

Language Restoration, Reclamation, and Repair at SPACE

SPACE Gallery, 534-538 Congress Street, Portland ME 04101, Məkihkanək “At the fish hook”
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Language matters. We are creating a living document that makes some suggestions for different phrases and words that are more mindful and acknowledge the roots of language aiming for nonviolent, anti-racist, and anti-ableist communication. We welcome additions, suggestions, and questions.

We understand that it may not be possible to eliminate all harmful language in conversation, in programs, and on our site due to education/socialization, resources, editing capacity, human error or other reasons. “Eliminate” is a goal to strive for even if it can’t be achieved. We all make mistakes and it’s hard to change figures of speech we inherited, but by trying again, apologizing when necessary, and correcting ourselves we learn new habits and restoration moves into long term repair.

When speaking about human identity, disability, gender and sexuality, how a person wishes to be addressed or identified supersedes any of our suggested alternatives for potentially harmful terms. If you are unsure in a given situation, ask the person with whom you are interacting.

This list has been developed by SPACE staff with community contributions.

Old phrase/word	Suggested restorative phrase/word
Hey Ladies/Gentlemen!	Hey folks/y’all!/Distinguished guests/ Friends
guys	folks/y’all/you all/everyone
Guns blazing	[Just don’t]
crazy	wild/silly/surprising/chaotic/hectic
Sir/Ma’am	Mx, my guest, (new) friend, drop formalizing them.
Master *such as master bedroom, or any other way master might be used in a way that signifies a power dynamic between people (not necessarily artistic mastery)	Primary / Dominant / Aggregate, become adept or expert in if needed
Slave to _____	I’m not beholden/limited to _____

Black listing/white listing	Cancel/Prioritize
Circle the wagons	Come together
Indian	Indigenous/Native American/First Nation distinct from Indian/ South Asian/AAPI/Pakistani/Benghal when appropriate
Slaves	People who were/are enslaved
Slaver	Human trafficker, Slave owner
Slavery	Enslavement
Rule of thumb	Common sense/the policy/guideline
Peanut gallery	Audience
Ninja	Rockstar
Spirit Animal	Meaningful creature/guide
Tribe	Squad, friends, family, network, support system
Bugger / Bugger Off	noun:Jerk verb:Buzz off
Mumbo Jumbo	a bunch of nonsense

Long time no see	It's been a long time!
No can do	Sorry, we can't
Hysterical	Upset
Mom, Dad, Father, Mother, etc. (don't use these if you don't know minor's family structure or preferred language for their family)	Parent/ Adult/ Caregiver
Raped	Destroyed, if using metaphorically
pow-wow	Meeting, gathering, one-on-one
Turn a blind eye	Ignore
Killing it	Doing a great job!

Savage, Barbaric	Unnecessarily cruel
Have a come to Jesus moment	Try to reconcile our differences
BIPOC (acronym applicable in some cases)	Indigenous, Black, Brown, and/or people of color (explain acronyms if you use them in writing or public programs and don't assume someone is lumped into an identity vector group).
stab/shot	try/approach
Sound guy	Sound engineer or sound person
mankind	humankind
landlord/land lady	Property owner
husband/wife (if you don't know OR person is non-binary/gender neutral, genderqueer, etc.)	spouse
Gun shy	afraid
Nieces/Nephews (if you don't know OR person is non-binary/gender neutral, genderqueer, etc.)	Nibblings
Aunts/Uncles (if you don't know OR person is non-binary/gender neutral, genderqueer, etc.)	Extended family, Ommer, nibbling, parent's sibling
Brother/sister (if you don't know OR person is non-binary/gender neutral, genderqueer, etc.)	Sibling
Son/daughter (if you don't know OR person is non-binary/gender neutral, genderqueer, etc.)	child/kid/bitsy/children/kiddos
An Irish goodbye	Slip out/gotta go
Love you long time	I love you/You're swell
Marginalized/Minority	Historically underrepresented or oppressed/Pushed to margins
"Native of" or "native to"	Originally from/Born and raised/From when not referring to Indigenous or First Nations peoples
Bagged / in the bag	Got it/Got a win!
Owned it	Confident

Overseer	Person in charge/Director/Manager
Trigger	Activation/Arousal
Cake walk / take the cake / prize walk	That was easy for me
Gypsy / gyp/gypped	Only use the name if referring to someone who self-identifies as a traditional nomadic Romani-speaking or related individual. Replacement noun: Wanderer, nomad / Verb: cheated out of, ripped off
Smart as a whip	That person is smart
Blind study/review	Masked study/review
Basket case	Nervous person
Addicted	When not speaking about addiction: hooked on or devoted to
“Confined” to a wheelchair (or other device/circumstance)	Uses a wheelchair (or other device/circumstance)
cripple/crippled	Person with a disability/disabled or impaired
Handicap parking	Accessible parking
Insane	surprising/wild
Lame	Boring or uncool
OCD	Detail-oriented, unless speaking to a medical diagnosis
retard/retarded	Person with a cognitive disability/ other non-hurtful pejorative adjective that describes your situation
Sanity check	Confidence check
Stand up meeting	Quick meeting
Walk-in	drop-by
Tone deaf	unenlightened
Wheelchair “bound”	Utilizing a wheelchair

Bury the hatchet	Call for peace or a truce
Geronimo	None, unless speaking about the historical figure. Another exclamation.
Guru	Expert, guide, leader, teacher, mentor
Totem Pole	Seniority, power, chain of command
On the warpath	On the offensive, angry, aggressive
“Preferred” pronouns	Pronouns
Congressman/woman	Congress person, representative
ballsy	Bold, risktaker
fireman/postman/etc	Fire fighter, postal carrier, etc.
Hermaphrodite (referring to a human)	Intersex person
Man hours	labor
manmade	Made by hand
Seminal	Leading, groundbreaking (seminal refers to “semen” and connotes male dominance)
transgendered	Trasgender - refers to it being a state of being, and not something that has happened to someone
tranny/ie	Transgender person, transgender male, transgender female
Original gender/real gender	Assigned at birth, AFAB (assigned female at birth), AMAB (assigned male at birth)
maternity/paternity	parenthood
Women (in reproductive justice)	People who menstruate, womb-bearing people, AFAB people
abort	cancel/end
Child prostitute	Child who has been trafficked
Hispanic	Spanish, Latino/a/x, or use specific country of origin

Karen	Demanding or entitled white woman
Oriental	Person of Asian descent, use specific country if known, or Asian American if appropriate
Straight	Heterosexual
Thug	Suspect or criminal
Victim	Person who has experienced, person overcoming, person impacted by
Barrio	Specific name of neighborhood
Ghetto	Place: Specific name of neighborhood, urban area, housing project, Adj: urban, class-related, adjective with more specificity
Black sheep	Outcast, outlier
Grandfathered	Legacy status
scalper/scalping	reseller/opportunist
"Sold down the river"	betrayed
Webmaster	Developer, programmer, admin
Prostitute/whore	Sex worker, or person who engages in sex work
"Go off the reservation"	Disagree with the group, defect, go rogue
Wife beater (shirt)	White tank top, undershirt,
African	Use the specific country or inquire about the specific geography when possible, unless actually referring to something representative of the continent
hick	Unsophisticated rural person
hillbilly	Person from Appalachia or Ozark regions of the US, see above as well
Hold down the fort	Cover the role, oversee things, staff something
Normal person	Average person, ordinary person, layperson

Prostitute (verb)	To debase
	<i>Email your suggestions to info@space538.org</i>