WORDS MATTER:
IN FOSTERING EQUALITY

Language isn't just something we use to communicate; it also structures the ways in which we think, and how we process values and beliefs. If the language we're using naturally, and regularly, associates inferiority and negativity with a cultural context, it's no wonder that the negativity gets exemplified in society. The science of bias suggests that we all carry prejudices within ourselves—and we all have the tools to keep them in check.

It's increasingly clear that structural racial divides remain deeply powerful and that language is one of the ways they're perpetuated. It's crucial that the discriminatory ideologies within these structures be rooted out.

The importance of de-racializing English is paramount for achieving racial justice, and it means that monitoring your own language use is extremely necessary.

Making language inclusive means examining everyday words, phrases, and idioms in language and being mindful of the connotations of what you say. The alternative — perpetuating racist mindsets through the use of language itself — is untenable.

HERE ARE SOME STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER:

- **Consciously commit yourself to egalitarianism in your language.**

- **Acknowledge differences, rather than pretend that you are ignoring them.**

- **Increase your familiarity with different people to expand your point of view and language choices.**

- **Consciously identify what qualities and goals those you are communicating with have in common with you.**

- **When you encounter examples of bias in language, speak out against it. Why? Doing so helps create and reinforce a standard for yourself and the people around you.**