

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR LEFTISTS\*

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## **Affirmative Action**

Affirmative Action means taking account of a person's race or gender in job admissions, educational admissions, job contracts, and other such decisions, in order to remedy historical injustices and to counter ongoing structural sexism and racial discrimination. Although conservative critics often equate Affirmative Action with "quotas", they are not the same thing. Affirmative Action does not mean that a certain number of people of color or women must be hired. Rather, it means that race or gender is one factor taken into account, say for a job application, as a way to balance out the privilege that men, white people, or other members of a dominant group already have.

## **Ally**

In activist terminology, an ally is someone who devotes themselves in solidarity to the struggles of an oppressed person or group, recognizing that "an injury to one is an injury to all." For example, white people can be anti-racist allies, straight people allies to LGBT folks, etc. In practice, an ally learns about another's struggle, supports and takes leadership from the oppressed, and works in principled coalition to further a just cause.

## **Anarchists**

Anarchists advocate a classless society with no government. Most anarchists are opposed to capitalism, and share with socialists the goal of taking production out of the control of private capitalists and making it more democratic. However, anarchists are distrustful of using the state to redistribute either wealth or property—anarchists believe that the state is just as repressive as the capitalist economic system. Because of this distrust of the state, many anarchists are reluctant to engage in forms of politics that require working within the state (such as the passage of laws or the election of candidates). Anarchists are also critical of organizations and hierarchical structures, and prefer to work in small autonomous groups which operate by consensus. (See also: *Consensus Model*)

## **Anarcho-Syndicalism**

A variant of anarchism. Anarcho-Syndicalists advocates the creation of "one big union" of all workers, who will overthrow capitalism by withdrawing their labor in a massive general strike. They generally eschew electoral politics and other forms of political action which are not at "the point of production," the workplace.

## **Apartheid**

The system of racial segregation imposed by the white Afrikaan government of South Africa between 1948 and 1994. Under apartheid (the Afrikaan's word for "separateness"), all South Africans were legally categorized by race. A series of laws restricted black access to property, employment, land, and public facilities. Eventually the apartheid system led to the creation of black "homelands" within South Africa—while ostensibly a way of giving blacks self-government, the homelands were really a way of forcing the black majority population into massive ghettos in economically undesirable regions of the country, while excluding them from the South African political system. After decades of liberation struggle by black South Africans and international solidarity by global allies, the apartheid system ended with the collapse of white minority rule and the triumph of the African National Congress in South Africa's first free elections in 1994. Today, "apartheid" is sometimes invoked in order to draw an analogy between white-ruled South Africa and the present practices of the Israeli government with regard to the Palestinians; however, this comparison is very controversial.

## **Authoritarian/Totalitarian**

Authoritarianism generally refers to a dictatorship with no democratic control and repression of civil liberties. Totalitarianism is a term coined to refer to societies in which the authoritarian state attempts to control every aspect of social life and ideology.

## **Autonomism**

Autonomism began in the 1960's as a left-wing version of Marxist socialism. It was hostile to the dominant forms of socialism at that time: reformist Social Democracy as practiced by the big socialist parties of Western Europe and some other industrialized countries, and pro-Soviet Communism as practiced by Communist parties around the world. Autonomism takes its name from the idea of "workers autonomy," which is the idea that workers can and should change their living conditions and challenge capitalist power without relying on established trade unions or political parties. Today, autonomism's meaning has expanded to include a wide variety of anarchisms and libertarian (anti-statist) socialisms. It is in particularly wide use on the European radical left. One popular strain of autonomism is Zapatismo, the ideology of the EZLN rebels in Chiapas, Mexico. Zapatismo, named for the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, is a guerilla movement that argues for decentralized, village-based democracy; the Zapatistas say that they are not interested in seizing state power like most traditional guerrillas. (See also: *Anarchism*)

## **Black Power**

A movement started primarily by young, radical activists in the 1960's Civil Rights Movement, Black Power referred to a set of beliefs and analysis emphasizing self-determination for African Americans. Black Power argued for cultural and historic pride, while also rejecting the "back to Africa" nationalist movements of the era. The Black Panther Party for Self Defense, founded in Oakland and soon spreading across black America was the leading proponent of Black Power in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Similar to the Chicano movement, the Puerto Rican Young Lords, and the American Indian Movement, all of which it would influence tremendously, Black Power called for a radical analysis of economic and political relations in America, and identified the struggle of African Americans as tied to the struggle against oppression led by revolutionary movements in developing countries. Many women in the Black Power movement rejected its patriarchal designation of women as primarily "mothers and reproducers of movement soldiers". Many Black Power activists were attracted to ideas and strategies of Mao Tse-Tung. (See also: *Maoism; Revolutionary Nationalism*)

## **Bourgeois**

In the early days of capitalism, the bourgeoisie were the small scale craftspeople who occupied a position in the economic order between landlords and peasants. In more modern language and in Marxist terminology, however, the bourgeoisie is the capitalist class, the owners of the means of production. They are contrasted to the Proletariat, the working classes who must work for wages because they do not have the means to produce the goods they need themselves. "Bourgeois" is often used to describe ideas or practices which are representative of the ruling class. Bourgeois ideology is characterized by individualism and idealism, and a desire for modesty and respectability. Some people also use the term "bourgeois" to mean simply "middle class". (See also: *Means of Production; Class Struggle*)

## **Cadre**

The most politically advanced and dedicated members of a political organization. Often used to apply to members of disciplined, vanguard party formations (See also: *Marxism-Leninism*), but can apply to any organization. As casual members become more educated in the political principles of the organization, and more loyal to it, they become cadres.

