrongful profit from the cultural creations of other communities of color. We aim to be conscious of terminology, expressions, and cultural practices that have been created by communities of color. This frequently occurs in digital communications, such as social media, and we seek to avoid appropriating them. Examples include—but are not limited to—African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and digital blackface¹.

Where using the names of racially minoritized groups, we capitalize those names, e.g. Native, Latinx, Black, Chicanx. We recognize that there are various reasonings behind capitalization for whiteness or Whiteness; not capitalizing can support the falsehood that white people are "neutral," while everyone else is circumscribed by racial categories. We also recognize that whiteness is not necessarily imbued with the same ideas of shared cultural identity or shared struggle that are held in our capitalization of the names of other racial identities. As such, where referring to or describing whiteness or white communities, capitalization is at the discretion of the author and is not required. In communicating to or about people of color, we will use terms that those individuals identify by, in consultation with them. For example, do not identify someone as Latinx without ensuring that they identify as Latinx.

Where contextually significant, we strive to distinguish between race, ethnicity, and nationality. While both can describe significant aspects of a person's cultural background and identity, they should not be conflated. We also endeavor to make intersections of race, ethnicity, and nationality visible. For example, how an individual identifies may depend on whether their family migrated voluntarily or were forcibly displaced as a part of colonization. Another example is to create narrative space for transracial and transnational adoptees.

Gender Inclusion

Brief synopsis

- Avoid stating or implying that social gender roles and behaviors are attributable to biology, and vice versa.
- Ask individuals how they should be referred to, including pronouns, name, and honorifics. Where it is not feasible to ask, e.g., if writing an article about a person who has passed away, do research on how the person historically refers to themselves.
 - Avoid applying gendered pronouns and honorifics, e.g. Mr., Ms., Mx., etc., without verifying that they are the pronouns and honorifics that any given person identifies by. Do not make assumptions about people's genders based on your perception of their gender expression, e.g. their haircut or their voice.

¹ For a definition of "digital blackface," see Lauren Michele Jackson's op-ed, "We Need to Talk About Digital Blackface in Reaction GIFs" in *Teen Vogue* at <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/digital-blackface-reaction-gifs> (last accessed February 18, 2021).

- Respect the stated names, pronouns, and honorifics of individuals, including if they are different than the names, pronouns, and honorifics that they have previously identified by. Do not use deadnames.
- Do not explicitly identify a person's gender unless it is relevant to the story or communication at hand **and** you have the person's permission.
- Where possible, find alternatives to words and phrases that rely on the assumption of masculinity or men being the default, e.g. "first-year" instead of "freshman."
- Avoid the implication that gender is a binary comprising only "men" and "women," and give room to a plurality of gender identities.

Contextual explanation

APALA seeks to expand its comprehension and use of gender in communications beyond the constraints of mainstream society's assumption that gender tightly correlates to a person's assigned sex at birth. We seek to recognize and respect the gender identities of its communications subjects. To this end, we will work to avoid assuming the gender of the people we communicate about and to, as well as to respect stated gender identities and markers, including honorifics and pronouns.

Because transgender and gender non-conforming people are historically and continue to be persecuted based on their gender, we privilege and value their rights to privacy and non-tokenized humanity in communication. We are aware that sex and gender are often irrelevant to the purpose of our communications; as such, we commit to identify the genders of people we communicate about only if it is directly relevant and where we have obtained the permission of individuals identified.

Globally, there is a common power differential that favors cisgender men and representation of cisgender men, minoritizing virtually all other genders. One impact of this is that common language relies on the assumption that people are men by default, which is particularly loaded in a profession in which women form a majority. We seek to avoid this language, e.g. "freshman," "mailman," "for he's a jolly good fellow," and find alternative phrases or phrasing where this is the case.

Finally, we recognize that APALA members and communities may identify with many gender identities aside from "man" or "woman," including non-binary, X-gender, genderqueer, hijra, kothi, kathoey, Māhū, Fa'afafine, and many more. We recognize that gender is not a binary, but a spectrum, and a person's gender identity may change over time. We seek to create room for the broadness of the gender spectrum and to push back against the assumption that gender is a binary or a constant.

