

Activist Jargon

ALLY: A group or individual that stands with members of other groups in their aims and actions. For example, people of color may count anti-racist white people as “allies” in the fight against racism and white supremacy.

ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN: An anti-authoritarian is a person who stands in practices opposition to all forms of authoritarianism, i.e. the concentration of great power and authority in an elite or a leader who can exercise that power over other people. Anti-authoritarians typically oppose not only authoritarian regimes, but also all forms of political, economic, or social coercion, including those seen on a college campus.

ANTI-RACIST: An anti-racist is a person who makes a conscious choice to act to challenge some aspect of the system of white supremacy. For a white person, this means both confronting oppression against people of color and confronting her/his own white privilege. For a person of color, it may be difficult not to be an anti-racist activist, since the struggle against racial injustice intersects with every issue affecting people of color.

BIOTECH: A massive industry devoted to the manipulation of life for profit, taking such forms as genetic engineering. Harvard currently has extensive partnerships worth millions of dollars with big biotech companies.

CARD CHECK NEUTRALITY: Card-check neutrality is a democratic process in which an employer agrees to honor its workers' right to organize unions. First, the employer agrees not to interfere with, manipulate or intimidate workers who are trying to exercise this right to organize. Second, the employer agrees to recognize the union once a simple majority of workers has signed cards saying they want to unionize.

CLASSISM: The belief that people deserve the privilege or oppression of their class based on their supposed merit, social status, level of education, job, etc.

COMMODIFICATION: When something valuable – such as a favor, a kiss, an education – is transformed into something that can be exchanged like currency.

CONSENSUS: Consensus is a process of making decisions that makes sure everybody has a say and everyone's needs are met. Consensus decision making goes through the following steps: 1) Group discussion. 2) Proposals for action are presented. 3) Debate is held on these proposals, concerns are raised and solutions are found. 4) Everyone in the group indicates whether they will support the proposal, will “stand aside,” or if they have fundamental concerns,

will block the group from proceeding. 5) If there are concerns, the issue is then revisited and creative compromises are found or the group must decide collectively how to proceed.

CORPORATE GLOBALIZATION: The integration and accumulation of global power by big corporations, undermining processes of democracy, community, accountability, human rights, and environmental protection.

CORPORATE MEDIA: The vast number of media outlets which are owned and controlled by large corporations. The most notable corporate media outlets include Fox News (owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.), CNN (owned by AOL-Time Warner), NBC (owned by General Electric), CBS (owned by Viacom), ABC (owned by Disney), and Clear Channel Radio (which controls 100 out of 112 major radio markets in the country).

CORPORATION, THE: At Harvard, "the Corporation" refers to the secretive, unaccountable governing body of the university, first chartered in 1650 (making it the oldest corporation started in North America). Today, the Harvard Corporation maintains total control over the university's endowment, which was recently announced to be worth over \$29.2 billion.

COUNTER-RECRUITING: An effort to oppose war by preventing military recruiters from enlisting young people into the military. Most counter-recruiting happens on college and high school campuses, and focuses on countering the deception and discrimination often practiced by military recruiters.

DESIGNATED SUPPLIERS PROGRAM: A policy drafted by the student group United Students Against Sweatshops to ensure that collegiate apparel is produced in designated factories that meet a high level of labor rights standards, including the payment of a living wage and the existence of a legitimate union or other representative body for workers.

DIRECT ACTION: A means of stopping objectionable practices or creating social change, either by directly obstructing an institution from performing those practices, or by using whatever methods and resources are in one's own power to solve social problems. Examples of direct action include a sit-in, a strike, a blockade, or a boycott. Direct actions are often, but not always, civil disobedience.

DIVESTMENT: The reduction or elimination of an institution's investments in firms, industries or countries, for reasons of social or humanitarian concern. Harvard has seen large movements for divestment from South Africa in the 1980s (in protest of apartheid), and more recently, for divestment from Israel in 2002 (in protest of the treatment of Palestinians) and divestment from Sudan in

2005 (in protest of the genocide in Darfur).