## **Chicanismo**

Philosophy of Chicano nationalism, represented primarily by MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) in the United States student movement. MEChA describes Chicanismo as an ideology of liberation through "educational, socio-economic, and political empowerment" for the Chicano people. Chicanismo is a political, not an ethnic or racial identity (though it emphasizes the history of indigenous people who were colonized first by Spain and Mexico and then by the United States, in what is now the American southwest). One is not born a Chicano—one becomes Chicano by dedicating oneself to the liberation of the Chicano nation. Chicana feminism developed in response to patriarchy in the Chicano movement, when Chicanas demanded the right to work for liberation as both women and Chicanas, while they also didn't feel at home in the mainly white, middle class feminist movement. (See also: *Revolutionary Nationalism*)

## **Civil disobedience**

Civil disobedience encompasses the active refusal to obey certain laws or commands of a government or of an occupying power without resorting to physical violence. The refusal may be because the law itself is viewed as wrong or simply to demonstrate moral outrage. Civil disobedience usually involves arrest and subsequent trial which sometimes provides an opportunity to extend the protest. Civil disobedience has been used in nonviolent resistance movements in India in the fight against British colonialism, South Africa in the fight against apartheid and in the civil rights movement of the USA and Europe as well as in the Scandinavian resistance against Nazi occupation.

## **Class Consciousness**

Class consciousness is the recognition that one has a common interest with a certain group of people, and against another group, because of the particular historic and economic circumstances one is in. It is the process of defining oneself to be part of a group that is defined by its members' position in the economy. Working people are "class conscious" to the extent that they think of themselves as workers, rather than as isolated individuals, or as "middle class," for instance.

## **Class Struggle**

The conflict between classes of people who occupy different positions in the economic structure, and therefore have different interests. Under capitalism, the primary struggle is between the capitalist class, which owns the means of production, and the working class, who must sell their labor power to the capitalists in order to survive. Marx, and many socialists who followed him, believed that the outcome of this conflict would result in the working class overthrowing capitalism or in a descending state of "barbarism".

## **Collective Bargaining**

The power of workers to negotiate a contract with their bosses as a group, rather than as individuals. This is the cornerstone of the power and operation of a trade union. Unions are empowered to negotiate on behalf of all workers together; with the threat of strike should acceptable terms not be met.

## **The Commons/Public Sphere**

The commons are the opposite of private property. The commons, or the public sphere, refers to all those things or institutions which cannot be owned and controlled by a single individual or sub-group in society. The earliest public sphere consisted of physical spaces which were shared communally, such as the public square of a

town or the common grazing land of pre-capitalist farming communities. Today, the commons refers to everything from interstate highways to the Internet to the social security system. For socialists, the commons are a major area of struggle. Conservatives and capitalists frequently argue that the interests of society are best served by taking things out of the public sphere and making them into private property through privatization.

## **Communism**

Philosophers and political thinkers often distinguish between two kinds of communism: Communism with a capital "C" and communism with a lower-case "c". Big-C Communism refers to the political movement which takes its inspiration from the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Soviet Union. Communism in this sense contrasts with Social Democracy and other forms of socialism which rejected the Russian Revolution. There are many varieties of Communism, but in general Communists support violent revolution and one-party dictatorship in certain circumstances, and they believe in the importance of defending "actually existing" socialist states, such as the Soviet Union or Cuba. Small-c communism is a much older and more varied political and philosophical tendency, which predates both the Russian Revolution and the thought of Karl Marx. Some people use "communism" to refer to a hypothetical utopian "end state" of the revolutionary process. According to this thinking, societies pass from capitalism into socialism, where production is democratically controlled by workers organized into a socialist government; and eventually socialism passes into communism, where the state disappears entirely and the economy functions according to the principle "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need." In general, communism signifies a more radical critique of capitalism, compared to socialism.

## **Consensus Model**

A decision-making model in which decisions can be made only if the entire group agrees. In a consensus system, even a single person can block a decision if they disagree with it. This is in contrast to various types of the majority rule model, in which minorities must abide by decisions they do not agree with. The consensus model is favored by many anarchist groups. (See also: *Anarchism*)

## **Consumerism (Commodity Fetishism)**

The ideology which causes people to identify themselves only as consumers of products rather than producers (workers). In the consumerist ideology, one does not ask questions about how a product was produced, or who produced it—the social origins of the product are completely hidden. This is what Marx called "commodity fetishism." Since every product has to be produced by someone, and since the market is just a way of relating different workers' products to each other through the medium of money, the market is a relationship between people. But in consumerist ideology/commodity fetishism, the market appears to be merely a relationship between things, because the people who produce the things have been erased from view. A politics based on consumerism focuses mostly on changing what products people choose to consume, rather than on changing how products are produced. (See also: *Ideology; False Consciousness*)

## **Coup D'etat**

A sudden change of government in which the leader of a country is overthrown by means of a small-group conspiracy led by another part of the government leadership. Coups are frequently led by factions of the military, or by rival factions within the top leadership of the government.