Inclusive Communication about Sexuality

Brief synopsis

- Although we often describe sexuality and gender identities in relation to each other and describe “queerness” in both, gender and sexuality are distinct aspects of a person’s being and should not be portrayed as one and the same.
- Use broad acronyms such as LGBT, LGBTQIA, or others primarily in reference to experiences that are common to queer and trans communities
 - If describing or referring to experiences that are common to specific groups within the broader LGBTQIA+ community, e.g., gay people or trans people, use the names of those specific groups, instead of ascribing the experiences to the entire community.
- Do not identify or describe an individual’s sexuality in a communication without their permission and only do so when it is relevant to the story or communication at hand.
- Avoid using the “LGBT” and “LGBTQIA+” acronyms to describe a person or individual experience. If referring to individuals, or to issues and experiences particular to one group under the acronym, use the more specific names of the communities or identities of the individual
 - Instead of “They are a LGBT person,” try “They are queer and trans.”
- Always use an individual’s personally-identified terminology. If unclear, ask them; do not make assumptions.

Contextual explanations section

In recognition of the presence and marginalized realities of LGBTQIA+ people in Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, we strive to represent the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people well in APALA communications.

We recognize the political and community solidarity between people of queer sexualities and queer gender identities in using the LGBTQIA+ acronym in its many forms or the term “queer.” We also strive to avoid overgeneralizing, by recognizing that lesbian, gay, bi- and pansexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual people are not monolithic. We recognize that gender identity and sexuality are related, but separate. We work to remain conscious of the fact that there are issues that disproportionately affect specific groups in this community. Inclusion requires that we be conscious of this and transparent about it in our communication. For example, if communicating to raise awareness of the disproportionately high number of hate crimes committed against trans women of color, it erases the specificity of the oppression faced by trans women of color to refer to them over-broadly as “LGBT individuals.”

Because queer people are historically and continue to be persecuted based on sexuality, we privilege and value their rights to privacy and non-tokenized humanity in communication. This includes critically considering whether it is relevant to a communication to identify a person’s sexuality and identifying a person’s sexuality only with the consent of that person. It also extends to the curation of content about openly queer people; we seek to overturn the harmful

trend of narratives that consistently end or rely on queer people existing unhappily (or dying) by highlighting stories of queer people's success and joy, with their consent.

We recognize that language evolves and that terms describing identities related to sexuality may hold different meanings for people based on their lived experiences. For this reason, although we use the word "queer" broadly to refer to LGBTQIA+ identities, where communicating about individuals, we commit to respect the way people describe their own sexuality. We are aware that, while the term "queer" is currently widely used, it is a reclamation of a term that has historically been used as a slur and many people do not use it to describe themselves because it causes them to relive traumatic experiences. Therefore, we will prioritize the use of self-identified descriptors when referring to the sexuality of specific people. Also, in keeping with a person-first approach, we will generally refer to queer identities in adjectival form, as opposed to noun form - for example, "queer people" as opposed to "queers," particularly if the person authoring the communication does not identify as queer.

Including People with Disabilities

Brief synopsis

- People's health conditions and disabilities should not be disclosed without their permission or where not relevant to the communication at hand.
- Be conscious of commonly-used words that implicitly put down people with disabilities. Ableist slurs include: "stupid/dumb," "lame," "handicapped," "retarded," and "crippled."
 - If communicating from an able-bodied standpoint about people with disabilities, avoid using reclaimed slurs that are mainly used among people with disabilities.
- Do not use diagnostic terms for common idiosyncrasies, e.g. referring to cleaning as "OCD" where the person does not have OCD.
- When communicating about communities of people with disabilities, do some research into terminologies that those communities identify by, and use those terminologies accordingly. When communicating about individuals, use terminology that the individuals identify by.
 - Be aware that medical and scientific terminology does not always reflect what is considered socially inclusive.
- If describing experiences of people with disabilities, avoid implying that people's disabilities are only a burden to their fellow community members and emphasize community responsibilities for care.
- Aside from word choice, alt text for images & gifs, color contrast between backgrounds and texts, captioning for videos are necessary for accessible APALA communications

Contextual explanation

We recognize that disabilities can be either visible or invisible, and that inclusion and accessibility should take both into account. In light of the fact that people with disabilities

continue to be discriminated against, we recommend that disabilities should not be disclosed where not relevant to the communication at hand, and never without explicit permission from subjects of communication. Furthermore, individuals who choose to disclose a disability in an APALA communication should have control over the degree of their disclosure; no specifics should be disclosed beyond what the individual has expressed consent for.