EMPOWERMENT: A model of social of change based on oppressed people gaining power through leading struggles to improve their own lives, rather than privileged people making changes on behalf of the oppressed.

FAIR TRADE: A model of economic trade that seeks more equal trade relations by empowering producers and workers in the Global South, offering them better conditions and fair prices for their goods. In 2004, Harvard students got university dining halls to switch to “fair trade coffee” grown under humane conditions.

FTAA: The Free Trade Area of the Americas, which would effectively extend the monopoly of U.S. based corporations throughout North and South America.

GENDER BINARY SYSTEM: A biologically determinist system which dictates that there are two acceptable genders, man or woman. This regime is upheld by heterosexism and patriarchy, regulating what gender “roles” are and the punishments for challenging or deviating from those roles.

GENTRIFICATION: The process in which the inhabitants of a low-cost neighborhood are displaced by wealthier residents as prices rise and properties are bought up, constructed or renovated so that the original residents can no longer afford to live there. Harvard is facing accusations of gentrification as the university expands across the Charles River into the neighborhood of Lower Allston.

HMC: The Harvard Management Company, charged with investing Harvard's \$29.2 billion endowment. Top money managers at the HMC have been paid as much as \$35 million a piece in one year, sparking some controversy over inequalities at Harvard. HMC is currently headed by Mohamed El-Erian, a former economist with the International Monetary Fund, who took over after top officials stepped down in 2005.

LGBTIQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Questioning

GRIEVANCE: Any complaint workers have about their job or their employers, especially something that breaches their contract or breaks the law. A union ensures that workers have a “grievance process,” whereby they can formally raise complaints and concerns about their compensation and treatment on the job.

HETEROSEXISM: An ideological and social system where people are compelled and assumed to be heterosexual. Heterosexism denies and persecutes nonheterosexual forms of behavior, identity, relationship, or community, and it also privileges people who act “straight.”

HOMOPHOBIA: The fear and persecution of queer people rooted in a desire to maintain an exclusively heterosexual social system.

HR 4437: House Resolution 4437, also known as the “Sensenbrenner Bill,” which would have made felons of the 12 million undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S., as well as those who help them in any way. The bill was opposed last spring by a massive movement of immigrant workers and their allies across the country, culminating in a general strike and boycott on May 1 that included a walkout by hundreds of Harvard students.

IMPERIALISM: The ideology and practice of nation states extending their authority and control over foreign lands, either by conquering and occupying a nation or by exerting control over its resources, its politics and its economy. The U.S. occupation of Iraq is often seen as an example of a new kind of “imperialism.”

KILLER COKE: A reference to the Coca-Cola Corporation and its connection to the recent murders of at least nine union activists in Colombia (along with hundreds more who have been kidnapped and tortured), as well as its pollution and depletion of the water resources of many villages in India.

LEGALIZATION: Legalization may be taken to mean many things, but it often refers to the demand that undocumented immigrants to the U.S. receive legal status so that they no longer have to live and work in the shadows.

LIVING WAGE: The lowest hourly wage a person can earn and still be able to cover the basic costs of living and raising a family in the area in which they work. Estimates of the local living wage vary: The Cambridge City Council claims the living wage is \$12.19, while the Mass. Family Self-Sufficiency Standard is \$20.85 for a parent with one child. Activists at Harvard led a campaign from 1998 to 2001 for a living wage for all campus workers.

MCCARTHYISM: The practice of using intimidation and accusations of disloyalty, subversion, or “un-American activities” to pressure people to conform to a certain political view or disavow a controversial political position. The practice was originally used against activists, authors, artists and intellectuals during the “Red Scare” of the 1950s, but has been revived in some universities and other institutions with the “war on terrorism.”

MILITARISM: The drive to base a nation's way of life on military principles, doctrines and goals, and to expand the influence of the military throughout society to education, entertainment, business and government policy.