## **Democratic Socialism**

A tendency in the socialist movement, which aims to combine aspects of the reformist and revolutionary traditions. Democratic socialists believe that the transformation to socialism should be democratic, and favored by a majority, and that socialists must place a high value on civil liberties and political freedom. However,

they also recognize that socialism will not happen automatically out of a sequence of liberal reforms. Democratic Socialists therefore advocate “non-reformist reforms” which redistribute power to working people and the oppressed, as superior to reforms which merely make life a little bit better for people under capitalism. Democratic Socialists also attempt to incorporate the insights of recent non-socialist movements which have raised the issue of non-class oppression by race, gender, and sexual orientation. There are three major Democratic Socialist organizations in the U.S.: The Democratic Socialists of America (and their youth section, the Young Democratic Socialists), The Socialist Party, and the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism. (See also: *Reformism*; *New Left*; *Social Democracy*; *Socialist Feminism*)

### **Dialectics**

The philosophical method, which primarily is concerned with change and inter-relatedness. Dialectical philosophy claims that you cannot understand a single part of a greater totality—a single aspect of capitalism, for instance—without looking its relationship to the greater whole. Dialectics also claims that you cannot investigate society at a single point in time—one must always take into account the way different parts of a system are in the process of changing into something else. Dialectics was central to the philosophy of Karl Marx, who took much of his dialectical method from the earlier philosopher Hegel.

### **Direct Action**

Political action which aims to achieve desired changes directly, rather than by pressuring an intermediary (such as an elected official) to do something. The term started with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the early 20th Century. Direct action can include strikes, sabotage and non-violent civil disobedience. In recent years, Direct Action has come to be associated with the takeover or disruption of events or undesirable processes, from timber exploitation in the Pacific Northwest, to meetings of international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Trade Organization.

### **Disenfranchisement**

The loss of the right to vote. People can be disenfranchised by laws which explicitly bar them from voting (such as the laws which bar convicted felons from voting in most states). Disenfranchisement can also occur in other ways, such as the systematic intimidation of voters or fraud in the counting of ballots. In the United States, people of color are the main targets of deliberate disenfranchisement campaigns.

### **Electoral Politics**

Participation in the structures of representative government. This can mean running candidates, campaigning in elections, or supporting the candidates of political parties. Many people on the left disagree over electoral politics. Some believe leftists should engage in electoral politics in order to promote a left agenda, while others believe that electoral politics is inherently corrupt, undemocratic and dominated by the ruling class, and therefore a waste of time for the left.

### **False Consciousness**

False ideas about reality. Many Marxists have claimed that under capitalism, workers develop a form of false consciousness in which they believe that their interests are the same as those of the capitalists, even when they are totally opposed. False consciousness is created and spread through a number of means, including education and the press. (See also: *Hegemony*; *Class Consciousness*)

### **Fascism**

Political doctrine which emerged in Europe between the world wars, and which persists in various forms to this day. Fascism is characterized by an opposition to the worst aspects of unrestricted capitalism, combined with a reactionary, racist and xenophobic

nationalism and an irrational glorification of authority, violence and military supremacy. Fascist regimes greatly restrict individual liberties and political freedoms, while simultaneously placing controls on the economy. However, Fascists generally do not challenge the private ownership of the economy. Instead, the fascist state collaborates with large industrialists and are extremely anti-communist.

### **French Turn (Entryism)**

Entryism is a tactic in which a small political faction enters a larger political party in an attempt to influence its politics, split it, or steal members from it. Entryism is a favorite tactic of Trotskyists. It is sometimes referred to as the “French Turn,” referring to a period in the 1930’s when Trotskyist groups, following the example of the French section, entered the mass Socialist parties in their countries in an attempt to gain influence over their left wings. (See also: *Trotskyism*)

### **Globalization**

The increasing interconnectedness of the world, and the breaking down of national boundaries. Most often used to refer to economic processes, such as the rise of transnational corporations that operate in multiple countries. Many theorists have claimed that globalization is weakening the power of individual nation-states, or even making them obsolete. Increasingly, global justice activists decry the process of “corporate” or “neoliberal” globalization in order to highlight that they are not against a globalizing world, but merely the dominant and exploitative model promoted by the capitalist elite. Globalization can also refer to cultural phenomena, such as the increased global communication due to the internet.

### **Hegemony**

This term essentially means “power over others”. Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci used the word to describe the way that capitalism takes root, not just as an economic system, but in the way that people think about the world. Capitalism is “hegemonic” because average people, even those negatively affected by it, believe that it is the “natural” way of things.

### **Heterosexism/Heteronormativity**

The social system, which constructs heterosexual identity as “normal,” thereby marking as odd or deviant all those who are homosexual, bisexual, transgender, or otherwise outside of the norm. This is different from homophobia, which denotes the fear or hatred of homosexual people and homosexuality. Laws that favor heterosexual couples over homosexual partners, and media imagery, which assumes that all relationships are heterosexual, are examples of institutionalized heterosexism. Socialist feminists believe that one of the primary expressions of the merging of patriarchal and capitalist systems is the traditional family unit supported by specific socialized gender roles; together these systems are responsible for heterosexism as an institution. (See also: *Socialist Feminism*)

### **Humanitarian Intervention**

A term coined, for the most part, by liberals who support waging war on countries in order to defend human rights. The bombing of Serbia, the action in Somalia, and both wars against Iraq have been described by some as “humanitarian interventions”. The term is meant to distinguish “good” wars, which are waged in defense of human rights, from wars which are waged in order to conquer territory, control resources, or promote the geo-political power of a country. The term and the idea of humanitarian intervention are controversial; there are many critics both on the conservative right and on the anti-imperialist left who believe that “humanitarian” goals can be a dishonest cover for other, more self-interested motivations for war. Those who support military campaigns on humanitarian grounds contend that intervening to stop or prevent ethnic cleansing, civil wars, or to overthrow despotic regimes are preferably to other alternatives.

## Identity Politics

This term is generally used to refer to the practice of political organizing which is based on common membership in a social group, rather than on shared values, goals, and strategies. The term came to prominence after the 1960's, when groups organized around ethnic, racial, gender, and sexual identities became more common in US politics. Although some progressives accuse identity politics of dividing the left and distracting leftists from the need for universal values, others have argued that identity politics are a necessary response to the left's blindness to types of oppression which are not based on class.

