



Multiple Heritage Project

Terms Used to Describe People of 'Mixed Race': Past and Present (2007)

The following phrases are just some of the terms that have been used to describe people of 'mixed race'. Decide which of these terms you consider to be acceptable and appropriate language for our time.

'U' denotes terms typically used in the USA

'D' denotes terms that are generally considered to be out-dated and offensive

'N' denotes more recent, but equally offensive terms

'P' denotes terms that young people of Multiple Heritage say they prefer – as indicated by recent research undertaken by the Project

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**Bi-racial : (U)** Of two races

**Black :** Is not a real skin colour - tends to be used as a 'political identity' for non-white people who suffer discrimination on the grounds of race

**Borderliner: (D)**

**Bounty: (D)** Traditionally, someone 'black' who 'acts white'

**Breed (Half- breed): (D)** 'Street' term for people of mixed race – suggests there are 'pure breeds' or races that are contaminated or watered down when people 'mix'.

**Brownie : (D)** Street term for mixed race girls

**Chequerboard: (D)**

**Coconut :(D)** same as 'Bounty'

**Coloured : (D)** In South Africa, this term refers to a 'mixed' group of people with African and European ancestry. In UK, is generally considered outdated and inappropriate as all people are considered to have a 'colour'.

**Coolie** : (D) This term is used to refer to people of Asian descent. The indentured slave labourers with Indian origins were called this in the Caribbean.

**Coon**: (D) An extremely offensive term for a 'person of colour'

**Confused.com** :(N) People of mixed race are often (incorrectly) assumed to confused about their identity.

**Creole** : In most of Latin America, Creole generally refers to people of mixed Spanish or Portuguese decent and in Brazil it is a slang word for Black individuals. The term has also been used to denote someone whose ancestry is so mixed that they do not belong to the any other categories.

**Dual Heritage** : (P) However, some young people dislike the notion of only referring to **two** backgrounds. (See 'Shared Heritage')

**Dusky** : To describe a person with an off-white complexion.

**Eurasian**: A term that refers to those of European and Asian parentage.

**Fair-skinned** : A light complexion.

**Grey**: (D) A shade you get when black is mixed with white.

**Half-black** \*1: (D)

**Half-breed** \*1: (D) See 'Breed'

**Half-caste**\*1: (D) In India, the population was divided into four hierarchical castes according to what they were good at, that is, priests, warriors, trades people and manual workers. Once a person is born in a 'lower' caste, he or she cannot move up to another 'higher' caste - nor can they marry into other castes. Children born out of wedlock from liaisons between the castes are known as '**half caste**'. The higher caste Indians of course used that as an excuse to keep the lower caste down using 'Institutional Castism'.

**Half – chat** \*1: (D) Slang for half-caste

**Half-pure**: (D) perpetuates notion of there being 'pure races' that are tainted or sullied where 'mixed race' people exist

**Half–white** \*1: (D)

**Hexadecaroon** \*2 : (D) One sixth black

**High yellow** : (D) Jamaican, and old USA term for people of fair complexion.

**Hovis (N) 'best of both'**: implies that pure races exist (of black and white) exist

**Hybrid**: Generally refers to something of mixed origin or composition - a mix of two different species

**Marranos**: (D) Probably comes from the Arabic word for **moharrama or muharram or mahram** meaning "a forbidden thing". The term 'marrano' can also refer to a "swine" or something "filthy".

**Métis** : (D) French and related to the Spanish word mestizo but basically means 'mixed blood'..  
...Portuguese for dog.

**Métis** : (D) Masculine and **Métisse** is feminine

**Mixed Blood: (D)** Historically, there has been controversy over interracial couples, which still exists in some contexts, such as fears of "racial impurity" when people have children of 'mixed blood'.

**Mixed Heritage : (P)**

**Mixed Parentage**

**Mixed Race: (P)** At the time of writing, this appears to be the most popular term used by young people of mixed race to describe themselves. However, is possibly beginning to lose favour in some circles as race is a social construction and for some 'mixed race' implies 'mixed up.'

**Mixican: (N)** A play on the word 'Mexican' for someone of mixed race.

**Mongrel: (D)** Of mixed breed or origin, relates to dogs.

**Mulatto : (D)** Term meaning 'small mule' in Spanish – someone ashamed of both races.

**Mule: (D)** Offspring of any two creatures specifically a male donkey and female horse

**Multiethnic**

**Multiple Heritage**

**Multiracial : (U)** Of many races

**Mutt: (D)** Slang for a mongrel dog

**No Nation : (N)** Obviously intimates that people of mixed race belong nowhere

**Octoroon \*2: (D)** One eighth Black blood

**Pick 'n' Mix: (N)** Like selecting sweets, implies 'pure races' can be 'mixed'

**Quadroon \*2: (D)** One quarter Black blood

**Quarter caste :** Term for a person who has one 'monoheritage' parent and one 'mixed race' parent

**Quintoon \*2 :** Offspring of an Octoroon and a European, basically it means having ancestry that is one-sixteenth African

**Red skin : (D)** Caribbean slang for people with fair skin

**Shared Heritage:** Where one of the child's parents comes from a mixed heritage themselves.

**Simpsons : (N)** This yellow, animated family is meant to allude to the 'yellowness' of mixed race people.

**Spurious person: (D)** Not legitimate or genuine – used to describe mixed race people in American around mid 1800's

**Waki: (N)** A person with one white parent and one Pakistani parent

**White :** Not a true skin colour (see 'Black')

**Wigga: (D)** A 'white' person who 'acts black'

**Zebra: (D)**

<sup>1\*</sup> any term making use of the word 'half' suggests any incomplete person.

<sup>2\*</sup> an old law in the Southern States of America racially categorised people according to how much 'black blood' they had in them

| Other terms used to describe people of 'mixed race': |            |           |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| derogatory                                           | acceptable | preferred |
|                                                      |            |           |

Please use this table to make a note of other terms – it will stimulate useful discussion for developing policy.