We acknowledge that even when not communicating actively about people with disabilities, everyday language includes implicit put-downs, including words that are considered slurs by community members and experts. In the spirit of making space without requiring people to disclose a disability, we will avoid the use of common phrases that show implicit bias against people with disabilities, including and not limited to those listed above. We recognize that some ableist slurs have been reappropriated by people with disabilities; when communicating from an able-bodied perspective on APALA's behalf, we will avoid using these terms. We will also work to remain aware that socially inclusive language is often not reflected in scientific or medical terminology, e.g. people with Down's syndrome are referred to as "mongoloids" in older medical texts. The fact that something is or was accepted by scientific communities does not necessarily warrant acceptance as inclusive language for APALA communication.

We recognize that communities of people with disabilities are not monolithic and different communities use different ways of describing themselves. Although the spirit of this document emphasizes person-first language overall, we are aware that, in many communities of people with disabilities, identity-first language is considered more appropriate. We recognize that some individuals and groups, including Autistic and Deaf communities², use identity-first language to challenge the stigma that a disability is inherently negative and needs to be separated from the person in order for that person to be a whole and complete person. Thus, we do not default to person-first language when communicating about people and communities with disabilities.

In addition to using respectful and inclusive language, APALA content should be delivered according to accessibility standards. This includes but is not limited to: using alt text for website and social media images for people who use screen readers; ensuring there is sufficient contrast between text and background colors; not relying on color alone to convey meaning; captioning videos; and using briefly descriptive and meaningful link text. If interviewing a person who discloses that they have a disability for APALA communications, ask if any accommodations are needed for the interview, and what will most help them; do not require the disclosure of specifics to justify accommodations.

Destigmatizing Mental Health

Content warning: This section includes discussion of recommended practices in communication about death and suicide

² See University of Kansas Research & Training Center on Independent Living Media Guidelines (<https://rtcil.org/products/media/guidelines>) and Autistic Self Advocacy Network's *Identity-First Language* (<https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/identity-first-language/>)

Brief synopsis

- Be conscious of commonly-used words that implicitly put down people with mental health disabilities and difficulties, or that discount mental health as a public health concern. Mental health slurs to avoid include “crazy,” “paranoid,” “psycho,” or “nuts.”
- Avoid language that cues that mental illness and mental healthcare are shameful, and choose language that does not convey bias or judgement, e.g. “has a history of” or “is being treated for” rather than “suffering from.”
- Avoid characterizing matters that are not mental illnesses as mental illnesses.
 - Do not use diagnostic terms for everyday idiosyncrasies, e.g. “My cleaning is so OCD,” or “I’m so distracted right now, it’s like I have ADHD.”
- In the spirit of person-first and active language, describe mental illness (where relevant to the communication) as only one facet of a person’s story, e.g, “[name] has depression,” not “[name] is depressed.”
- Do not pathologize or criminalize death or suicide, e.g. use “died by suicide” as opposed to “committed suicide.”
- Do not glamorize death, particularly death by suicide.
- Include content warnings for material that discusses topics that may cause people with post-traumatic stress to experience past traumas. Content warnings should also account for violence toward marginalized groups. E.g. If the content includes racism, it should be included in the content warnings.
 - Content warnings should alert people to content that they may find triggering and give them a chance to avoid or prepare themselves. Content warnings should include the general topic(s) of concern and possibly the extent to which it is discussed.

