

WORKING GLOSSARY OF ORGANIZING TERMS

ABELISM: 1) Oppression, prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination against disabled people on the basis of actual or presumed disability; 2) the belief that people are superior or inferior, have better quality of life, or have lives more valuable or worth living on the basis of actual or perceived disability (autistichoya.com)

ABOLITION: As defined by Critical Resistance, a long term political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance, and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment

ACTIVISM: 'People who take action on behalf of things we care about. Activists attend rallies, make phone calls, write letters and speak out against injustice. But not all activists are community organizers.' Charlene Carruthers, *Unapologetic* (p. 89)

ADVOCACY: Literally, the act of pleading or arguing in favor of something publicly. In social justice work, this usually involves groups or individuals (who may or may not be directly affected by the issue or conditions surrounding it) pushing for certain kinds of changes, laws, or issues. For example, a disability rights activist /advocate argues for accessible bathrooms in public buildings, whether or not that person would personally benefit from said advocacy. (SONG)

BASE: A base is a group of people who can think together, work together, and grow together. (SONG)

BASE BUILDING: Increasing the number of people who share the same vision, and who are developing the strategies and doing the work for moving that vision. (SONG)

CAMPAIGNS: Sustained, time-bound, organizing fights, with a target (someone who can give you what you want) to win concrete policy and institutional change on issues that impact your constituency. (SONG)

CAPITALISM: An economic system in which the means of production, access to goods, and the value of goods are controlled by private individuals and corporations. Racial Capitalism, as theorized by Cedric Robinson, argues that this system was built and flourished through the exploitation of people through slavery, imperialism, and genocide. Neoliberalism is a model of capitalism that operates through the privatization of public goods, deregulation of trade, diminshment of social services and emphasis on individual freedoms. - Charlene Carruthers, *Unapologetic*

COLONIALISM: Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another. One of the difficulties in defining colonialism is that it is hard to distinguish it from imperialism. Frequently the two concepts are treated as synonyms. Like colonialism, imperialism also involves political and economic control over a dependent territory ... the practice of colonialism usually involved the transfer of population to a new territory, where the arrivals lived as permanent settlers while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/>)

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: Organizing is people together building a base that has the shared vision to act together to build power, challenge power, and change power relationships and communities. This is important because the power to make change lies

in the hands of the people that those changes affect most directly. Organizing has won concrete gains for oppressed people in the US and around the world, like the two-day weekend for workers, an end to segregation of certain public spaces, and the legal rights of people with disabilities to demand equal access to public spaces. (SONG)

“What does community organizing entail? I believe that the two essential elements of it are developing leaders and strategizing to take action. The model of community organizing I learned and practice is rooted in relationships between individuals working towards the same goal, often with various tactics. Organizers can work within cultural spaces, within issue-focused campaigns, and many other places ... I believe in community organizing that works to dismantle systems of oppression and replace them with systems designed to allow collective dignity and power ... Community organizing is not automatically radical or liberating and no one person or group has a monopoly on it. Some people organize to restrict access to human dignity for others, to dominate and oppress others.” Charlene Carruthers, *Unapologetic* (p. 89)

CULTURAL HEGEMONY: Cultural hegemony functions by framing the worldview of the ruling class, and the social and economic structures that embody it, as just, legitimate, and designed for the benefit of all, even though these structures may only benefit the ruling class. (ThoughtCo)

DISSOCIATION: Intentional or unintentional compartmentalizing of consciousness and/or behavior. Often used to detach oneself from dealing with a collective problem or condition. Often a self-preservation coping mechanism to dealing with (or rather NOT dealing with) conflict, accountability, contradictions, trauma, traumatic events.

DOMINATION: Stems from ‘dominant.’ Proximity to power and control in order to effectively subjugate or control people, resources, and more.

EUGENICS: A pseudoscience with the stated aim of improving the genetic constitution of the human species by selective breeding. Eugenics is from a Greek word meaning ‘normal genes.’ The use of Albert Einstein’s sperm to conceive a child by artificial insemination would represent an attempt at positive eugenics. The Nazis notoriously engaged in negative eugenics by genocide in World War II. It is important to note that no experiment in eugenics has ever been shown to result in measurable improvements in human health. (Medicine Net)

FEMINISM: In the view of bell hooks, a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. This includes political, social, and ideological methods and work.