## Ideology

In traditional Marxist theory, ideology refers to the false view of the world that capitalism generates in people. (see *False Consciousness*). In this view, the goal of Marxist analysis is to overcome ideology by revealing the real relations between people under capitalism (such as the exploitation of workers by capitalists). Influenced by post-modernism, many modern progressives, including socialists, use a sense of "ideology" that is more politically neutral. In this sense, everyone has an "ideology", which refers only to their particular way of interpreting the world. In this view, the important thing is not to overcome ideology but to recognize that it exists everywhere and at all times—that there is no such thing as a totally objective, un-ideological perspective. (See also: *Post-modernism*)

In a more positive sense, ideology is the set of ideas and perspectives of an organization or movement. While it is important to understand and "unpack" the often obscured or hard to detect remnants of negative (sexist, classist, etc.) ideologies at work, it is also important to have a useful way of looking at the world. Conversely, often these ideologies, even good, progressive ones, can become too fixed, rigid and blinding. (See also: *Sectarianism*)

## Imperialism

The domination of one group of countries by another group of countries. Under capitalism, imperialist countries seek to dominate the less developed countries in order to exploit their cheap labor and raw materials. Just as capitalists exploit workers by paying them less than their labor is worth, imperialist countries exploit less developed countries by extracting more raw materials and finished products than they put in. In socialist discourse, "imperialism" often refers to the specific theory of imperialism developed by V.I. Lenin, which saw imperialism as a new stage of capitalism with certain specific features, including the decrease of free competition and the increasing power of monopolies. (See also: *Class Struggle; Maoism*)

## Institutionalized Racism

The oppression of people of color by socio-economic structures and institutions, rather than by individual racists. If a set of policies or some social institution has dramatically unequal consequences that negatively impact people of color, then it is racist even if it was not intended to be. The higher poverty and unemployment rates among African-Americans, and the laws which cause blacks to be a disproportionate percentage of the prison population, are effects of institutional racism, because they are a product of a system rather than any individual attempt to oppress black people.

## Liberalism

In its historical sense, liberalism is the political philosophy which advocates democratic, representative government, equality before the law, equal opportunity, and maximum personal liberty from state coercion. In modern usage, liberals are those who want to use the state to remedy some of the worst aspects of capitalism (through such things as welfare benefits) but who are unwilling to challenge the market, private property, or the basic power relations of capitalism. In the U.S. political landscape, the term "liberal" is commonly used to describe any left-of-center people or ideas, whereas elsewhere "liberal" can refer to those who promote the ideology of the "free-market" (as in neoliberal).

## Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is a branch of the liberal political tradition, which holds that all people are equal, because they have the same capacity for rational thought. Liberal feminists demand equal rights for women—such as equal pay and access to education—on the grounds that women and men are fundamentally equal as human beings. Liberal feminists typically do not question the existing class or racial hierarchy—they only want to give women the same opportunities as men to rise into the middle or ruling class.

## Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology is a left-wing style of Christianity which emerged in Latin America in the 1970's. Combining traditional Christian doctrine with Marxism, Liberation Theology argues that religion should take the side of the poor and concern itself with social change, and not merely retreat into private religious experience. The Latin American liberation theologians were involved in organizing the poor, and they argued for Latin American independence from United States control. Many liberation theology priests were active in resisting right-wing military governments in Latin America, and were harassed or killed for their efforts, and the theology was formally rejected by the European Catholic hierarchy.

## Maoism

Maoism is the section of the Communist movement which follows the theories of Mao Tse Tung, the leader of the People's Republic of China. Mao believed that peasants, in addition to industrial workers, could lead a Communist revolution led by a vanguard party. He also theorized that the fight against imperialism, the fight of poor countries against rich countries, is the central struggle in modern society. Maoists in the US were instrumental in helping to develop theories on the struggle for liberation by people of color within the US, arguing that they constituted "internal colonies", and that their fight is linked to the fight against imperialism around the world. Mao was a massive influence on both the white student protest movements of the late 1960's as well as the black power movement. Today, Maoism is represented in the U.S. by the Revolutionary Communist Party, the Freedom Road Socialist Organization and the Progressive Labor Party, among other groups. (See also: *Vanguard; Revolutionary Nationalism*)

## Market Socialism

There is a long-running debate within the socialist movement about the relationship between socialism and markets. Traditionally, there are two broad ways in which socialists criticize capitalism. One way focuses on the fact that under capitalism, wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few private capitalists, who make most of the decisions about production and keep most of the profits from it. Another way focuses on the system of buying and selling on the free market leads to resources being allocated in irrational and wasteful ways, and leads to free, public goods being turned into for-profit commodities. Those who are more concerned with the problem of private ownership will often argue that socialism does not require the abolition of the market - instead, it is possible to keep a market system in which the actors are not all privately owned firms, but include co-operative firms, non-profit organizations and government financed or controlled enterprises. The alternative to a market system is some kind of planning: a system in which what is produced is determined by a political process, and not by market forces of supply and demand. There are systems of planning which are centralized (such as the Soviet system) and those which are more decentralized. Proponents of market socialism typically embrace a mix of both democratic planning and supply and demand mechanisms.