Contextual explanation

We recognize that stigma in many Asian American and Pacific Islander communities prevents many Asian American and Pacific Islander people from seeking help or having open dialogue around mental health. To compound this, everyday language frequently disregards, misrepresents, or makes light of the realities of people who struggle with mental health. In light of this, we will work to remain conscious of and avoid words that commonly belittle mental health issues and people who have them. We will avoid characterizing matters that are not mental health conditions as such. Matters that are historically or presently characterized as mental health conditions, but which we do not recognize as such include everyday idiosyncrasies, queerness, physical health concerns, and racism. We also seek to push back on stereotypes that associate people with minoritized gender identities with mental health conditions.

Because death is an activating topic for many people with mental health conditions, especially death by suicide, and because the number of deaths by suicide in America has risen to become

a public health crisis³, we strive to treat the topics of death and suicide with care. Experts in suicide & suicidality studies report that risk of additional suicides increase when a death by suicide is covered in sensationalist or graphic ways⁴. Therefore, we will work to avoid romanticizing, glamorizing, or otherwise implying desirability in the topic of death, particularly death by suicide. Like other topics related to mental health, a common first step in addressing deaths by suicide as a public health crisis includes building awareness and careful conversation about it; this is made difficult by the fact that common language about suicide treats it as criminal or shameful. This language has the impact of minimizing the grief of people who survive a loved one's death by suicide and quashes our community's ability to have healing conversations about it. Therefore, we will also work to avoid language that implies that death by suicide is a crime or an act that cannot be communicated about.

In presenting content that is as inclusive as possible of the Asian American and Pacific Islander experience, we recognize that some topics may be triggering for members of our audience. Triggers are stimuli that serve as reminders of past trauma and can cause negative, or unwanted, physiological and/or psychological responses including sadness, anxiety, depression or even reliving a past traumatic experience. While we are not able to identify every potential trigger as triggers may be specific to an individual's situation, we seek to alert people to potentially triggering content and give them the option to avoid the content or prepare themselves. We strive to include content warnings regarding general topics of concern, striking a balance between generic and specific; content warnings that are too specific may have the undesired impact of triggering readers, and content warnings that are too generic may not help readers to prepare themselves appropriately.

Inclusive Communication about Faith and Religion

Brief synopsis

- Avoid the assumption that audience members will resonate most with Christian views of spirituality, or cultural and faith practices.
 - e.g. Do not assume that all audience members celebrate Christmas or have positive experiences with Christmas.
- When communicating about faiths and beliefs outside of one's own, do not sensationalize the practices or imply that those faiths and beliefs are outside of normalcy.

³ Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. See the National Institute for Mental Health's statistics page. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml> (last accessed February 18, 2021)

⁴ This risk is often called "suicide contagion." For more on this, including recommendations related to media reporting on suicide, see Patrick O'Carroll and Lloyd Potter's "Suicide Contagion and the Reporting of Suicide: Recommendations from a National Workshop" in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Recommendations and Reports* at <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00031539.htm> (last accessed February 18, 2021)

- When communicating about a faith-based cultural practice from a faith outside one's own sphere of experience, research it first.
- If a person's faith or religion is not relevant to the communication, it does not need to be included.
 - If it is relevant to the communication, ask the person how they would like their faith or religious practices described, if at all.
- Avoid assumptions about a person's faith in connection with their nationality or ethnicity, and vice versa.
 - e.g. Do not assume that a person is Hindu if they self-identify as Indian.

Contextual explanations

American and Western culture tends to assume a Christian cultural majority, which may not be applicable to everyone in APALA communities. Because Asian American and Pacific Islander communities come from many different Asian diasporas and diaspora experiences, we commit to avoid making assumptions about people's faith and religion and actively recognize the discrimination that many people in our communities experience based on faith and religion. We recognize that Asian American and Pacific Islander communities may observe Islam, Baha'i, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity, Daoism, and many other religious or spiritual practices.

We seek to treat faith and spiritual practices with care in our communications. We commit to portraying our community members' faiths and religions as valid and normal. We commit to avoid sensationalizing spiritual practices, or tokenizing members of our communities who observe minoritized religions, faiths, or spiritual practices.