GREED: A selfish and excessive desire for more of something (money) than is needed (Miriam-Webster)

HOMOPHOBIA: “The irrational fear and hatred of those who love and sexually desire those of the same sex.” Suzanne Pharr, *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism* (p. 1)

INFRASTRUCTURE: What connects and links people together (in a town, a region, a country, etc.) so that they can act collectively. Infrastructure can be things like a group of trained fire fighters ready to act together, or a group of organizers who have built our own community neighborhood watch, or something bigger like a network around the South of organizers who are doing local work in communities with one vision in mind. Governments also build infrastructures—like our network of highways and roads. (SONG)

INTERSECTIONALITY: Coined by critical race theory scholar Kimberlé Crewshaw in 1989, intersectionality refers to interlocking and mutually reinforcing systems of oppression and inseparable categories of identity, most notably race, class, gender, and sexuality. This analytical and political approach preceded Crewshaw's naming of it and is reflected in the work of Black feminist scholars and activists, including Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Barbara Smith, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, and in the *Combahee River Collective Statement* of 1977, considered a foundational Black feminist manifesto (Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter*, p. 202). "How our lives, issues, and identities are connected." (SONG) "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not lead single-issue lives." (Audre Lorde)

IDENTITY POLITICS: First coined by Black feminist Barbara Smith, 'the laden phrase "identity politics" has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups. Rather than organizing solely around belief systems, programmatic manifestos, or party affiliation, identity political formations typically aim to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. Members of that constituency assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness that challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of greater self-determination. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/>)

MISOGYNY: A hatred of women (Miriam-Webster)

NEOLIBERALISM: "First advanced in the nineteenth century, it currently refers to privatization, deregulation, and a kind of laissez-faire capitalism, according to which the government plays a minimal role and the free market supposedly governs the

economy. Milton Friedman is closely associated with neoliberal policies, such as those he advised the Pinochet government to implement in Chile after the US-backed coup that ousted the democratically elected president Salvador Allende. David Harvey, Marxist geographer and critic of neoliberalism, views it as the capitalist instrumentalization of politics. In a neoliberal frame, the market is supreme." (Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter*, p. 202)

NON-PROFITIZATION: The practice of relying on state-sanctioned non-profit incorporation status to legitimize leadership, social justice work, activism, or political formation and ideology.

As a phenomenon, 'non-profitization' is problematic in that: 1) non-profits have the capacity to raise funds that are tax-deductible to advance their mission, and many use non-profits as capital structures to co-opt the work of movements and grassroots leaders; 2) structural inequality in society often mirrors structural inequality in the non-profit sector, and in organized philanthropy, which often funds and fuels non-profit organizations as vehicles for social change or to maintaining the status quo; and 3) even as many movement organizations have a non-profit tax status, non-profit management as a field is steeped in the norms and values of white supremacy inherent in its original "charity" and religious institution model, ultimately designed to buffer the state from organized resistance by controlling the institutions that provide the safety net and social services the state should be providing (as well as institutions that educate the public, evangelize and/or provide religious education and/or support movement building).

For more background and context, see *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence.

PRAXIS: The act of turning theory and political education into practical action in the struggle against oppression and for liberation.

ORGANIZERS: "Every Organizer has two jobs - build organizations and develop other leaders. Organizers get people to come together and do the work as a group. Organizers also develop the skills and leadership of other people in order to strengthen the organization. An organizer builds community with purpose, and provides/supports a means by which people solve their own problems." Michael Jacoby Brown, *Building Powerful Community Organizations* (p. 14)

RADICAL BLACK FEMINISMS: Are 'rooted in the lived experience and interlocking oppressions of Black people on the basis of race, class, and gender and aim to dismantle all forms of systemic oppression.' Charlene Carruthers, *Unapologetic* (p. XI)
(US focused for the scope of her book)