## Marxism

The philosophy of Karl Marx, which has been associated with many different kinds of political movements by both its proponents and its detractors. Marx is associated both with a set of political and economic positions, and with a general philosophical method. As an economic theory, Marxism offers an analysis of how capitalism

functions and how workers are exploited by it. As a political theory, Marxism deals with the processes by which workers can organize themselves to overthrow capitalism and create a socialist society. As a method, Marxism insists that how people live shapes their ideas, not vice versa (materialism), and that any idea or social fact cannot be understood without placing it in its proper historical context (historicism). (See also: *Materialism; Dialectics*)

### **Marxism-Leninism**

A variant of Marxism developed by supporters of the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution of 1917. Marxism-Leninism challenged the traditional Marxist notion that socialist revolution could occur only in an advanced industrial nation. Marxist-Leninists also uphold Lenin's concept of the Vanguard Party—a centralized, disciplined party of professional revolutionaries that is supposed to lead the socialist revolution. Most Marxist-Leninists advocate a revolutionary seizure of power, rather than a gradual progress to socialism through reforms (See also: *Reformism*). Trotskyists, Maoists, and Stalinists all consider themselves Marxist-Leninists. (See also: *Vanguard Party*)

### **Materialism**

In common use, this term means an obsession with money and material possessions. In philosophy and socialist theory, however, materialism is the philosophical doctrine which states that there is an external, physical world which exists outside of the subjective consciousness of individuals, and which shapes that consciousness. In Marx's famous formulation of materialist principle, "consciousness does not determine life; life determines consciousness." For socialists, materialism means that people's ideas about the world are shaped by the material conditions they live in, such as their jobs and their family life. Materialism does not mean, however, that ideas can never change the world—it means merely that the world is not created by ideas. (See also: *Ideology; Marxism*)

### **Means of Production**

The resources required for the production of goods. These include land, raw materials, tools, and capital (large sums of money used to invest in production). Under capitalism, the means of production are controlled by private capitalists, so society has very little democratic control over what gets produced and how the producers (the workers) get treated. Since workers do not control their own means of production, they must work for the capitalists who have the means of production in order to support themselves. Socialists have traditionally advocated for the means of production to be brought under public, democratic control.

**Militant** (since some people mistake this with being militaristic)

To be especially active, committed and aggressive on behalf of a cause. The most energetic and hard-working activists are often called militants. The term "militant" does not necessarily refer to military action or violence.

### **Military Industrial Complex**

An interlocking system of connections between the publicly funded military and private corporations. The term was coined by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1961. The increasing size of the military gives rise to large and powerful private arms corporations, which in turn have great power over the government. As the military sector becomes more important to the economy, private arms producers combined with the military itself have more and more unchecked political influence, and they have an interest in encouraging military spending whether or not it is necessary for national defense.

### **Neocolonialism**

A system in which former colonial countries are controlled by the former colonizers and international institutions like the International Monetary Fund, even though the countries have gained formal independence. First world countries can often control the economies of their former colonies and other "third world" nations

by attaching conditions (like low wages, slack environmental regulations) to economic aid.

### **Neoconservative**

A blanket term for a new type of right-wing political figure, which emerged in the 1960's and 1970's, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom. Many of the key figures who would eventually come to be called neo-conservatives started out as liberals, Cold War Democrats or even socialists. In the 1960's, their opposition to the counter-culture and their support for the Vietnam War pushed them to the right. By the end of the 1970's they had left behind liberalism and left politics entirely, and many of these ex-leftists supported Ronald Reagan's election. Today, "neo-conservative" is used to refer to a group which includes many different kinds of right-wingers. In general, neo-conservatism is distinguished from older forms of conservative politics (which are now sometimes called paleo-conservatism) by a different approach to military and fiscal policy. Where paleo-conservatives tend to be isolationists who resist American involvement in foreign wars, neocons believe in using the power of the US military to impose pro-American governments around the world. And while paleocons and neocons both pay lip service to the idea of a balanced budget and a small government, in practice the neocons have been happy to increase both the budget deficit and the size of the government. Many prominent neoconservatives are associated with the Administration of George W. Bush, and many see the war against Iraq as an example of the neo-conservative strategy.

### **Neoliberalism**

Neoliberals believe in the extension and intensification of "free" market relations throughout the world. They support opening restrictions to free trade between countries, as well as the privatization of state-owned industries. In general, neoliberals oppose almost all controls on the capitalist "free" market.

### **New Left**

Political movement that emerged in the 1960's with the coming-of-age of the Baby Boom generation, primarily in the United States and Europe. The New Left was characterized by its rejection of many of the political positions of the traditional socialist movement (See also: *Old Left*), as well as a rejection of the reflexive anti-communism of conservatives and social democrats. The New Left was generally opposed to both western and Communist society, which were both thought to be authoritarian and undemocratic. The most well-known New Left organization in the US was the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Like much of the New Left, SDS had roots in the Old Left—in this case, the Socialist Party. Also like much of the New Left, SDS, particularly in its early years, shifted away from the Old Left emphasis on economic equality, and towards an emphasis on what SDS called "participatory democracy"—a true democracy in which people would have real control over their own lives. An increased sensitivity to oppression based on gender, race, and sexual orientation developed out of tensions within the New Left (and with the Old Left). The individuals and institutions of the New Left are inseparably connected with the emergence of the modern Civil Rights, women's liberation, and queer liberation movements.

### **Old Left**

In contrast to the New Left (See also: *New Left*), the Old Left consisted of the socialist movements which had their roots in the 19th Century. At the time the New Left emerged in the 1960's, the "old left" was split between the Communist supporters of the Soviet Union and the anti-Communist Social Democrats of Western Europe. Old Left political analysis was centered on economic types of oppression, and on vying for state power. In contrast, New Leftists were more concerned with non-class types of oppression (gender, race, sexual orientation), and with challenging the alienating and oppressive aspects of everyday life. The Old Left, and the ideas it followed, was also interested in the lives and conditions of "average" people, seeing the working-class as the keystone of social change, while the New Left looked to traditionally

marginalized communities, sometimes going as far as to say that white workers were no longer part of any strategy for social transformation.

