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Explaining AP style on Black and white

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AP's style is now to capitalize Black in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense, conveying an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black, including those in the African diaspora and within Africa. The lowercase black is a color, not a person. AP style will continue to lowercase the term white in racial, ethnic and cultural senses.

We also now capitalize Indigenous in reference to original inhabitants of a place.

These decisions align with long-standing capitalization of distinct racial and ethnic identifiers such as Latino, Asian American and Native American. Our discussions on style and language consider many points, including the need to be inclusive and respectful in our storytelling and the evolution of language.

After a review and period of consultation, we found, at this time, less support for capitalizing white. White people generally do not share the same history and culture, or the experience of being discriminated against because of skin color. In addition, AP is a global news organization and there is considerable disagreement, ambiguity and confusion about whom the term includes in much of the world.

We agree that white people's skin color plays into systemic inequalities and injustices, and we want our journalism to robustly explore those problems. But capitalizing the term white, as is done by white supremacists, risks subtly conveying legitimacy to such beliefs.

Some have expressed a view that if we do not capitalize white, we are being inconsistent and discriminating against white people, or, conversely, that we are implying that white is the default. We also took note of the argument that capitalizing the term could pull white people more fully into issues and discussions of race and equality.

We will watch closely how usage and thought evolve on these questions, and we will review our decision periodically.

We welcome your thoughts at: https://apstylebook.com/suggestions