In recognition of the fact that many people experience discrimination, from microaggressions to state-level oppression, based on their faith and religion, we commit to researching and understanding religious and faith practices outside our own experiences, including consulting community members who observe the practices, with their consent. We will refer to individuals' faith, religion, or spiritual practice only with their consent, and generally only if it is relevant to the communication at hand. Relatedly, because it is a microaggression to assume a person's faith based on their ethnicity or nationality, or vice versa, we commit to abstain from doing this.

Recognizing and Resisting Power-Based Interpersonal Violence

Brief synopsis

- Language, power, and violence are interconnected. Violence can be symbolic and conveyed through choice of words.
- Avoid language that conveys disbelief or bias.
 - Use "shared" or "reported" instead of "confessed," "claimed," or "alleged."

- Be aware of and avoid using language that normalizes and/or minimizes violence.
 - e.g. Use “relationship violence,” “domestic violence,” or “intimate partner violence” instead of “domestic dispute” or “quarrel.”
- Use active voice to retain accountability for the person who committed the act of violence and avoid blaming the person who experienced it, e.g. “they reported that he raped them” instead of “they were raped.”
- Use “person who has experienced ____” instead of “victim.”
 - “Survivor” is acceptable if the person in question identifies with the term; however, be aware that not all people who have experienced interpersonal violence identify with it.

Contextual explanation

“Power-based interpersonal violence” refers to interconnected forms of violence including – but not limited to – sexual assault, harassment, bullying, child abuse, and abusive relationships. Power and violence is not always physical and can be rooted in and conveyed through language choice. We acknowledge that there virtually always exist power dynamics in interactions between individuals, between parties, and between organizations, based on position, influence, and historical oppressions. There may also be power dynamics between the position of APALA, as an organization with platforms and resources, and the organizations and individuals whom we communicate with. We acknowledge that language can produce and perpetuate power-based interpersonal violence, both intentionally and unintentionally. We commit to making conscious language choices rooted in the awareness of power dynamics between different parties and entities.

When communicating about dynamics or incidents of power-based interpersonal violence, including workplace or school bullying, domestic or intimate partner abuse, child abuse, or human trafficking, we strive to respect the agency of people who have experienced and survived interpersonal violence and to normalize belief in them. As such we will avoid language that conveys disbelief, sensationalizes violence, portrays acts of violence as normal, or downplays the impacts of the violence. Similarly, we commit to using the language that the individual we are communicating with or about identifies by.

In parallel, we recognize that violence is not merely passively experienced but actively perpetrated; when communicating about incidents of power-based violence, we recognize the accountability of perpetrators of violence through the use of active voice.

Inclusive Communication about Citizenship, Residency and Immigration Status

Brief synopsis

- Avoid dehumanizing language, e.g. “alien” or “illegal.”
- Do not use “refugee,” “asylum-seeker,” “immigrant,” or “migrant” interchangeably.

- Avoid the implication that one has to be a citizen in order to be “an American.”
- If a person’s citizenship, residency, or immigration status is not relevant to the communication, it does not need to be included.
 - If it is relevant to the communication, ask the person how they would like their status described.
- Do not assume a person’s citizenship, residency, or immigration status.
 - e.g. If a person expresses not having a driver’s license, do not express shock or assume that they do not have a driver’s license because they do not know how to drive.
- Provide options for anonymity if interviewing or communicating specifically about an individual’s citizenship or residency status.

Contextual explanations

Historically, Asian Americans have been denied citizenship and its associated privileges. Many Asian Americans continue to be denied these privileges today; in 2015, it was estimated that 1.7 million Asian immigrants from India, China, the Philippines, South Korea, Vietnam, Pakistan, and many other Asian countries, were undocumented⁵. This legacy has shaped language describing these communities, resulting in the perception of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners. From the media to library subject headings, dehumanizing language is often used to label people with different immigration statuses, particularly those without citizenship. While undocumented Asian Americans are a quickly growing population, they are often omitted from discussions on immigration. We want to call attention to this trend, which affects Asian American communities.

Additionally, different kinds of immigration statuses are often conflated. In recognizing the unique experiential differences between “refugee,” “asylum-seeker,” “immigrant,” or “migrant,” we will not use these terms interchangeably. Individuals can identify as “Asian American” and “American” regardless of their legal status. If a person’s citizenship, residency, or immigration status is not relevant to the communication, it should not be included. If it becomes apparent that the tenor of a communication requires a subject to disclose their status, we commit to reshape the communication such that it no longer requires this. Do not make assumptions about a person’s citizenship, residency, or immigration status.