### **Parliamentary Politics**

The system of representative democracy common throughout capitalist countries. This term is used to denote both Presidential (as the United States or Mexico) and the more specifically Parliamentary systems of government. A long debate has raged within the left about the merits and detractions of using or participating in representative government within a capitalist economic system.

### **Patriarchy**

The institutionalized domination and oppression of women, where men as a group oppress women as a group, by actively or passively participating in its maintenance. This does not refer only to the domination of women by specific men, but by the way in which a sexist society systematically oppresses women. Examples of patriarchal norms include sexual double standards, restrictions on reproductive rights (both outlawing abortion and cutting welfare programs for poor mothers), the segregation of women into less-prestigious, lower-paying work, and control of women as a group through violence. Patriarchy interacts with capitalism, racism, and heteronormativity in different ways for different women, but they tend to reinforce each other.

### **Post-Modernism**

A blanket term covering a wide range of academic, cultural, and political theories, which have been propagated since the 1960's. Post-modernism criticizes the idea that there is a truth which is independent of the particular perspective of individuals. Post-modernists also challenge the categorization of people into races, nations, classes, and genders, pointing out the differences and contradictions between the people who these terms supposedly unify. As a result of this critique of essentialism and objective truth, post-modernists tend to be skeptical of any historical project for broad social transformation, such as socialism.

### **Praxis**

Activity which is undertaken because of a preconceived plan—or, to put it another way, the combination of theory and practice. Praxis is, as far as we know, unique to human activity. When ants build an anthill, they are simply obeying their hard-wired instinctive programming. When humans build a skyscraper, they are doing it on the basis of an architectural plan. In politics, praxis refers to the process of developing a political analysis, testing it out in actual practice, and then correcting the theory on the basis of the success or failure of the political practice.

### **Prison Industrial Complex**

An interlocking system of connections between the public criminal justice system and the economy. A desperate need for employment in rural, post-industrial areas puts pressure on these communities to build prisons. Private corporations run for-profit prisons which house convicts, and many companies use prison labor because it is cheaper and prisoners do not have the same rights as other workers. The corporate and political interests who profit from prisons have an interest in increasing the prison population, regardless of the costs or benefits to society. (See also: *Military Industrial Complex*)

### **Privilege (Class, Race, Gender, Sexual)**

People who are middle or upper class, white, male, and/or heterosexual have advantages in this society which they are often unconscious of. This can mean the privilege to get arrested, knowing one is less likely to be brutalized because one has white skin, or to be deported because one has US citizenship status. It can mean the privilege of a man to walk home alone at night without fear of being raped. It can mean the privilege of affluent student activists to travel to conferences because they don't have to work full time to pay off their tuition. Although sometimes a person

can choose to relinquish their privilege, it is often considered more important to acknowledge the existence of privilege, account for the fact that many other people are not coming from such privileged positions, and use privilege to be an ally of those more oppressed. (See also: *Ally*)

### **Proletariat (and dictatorship of...)**

Today, the term "proletariat" is usually used to mean "working class". The word comes from Latin, and in ancient Rome it referred to the lowest class of Roman citizen. The current usage originates with Karl Marx, who used "proletariat" to identify those people in a modern capitalist society who must sell their labor for a wage in order to live. This is the definition of the working class, or proletariat, in Marxist theory. Although many people think of "proletarians" or the "working class" as consisting only of blue-collar manual laborers, Marx's definition applies just as well to many other working people, including service-sector workers, clerical employees, and even some professionals.

Some Marxists also use the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" to refer to the form of government that would exist after a socialist revolution. Many 20th-century communists equated the dictatorship of the proletariat with a one-party dictatorship like those which existed in the USSR or China. Marx did not originally mean "dictatorship" in this modern sense, however. To Marx, all class societies are "dictatorships" because one class dominates government. The dictatorship of the proletariat, for Marx, simply referred to a situation in which working class parties had taken control of the state and were working to build socialism and abolish the system of classes. This was not meant to be incompatible with democracy.

### **Radical Feminism**

Radical feminism exists in many forms, but most radical feminists believe that the primary form of oppression in society is the oppression of women by patriarchy (See also: *Patriarchy*). Unlike liberal feminists, radical feminists believe that the family is a major location of women's oppression. Many radical feminists believe that the biological fact that women bear children—and are generally expected to do most of the work of child rearing—is at the root of female oppression. One tendency within radical feminism, separatism, advocates the creation of separate, all-female communities in which men play no role.

### **Reactionary**

Refers to a conservative "reaction" against attempts to change traditional social arrangements. Often used to mean "right wing" in general, even in reference to new and radical right-wing ideas. Reactionary in this sense is the opposite of "progressive." The term reactionary can also refer to anything that is in response to something else. A series of protests in response to a planned KKK rally could be viewed as reactionary even if they were not politically conservative. Reactionary in this sense is the opposite of "proactive".

### **Reductionism**

The idea that one social or natural phenomenon can be reduced to another one. For instance, the idea that racism only exists because capitalists can use it to divide workers, and that racism will be eliminated if everyone unites on the basis of class to overthrow capitalism, is a type of reductionist thinking. The idea that all human behavior can be reduced to biology and evolutionary explanations is another form of reductionism.

### **Reformism**

The political strategy of transforming the social system through incremental reforms. Originally, "reformism" in a socialist context referred to the idea (originating with the German Social Democrat Eduard Bernstein) that socialism could be achieved step by step, by gradually bringing more and more of the economy under democratic, state control. In later years, however, those who were identified as reformists gave up the idea that socialism would ever

be achieved, and settled for reforms which lessen some of the worst aspects of capitalism.

