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## GLOSSARY

*This tool was developed as part of [Liberation In Our Lifetime](#), SONG's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary chapbook and is an updated and expanded version of our "Key Terms" document. We do not claim ownership of these definitions and would be remiss without thanking [Movement Strategy Center](#), [School of Unity and Liberation \(SOUL\)](#), [Center for Story Based Strategy](#), [Project South](#), [The Change Agency](#), and countless others for their contributions to these evolving words. We hope to continue updating this tool over time as part of our continuous efforts to strive towards shared language and shared understanding in our collective organizing towards liberation.*

### **Abolitionists**

"A political vision, a structural analysis of oppression, and a practical organizing strategy working towards a society that addresses harm without relying on prisons, police, military, or other violent systems."

From [Beautiful Trouble](#):

### **alliance**

A strategic alliance is a grouping of organizations (some that may be networks or coalitions themselves) that hold a common long-term vision, have a high level of political alignment, and agree to strategize and work together over time.

### **base**

A base is a group of people who can think together, work together and grow together.

### **base building**

Base building is increasing the number of people who share the same vision and who are developing the strategies, and doing the work, for moving that vision.

### **Black Feminism**

A theoretical framework that highlights the experiences of Black women and the intersecting oppressions of racism and sexism. (Wikipedia.com)

### **Black Southern freedom movement:**

Aka the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). however this term acknowledges and re-centers the leadership of multitudes of Black Southerners, especially women and queer Black southerners, whose diverse strategies, beliefs, and tactics have been historically left out of white-washed, revisionist histories of the CRM.

### **Beloved Community**

Martin Luther King, Jr. described the “Beloved Community” as a society where “caring and compassion drive political policies that support the worldwide elimination of poverty and hunger and all forms of bigotry and violence. At its core, the 'Beloved Community' is an engine of reconciliation.” (The King Center)

### **501 C3**

A nonprofit that has been recognized by the IRS as being tax-exempt by virtue of its charitable programs. (501c3.org)

### **campaign**

Sustained fights to win concrete policy and institutional change on issues that impact your constituency\*

### **climate justice**

An approach to climate action that emphasizes the connections between the climate crises, social, racial, and environmental issues that facilitates the unequal impact of climate change on marginalized populations. (UC Center for Climate Change)

### **Community Accountability**

Community Accountability is an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions regarding community concerns and matters. (Merriam-Webster.com)

### **conditions**

What we are facing that makes our lives either easy or hard and where people stand in relationship to power and oppression. Includes how we sit in relationship to the economy, the government, access to public services, environmental situations and systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, and heterosexism.

### **Conflict and harm**

Conflict, disagreement, difference or argument between people (a.m. brown.)

Harm, physical or mental damage or injury : something that causes someone or something to be hurt, broken, made less valuable or successful, etc. (Britannica.com)

### **conflict avoidance**

A method of handling conflict that aims to keep the peace without directly addressing the issue at hand. It can include changing the subject, putting a discussion off until later, and involve some form of people pleasing.

### **constituency**

“A group or class served by an organization or institution, specifically the people impacted by the issues that the organization works. This can also be thought of as an organizations’ potential base or as the “community” to be organized.” (School of Unity and Liberation)

### **Democracy**

A system of government where the general population, or eligible members, of a state determines state officials through elections and voting. (Britannica.com)

### **democratic/radical accountability**

Democratic accountability enables the sharing of power (concept of checks and balance) and the public control over the use of public resources. It contributes to reducing the risk of power abuse and corruptive practices, which in turn is essential to ensure the fulfillment of peoples' basic human rights. (Governance SD Network)

Radical accountability is an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions and to understand the root causes of one's actions. (Merriam-Webster.com)

**electoral politics**

Actions or activities concerned with achieving or using power in a society that are connected to elections. (CollinsDictionary.com)

**Empire and colonialism**

An empire is a group of countries or regions that are controlled by one ruler or one government. (Britannica.com)

Colonialism is defined as “control by one power over a dependent area or people.” It occurs when one nation subjugates another, conquering its population and exploiting it, often while forcing its own language and cultural values upon its people. (National Geographic)

**Fascism**

A far-right, authoritarian, ultranationalist political ideology and movement characterized by a dictatorial leader, militarism, forcible suppression of opposition, etc. (Wikipedia.com)

**Feminist**

A feminist is someone who is an advocate of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes; a person who supports feminism. (Dictionary.com)

Feminism is a range of socio-political movements and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. (Wikipedia.com)

**Fragility**

Fragility is the quality of being easily broken or damaged. (Dictionary.com)

Also related to “White Fragility” which is the discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice. (Dictionary.com)

**grassroots**

Ordinary people and communities affected by traditional power structures who are working towards a mutual goal. Often used in reference and tandem to **organizing** and **movement**.

**Hetero-patriarchy**

A socio-political system where heterosexual (re: cisgender) men have authority over all other people with marginalized genders and sexual orientations. (Wikipedia.com)

**ideological and political fundamentalism**

Ideological and political fundamentalism is a movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles, ideologies, and politics. (Merriam-Webster.com)

**Ideology**

A system or set of ideas or ideals. (Dictionary.com)

**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.

**intersectional**

How all of our lives, issues, and identities are connected. We work across race, class, culture, gender and sexuality and don't leave people or struggles behind. We want to build a whole world from whole selves.