Concluding Statement

We understand that some of these guidelines may stimulate reflection upon existing communications, including possible requests for editorial changes. Editorial changes to already-published communications for the purpose of making the language more inclusive may be made and can be initiated by editors, interviewees, or community members. They should

⁵ This figure is drawn from AAPI Data’s 2017 “Data on Undocumented Asian Americans,” <https://aapidata.com/undocumented/> (last accessed February 18, 2021)

always include an added editorial note to acknowledge the change, why it was made, and when it was made. For example,

<http://www.apalaweb.org/member-highlights-showcase-rebecca-martin/>

This document was created with the assumption and hope that language evolves and that what is considered “inclusive” will grow and change. It is intended to be reviewed and updated.

Further Reading

Our Community

Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA) - [Covering Asia and Asian Americans](#)

South Asian Journalists Association (SAJA) - [Covering South Asian Americans and South Asia](#)

18 Million Rising - [Operating Principles](#)

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence - [Census Data and API Identities](#)

Solidarity with Other Communities of Color

We Here - Safe Space Agreement and Code of Conduct (available to members)

Race Forward - [Race Reporting Guide](#)

National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) - [NABJ Style Guide](#)

National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) - [NAHJ Cultural Competence Handbook](#)

Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) - [Reporting and Indigenous Terminology](#)

NPR - [Code Switch](#)

National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance - [QTAPI's for #BlackLivesMatter](#)

Simmons University Library - [Anti-Oppression: Anti-Racism](#)

Gender Inclusion

Hues, [The Genderbread Person](#)

Gender Spectrum - [The Language of Gender](#)

[The Trans Language Primer](#)

[MyPronouns.org](#)

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates - [Toolkits & Guides](#)

Pride at Work - [Union Guide to Discussing LGBTQ People and Issues](#)

Radical Copyeditor - [Transgender Style guide](#)

Inclusive Communication about Sexualities

Trevor Project - [Lifeguard Workshop](#)

National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network - [Radical Syllabus for QTPoC Mental Health Practitioners](#)

National Gay and Lesbian Journalists Association (NGLJA) - [LGBTQ Terminology Stylebook](#)

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates - [Toolkits & Guides](#)

Pride at Work - [Union Guide to Discussing LGBTQ People and Issues](#)

Including People with Disabilities

National Center on Disability and Journalism (ASU) - [Disability Language Style Guide](#)
 APA Style Guide, 6th Edition - [Guidelines for NonHandicapping Language in APA Journals](#)
 University of Illinois Library - [Disability Resource Guide](#)
 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - [Social Media Accessibility](#)
 CUNY - [Accessibility Toolkit for Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#)
Radical Copyeditor - [On Person-First Language: It's Time to Actually Put the Person First](#)

Destigmatizing Mental Health

University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and Arts Inclusive Teaching - [Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings](#)
 Mental Health Coordinating Council - [Recovery-Oriented Language Guide](#)
 Reporting on Suicide - [Best Practices and Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#)
Psychology Today - [Ten Commandments for How to Talk About Mental Health](#)

Inclusive Communication about Faith and Religion

Religion Newswriters Association - [Religion Stylebook](#)
 Conscious Style Guide - [Spirituality, Religion and Atheism Guide](#)

Recognizing and Resisting Power-Based Interpersonal Violence

(archived) Emerson College Office of Marketing - [Guidelines for Inclusive Language](#)
 Workplace Bullying Institute - [Discover the Steps in Your Journey](#)
 Asian Pacific Institute of Gender-Based Violence - [Interpretation: The Importance of Language in Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault](#)

Inclusive Communication about Citizenship, Residency and Immigration Status

National Latin@ Network - [What Is Immigration Status?](#)
 Race Forward - [Journalist Style Guide for Covering Immigration](#)
[Change the Subject](#), documentary directed by Sawyer Broadley and Jill Baron
 United We Dream - [Toolkits](#)