### **Reparations**

A political movement in the United States, which advocates that the United States government pay reparations to African-Americans for their brutal exploitation under slavery. The argument is that even though the actual slaveholders are long dead, all white Americans have benefited from their racial privilege, as slave labor was essential to creating the economic prosperity of the United States. In addition, African-Americans still suffer from the effects of slavery and racism. Most reparations advocates demand not that individual African-Americans be paid in cash, but that money be put into social programs to remedy the poverty, joblessness, sub-standard education, and other ills that disproportionately impact people of color.

### **Reproductive Rights**

A term used to describe the broad movement for a range of feminist goals related to women's reproduction. Reproductive rights advocates believe that women should have the right to self-determination in all aspects of birth control, pregnancy, and childbearing – how and when to have children. This movement champions access to birth control, comprehensive sex education, abortion rights, adoption, and programs that increase the ability of women to raise children if they choose (an expanded welfare state) and opposes policies that limit self-determination, such as forced sterilization or parental consent laws for minors seeking abortions. The reproductive rights movement differs from the "Pro-Choice" movement in that it espouses a feminist rights-based philosophy, not a consumer choice philosophy (the "right to choose" ideal purposefully appeals to the American capitalist ideal of choice in an unfettered marketplace). The reproductive rights movement, as an intrinsically socialist feminist interpretation of these feminist issues, differs from liberal feminist interpretations in that it explicitly communicates that legalization of birth control, abortion, and midwifery (for example) are not end goals. The end goals of a reproductive rights movement are instead access and full choice taking into account the unique forms of discrimination against women of color, lesbians, poor women, and immigrant women. (See also: *Liberal Feminism*; *Socialist Feminism*)

### **Revolutionary Nationalism**

Revolutionary nationalists fight for the liberation of an oppressed nation, meaning a racial or ethnic group that is systematically oppressed, such as blacks, Chicanos and other Latinos, Asian Pacific Americans, Arabs or American Indians in the United States. Revolutionary nationalists are concerned with winning economic and political power in order to liberate the oppressed nation and improve their lives, and many revolutionary nationalists advocate some kind of socialism. This makes them distinct from cultural nationalists, who are more interested in creating national culture and group identity rather than fighting for political power or transforming the entire society.

### **Sectarianism**

In left politics, sectarianism is the fanatical defense of one's own political organization or tendency, and the denunciation of others on the left. Sectarianism places disputes between other leftists ahead of the struggle against a common enemy, and socialists are infamous for it. Socialists have often denounced each other for tiny differences in doctrine which are almost imperceptible to outsiders. Whether any particular criticism of others on the left counts as sectarianism, instead of just "principled politics," is of course always a matter of great dispute.

### **Social Democracy**

Before the Russian Revolution, all socialists referred to themselves as social democrats. After 1917, Social Democracy refers to the large socialist parties, especially in Western Europe, which opposed the USSR. Social Democrats aim to take power through democratic elections rather than through a violent revolution, and

they aim to gradually make the economy more socialistic rather than taking the property of the capitalists immediately. Many of the Social Democratic parties in power succeeded in instituting strong systems of trade unionism, nationalization (state ownership) of industry, and social benefits which greatly improved the living conditions of workers under capitalism. (See also: *Welfare State*)

### **Socialist Feminism**

Socialist feminism aims to combine many of the insights of radical, liberal, and Marxist feminism, as well as the experience of lesbians and women of color. Like liberal feminists, socialist feminists advocate equality for women in the law and in the workplace. Like radical feminists, socialist feminists believe that the oppression of women is fundamental and cannot be reduced to class, and they critique the patriarchal family structure. However, they take from black feminism the recognition that there is no independent, universal "woman" independent of class and race. From Marxism, socialist feminism takes a commitment to abolishing class—not only economic class based on the production of goods and services, but also sex-class based on the reproduction of people (See also: *Democratic Socialism*)

### **Socialization**

The process through which individuals gain values and beliefs through the process of growing up and interacting with their society, as opposed to things which are biological and present at birth. People are socialized to accept many social norms which are fairly harmless—the appropriate distance to keep from a person you are talking to, for instance (which varies with every culture). But people are also socialized to accept racist, sexist, and homophobic values, and to accept the fact of economic class. (See also: *Patriarchy*; *Heterosexism*; *Class Consciousness*)

### **Socio-Economic**

Many phenomena in society are referred to as "socio-economic," meaning that they touch on both the social and economic existence of people. While some forms of exploitation and oppression—such as low wages and poor working conditions—fall into the traditional sphere of the "economic," others, such as police brutality and the negative portrayal of poor people in the media, are more broadly social issues. Since it is often impossible to strictly separate economic from social effects, the general term "socio-economic" is often used.

### **Tendency**

A tendency, in socialist parlance, is a group of people organized around a set of political positions. A tendency may be a grouping of individuals within a political party who push a specific political agenda, or it may simply refer to a group of disconnected people who identify with a particular theory or journal.

### **Third Way**

Pioneered by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and other conservative Social Democrats, the "third way" claims to be an alternative to both socialism and capitalism. According to Third Way theorists, the "new economy" based on information technology has made the old social democratic program of state ownership of industry and the welfare state obsolete. Third Way proponents accept that most of the economy should be privately owned and regulated only by the free market. They also believe that the state should not provide benefits (such as welfare or health care) to people without requiring responsibilities from them. Third Way ideology is dominant in many large Social Democratic parties throughout the world. (See also: *Social Democracy*)

### **Third World**

A term coined during the cold war to describe the countries—mostly former colonies—which were not allied with the "first world" (the United States and its allies) or the "second world" (the Soviet Union and the other Communist states). Today the term is generally used to describe the poorest and least economically developed countries in the world. The term has fallen somewhat out of favor, however,

and has been replaced by analogous terms such as “developing countries”, “the global south”, “the periphery”, or “newly industrializing countries”.