PATRIARCHY: 'Patriarchy - an enforced belief in male dominance and control - is the ideology and sexism is the system that holds it in place. The chatchesim goes like this: who do gender roles serve? Men and women who seek power from them. Who suffers from gender roles? Women most completely and men in part. How are gender roles maintained? By the weapons of sexism: economics, violence, homophobia ... heterosexism is backed by institutions, i.e., marriage laws, to ensure its predominance. It's the institutional enforced of homophobia.' Suzanne Pharr, *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism* (p. 8)

POPULAR EDUCATION: A learning methodology attributed to Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. Popular education aims to support marginalized people in taking control of their own learning. (SONG)

POPULATION CONTROL: A policy of attempting to limit the growth in numbers of a population, especially in poor or densely populated parts of the world, by programs of contraception or sterilization.
(Dictionary.com)

POWER: "The word [power] has many meanings. Power is the ability to act and get what you want. Power is built and maintained through organized people and organized resources. Power is not inherently good or bad. For people from marginalized groups, experiences with power are often negative. We are used to people having power over us. The amount of power other people and institutions have over our lives, our children, our mobility, our access to basic needs (food, water, and shelter) and even our desire is immeasurable ... Power relationships are based on individuals, but they are intrinsically connected to the systems of power maintained by capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and anti-Blackness ... What type of power do we want? Creating changes requires building and harnessing power. Anyone committed to transformative change must also be committed to building transformative power." Charlene Carruthers, *Unapologetic* (p. 105)

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE: SisterSong defines Reproductive Justice as the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities. (SisterSong)

THE RIGHT: "The Right consists of individuals and groups that range from conservative, free-market capitalists to white supremacist neo-Nazis. It is not monolithic but a confederacy of loosely related individuals, groups, and organizations, some of which work in coalition with each other, some of which simply work toward similar goals, and some of which oppose each other ... their work advance[s] the effort

to control the economic and cultural climate ... to limit access to social and economic equality and justice.” Suzanne Pharr, *In the Time of the Right* (p. 39)

TOKENISM: A means for institutions, organizations and companies to refuse to address structural inequality and maintain hegemony. Not genuinely valuing a person’s work or leadership on its own merit; rather it is the act of valuing or utilizing someone’s identity (political, race, ethnicity, class, gender, nationality, etc.) over their skills, values, and life experience, for the sole purpose of using them as a “token” representation of a collective group of people, while simultaneously excluding others of that same identity group (from leadership, power, visibility, etc.).

RACIAL CAPITALISM: Refers to the inextricable connections between white supremacy and modern capitalism, as exemplified by the transatlantic slave trade and race-based slavery in the Americas, colonialism and imperialism, and various forms of racial segregation that reinforce economic subordination and exploitation. Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter* (p. 203)

SELF-DETERMINATION: The ability of a person or community to make choices for themselves about their own lives, bodies, and futures. Often put well in the slogan, “Nothing about us without us!” (SONG)

SOVEREIGNTY: the full right and power of a governing body over itself, without any interference from outside sources or bodies. (Wikipedia)

TRAUMA: Physical, psychological, or spiritual harm inflicted intentionally or unintentionally by learned behaviors or deliberate actions that co-create a polarization of values (e.g., rape culture); interactions (any form of assault / microaggressions, etc.); or physical space (war zones / occupations / gentrification, etc.).

WHITE SUPREMACY: A global paradigm shift and assertion of power, aligned with Judeo-Christianity, that reenforces a racialized social order that benefits white people at the expense of everyone else. The cultural practice of valuing people of European descent, as well as their physical or cultural traits and history, over people from other cultures and ethnicities.

White supremacy has many manifestations such as white nationalism and racial caste systems. All manifestations assert that ‘whiteness’ exists in direct opposition of ‘Blackness,’ purposed to isolate, devalue, criminalize, and ultimately control the labor, land, wealth, reproduction, language (and every aspect of their lives from the cradle to the grave) of Black people, Indigenous people, mixed-race people and people of color.

White supremacy perpetuates settler colonization, and relies on notions such as “racial purity” and punitive violence as a means of social control to assert institutional, interpersonal, and internalized oppression.

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