### **leadership development**

Developing the political analysis and practical skills of members of your organization to enable them to build the organization's base, fight campaigns, and build the organization.\*

### **Liberalism**

A political and economic doctrine that emphasizes individual autonomy, equality of opportunity, and the protection of individual rights. (Britannica.com)

### **Marxist**

A Marxist is someone who honors the political philosophy of Marxism. Marxism is the social, economic, and political philosophy that analyzes the impact of the ruling class on the laborers and the uneven distribution of wealth and privileges. (The Economic Times)

### **Membership**

Membership is the state of belonging to or being a part of a group or an organization : the state of being a member. (Britannica.com)

### **Movement (Social Movement)**

Social movements impact and change people's lives. They are defined by their ability to move large numbers of people to action to achieve structural and cultural transformation on a national or global scale. They engage a diverse range of communities and approaches simultaneously. While approaches may differ, social movements unite people in shared principles and goals. They are organized, yet informal, entities that are engaged in extra-institutional conflict oriented towards a goal. The goal can either be as specific and narrow as a particular policy or as broad as cultural change.

### **Movement Building**

"Movement Building is the long-term, coordinated effort of individuals and organized groups of people to intentionally spark and sustain a social movement. Movement builders constantly engage core allies, the public, and people in positions of power to address systemic problems and promote alternative visions or solutions." (Movement Strategy Center)

### **movement-building organization**

An organization dedicated to organizing and motivating people to work towards a collective vision or cause that is important for a community. (The Solutions Project)

### **Neoliberalism**

The idea of profit over people. The extreme de-regulation of the economy and the elimination and defunding of elements of the social safety net, like public education and social security. Neoliberalism works to undermine local economies to consolidate power and resources into a few hands.

### **Non-profit**

An entity created and operated for charitable or socially beneficial purposes rather than to make a profit. (Investopedia.com)

### **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 the 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)

### **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 U.S. 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.

### **outreach**

A component of base-building. Outreach is going into the community to talk about your organization, your organizing, a specific campaign, upcoming event, or another component of your work. We use outreach to meet new people into the community and to connect them to a critical mass of people working for social change.

### **Perfectionism**

A disposition to regard anything short of perfection as unacceptable. In psychology, it's a broad personality trait characterized by a person's concern with striving for flawlessness and perfection and is accompanied by critical self-evaluations and concerns regarding others' evaluations. (Dictionary.com; Psychology Today)

### **Plantation (as in the US is a plantation)**

A large property or landholding dependent on the labor of enslaved people. (National Geographic Society)

### **political education (PE)**

PE is a structured process of study that is used by social movement organizations to strengthen an organization's commitment and accountability to those who are most marginalized by systems of oppression. Leadership development is a primary goal of PE. Rather than indoctrination and passive agreement, critical thinking and principled struggle are emphasized.

### **power analysis**

Using different tools to build a group or organization's understanding of the context surrounding an issue. This includes identifying key stakeholders and where they stand in relationship to the issue and how they do or could wield influence.

### **queer liberation**

Seeks liberation for all peoples through working for the recognition of our whole selves; the integrity of the relationships and families we embrace; self determination in choices for our bodies in sexuality, gender, eroticism, disability, safety, and privacy; the dignity of our spiritual practices; fairness in our economic systems, our work and its compensation; full access to participating in and benefiting from society's institutions; human rights for all; and justice as a birthright for all.

### **relational organizing**

Starts with a group of people who have relationships with each other. It is a type of community organizing that relies on and prioritizes relationships both inside and outside of an organization in order to build stronger, more dynamic and creative collective power. It includes base building, political education, issue identification, training and action.

### **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)

### **scale**

People's movements often quantify and qualify the breadth and depth of people power through numbers (building **base** and membership) and through community/organization/movement run **infrastructure**. We often hear people talk about, "Going to scale." This means that we work to maximize our capacity to do as much as we can with what we have.

### **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!"

### **social movement**

Social movement, a loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society's structure or values. (Britannica.com)

### **the State**

State, political organization of society, or the body politic, or, more narrowly, the institutions of government. (Britannica.com)

### **strategy**

A premeditated and systematic plan of action to achieve a particular goal. Strategy is inseparable from analysis and requires reflection and flexibility to emergent situations. A strategy can be as simple or complex as you and your group determine. It should communicate your theory of change, the political context you are working in, the problems and solutions, your goals, power analysis, tactics and timeline. (Center for Story Based Strategy)

### **tactics**

Tactics are the social action activities that you use to achieve your goals and objectives. They are the steps and the logic to strategy. Groups choose tactics that will deliver the greatest impact for the energy and resources invested. (The Change Agency)

### **Transformative Justice**

"Transformative Justice (TJ) is a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence. TJ can be thought of as a way of "making things right," getting in "right relation," or creating justice together. Transformative justice responses and interventions 1) do not rely on the state (e.g. police, prisons, the criminal legal system, I.C.E., foster care system (though some TJ responses do rely on or incorporate social services like counseling); 2) do not reinforce or perpetuate violence such as oppressive norms or vigilantism; and most importantly, 3) actively cultivate the things we know prevent violence such as healing, accountability, resilience, and safety for all involved."  
(Transformative Justice: A Brief Description, by Mia Mingus and informed by many)

### **white nationalist (as distinct from white supremacist)**

Someone who espouses white supremacist ideologies in order to push for a white ethnostate. (Vox)

### **white supremacist**

Someone who believes white people are better than/superior to others and should dominate. An advocate for the maintenance and defense of any power and privilege held by white people. (wordnik + wiki)