**LGBTTSIQQ** (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two Spirit, Intersex, Queer, and Questioning)

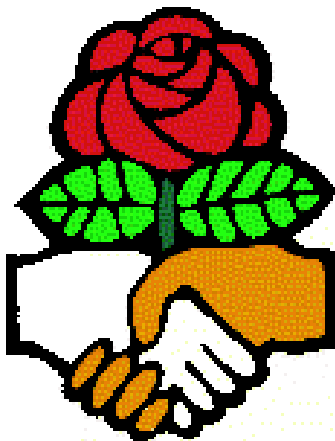
This is currently the most comprehensive acronym for the range of sexual identities that fall outside of the traditional idea of “normal” heterosexuality, although the shorter acronym “LGBT” is more commonplace. This includes *Lesbian*, *Gay*, and *Bisexual* identities. This also includes *Transgender*, an umbrella term that describes pre-op, post-op, and non-op transsexuals, transvestites, gender-queers, drag kings/queens, and a range of other individuals who identify or express a gender, which is different from their assigned biological sex. *Two-Spirit* is a concept drawn from a few Native American peoples, like the Blackfoot. It refers to those who take on certain gender roles that are not typically associated with their assigned biological sex. Two-Spirit is gaining popularity amongst transgender persons of broader Native American dissent as a contemporary way of describing a specifically Native American transgender community. *Intersex* refers to individuals born with ambiguous secondary sex characteristics or persons whose sex chromosomes are not genetically “XX” or “XY,” although they may appear to have the secondary-sex characteristics of a particular sex. *Queer* is a general term (and one whose meaning is contested); it refers to all those sexual identities and practices which are outside the “normal.” Finally, *Questioning* simply refers to all those who are uncertain of their sexual identity, and is included to create political space and community for the needs of youth who are beginning to explore their gender and sexuality more fully. (See also: *Heterosexism/Heteronormativity*)

#### **Trade Unionism (Laborism)**

The process and politics of building, supporting and maintaining unions. Often criticized by some radicals as a conservative force, encouraging people to think about the short-term benefits of higher pay or shorter hours, rather than the long-term or radical restructuring of society.

#### **Trotskyism**

Section of the Communist movement inspired by Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the Russian Revolution. After Trotsky was forced out of the Soviet leadership and exiled by Stalin, he developed the analysis of the USSR as a “degenerated workers state,” an analysis which has influenced all subsequent Trotskyists. According to this theory, the USSR was run by a bureaucratic, authoritarian Stalinist leadership that needed to be overthrown by a political revolution of the proletariat; however, some Trotskyists still defended the USSR (and generally defend other state socialist regimes like Cuba) on the grounds that it still had socialized property relations and was therefore preferable to capitalism. This debate has split the Trotskyist movement into many, often tiny sects. In the U.S., the Socialist Workers Party, the International Socialist Organization and the Spartacist League are examples of Trotskyist organizations. (See also *Marxism-Leninism; Sectarianism; French Turn*)



#### **Tyranny of Structurelessness**

The idea, introduced by the feminist theorist Jo Freeman in her essay of the same name, that hierarchical structures exist in groups even if they are officially structureless, and that this leads to a “tyranny” because these hierarchies are totally unaccountable. Freeman noticed that, in many supposedly non-hierarchical feminist groups, certain people had more influence, got more attention, and received more prestige than others. Since there were technically no leaders, there was no way to hold these people accountable for their power. As a guard against this, Freeman advocated having more formal structure, but making these structures as open as possible and rotating tasks to the greatest degree feasible.

#### **Vanguard (Party)**

The Vanguard Party is an idea derived from V.I. Lenin, leader of the Russian Revolution. Lenin believed that the working class, through its spontaneous economic struggles, would only attain a “trade union consciousness”—that is, they would only fight for a better life under capitalism, and would never see the need for a socialist revolution. Lenin proposed that revolutionary ideas had to come from the outside, from a vanguard party. The vanguard, in the Leninist formulation, also refers to the small group of revolutionaries who seize power in a socialist revolution, as the Bolsheviks did in 1917. Although the idea of the vanguard is associated mostly with Leninism, aspects of it appear in any ideological organization which upholds the need to participate in political activism by presenting critique and analysis, rather than blindly following the activity of “the masses.”

#### **Welfare State**

A capitalist state which provides large amounts of personal benefits to its citizens. This can take the form of unemployment compensation, health care, free education, old age pensions, or other kinds of social programs. A welfare state attempts to counteract the negative effects of capitalism (inequality, poverty, etc.) through social programs. A strong welfare state can also, in some cases, change the balance of power between workers and owners, by offering workers an option in life rather than working for low wages, and by taking certain economic goods (health care, education, housing) out of the market and into public control. Socialists have been instrumental in creating welfare states in North America and Europe, but many liberals defend the welfare state as well. (See also: *Social Democracy; Liberalism*)

#### **Zionism**

Nationalist movement which asserts that Jews should build their own homeland in the middle east. Modern Zionism is generally traced to the 18th Century thinker Theodor Hertzl, who believed that Jews would never escape oppression unless they had their own state. Zionism has been a principal guiding ideology of the state of Israel since its inception. There are Zionists of both the right and left, including socialist Zionists.

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