NON-HIERARCHICAL: A process of social or political organizing in which everyone is an equal and a leader in the organization, and no one has any more power or authority than anyone else. Non-hierarchical organizing can be contrasted with

top-down organization, which is much more common.

OCCUPATION, THE: Often used to refer to the U.S. military occupation of Iraq (2003-present), and sometimes to refer to the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories (1967-present). In Iraq, the occupation has led to the deaths of 2,700 U.S. troops and “excess deaths” of over 100,000 Iraqi civilians, while in the Occupied Territories and Israel, more than 5,000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israelis have been killed since 1987.

OPPRESSOR, OPPRESSED, OPPRESSION: An oppressor is one who uses her/his power to

dominate others. An oppressed is one who is dominated by an oppressor, and by those who consent or cooperate with this domination. Oppression is the power and the effects of domination. Different kinds of oppression often intersect and build off each other. Such oppression may include racism, sexism, heterosexism, anti-semitism, ablism, ageism, and some say capitalism itself.

OIL: Oil may be the single biggest factor driving the political economy, and many believe it is also a key factor in recent wars. Major oil companies like ExxonMobil, Shell, Occidental, and Halliburton have been implicated around the world for human rights abuses and environmental devastation, sometimes in collaboration with local governments, sometimes with the aid of U.S. military forces, private security or paramilitaries.

OUTSOURCING: The practice of “sourcing” jobs out to an outside contractor rather than hiring employees directly to do those jobs. There is a trend of universities using “outsourced” labor to cut costs and evade responsibility for the treatment of workers. For example, in recent years, Harvard has outsourced hundreds of security jobs, slashing wages and benefits, eliminating job security, and busting campus unions in the process.

PARITY: Parity refers to the principle of “equal pay for equal work,” extending the same wages and benefits to contracted or outsourced workers as directly hired workers. In principle, parity was won at Harvard after the Living Wage Campaign's occupation of Massachusetts Hall in 2001.

PATRIARCHY: An economic, political, cultural and social system of domination of women and privileging of men. It is based on restricted gender roles and binary definitions of gender. It also has rigidly enforced heterosexuality that places male/straight as superior and women/queer as inferior.

PEOPLE OF COLOR: A term used to refer to peoples and ethnicities whose ancestral origins are from Africa, Asia, the Americas, or the Middle East. “People of color” is often used instead of the term “minority” (soon to be factually inaccurate, as people of color will constitute a majority of the U.S. within a decade). The term also emphasizes common experiences of racial discrimination and racial oppression.

PHARMACEUTICALS: Big pharmaceutical companies that control a majority of the global market for vital medications. Several Harvard researchers have come under fire for their secret ties to these corporations.

PICKET LINE: A form of action in which people congregate outside a place of work or other location to protest the conditions, people, or institutions inside. It is considered a grave offense to cross a workers' picket line.

POLITICAL PRISONER: A political prisoner is a person who has been detained or jailed merely because their ideas or image are deemed by a government to challenge or threaten the authority of the state. Holding political prisoners is often seen as contrary to basic principles of democracy, freedom of speech and freedom of thought. Prominent political prisoners in the U.S. today include Leonard Peltier, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Daniel McGowan.

POPULAR EDUCATION: A participatory, less formal form of learning that addresses the concerns of a community, draws on the experiences of all the people involved, and offers possibilities for social action.

PREJUDICE: A prejudice is a pre-judgment in favor of or against a person, a group, an idea, or a thing. An action against a person or group based on such a prejudgment is often called discrimination or bigotry.

PRISON-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX: A term used to refer to the use of prisons and prisoners for private profit (at the public's cost). Harvard continues to have ties to companies that profit from prisons, such as Sodexo.

PRIVILEGE: Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to all members of a dominant group (such as white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because they are taught not to see it, but nevertheless puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.

QUEER: Queer is an umbrella term of self-identification, usually used in place of or in addition to identifications of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or intersex. The basic idea is that queer is a gender or sexual identification that implies that queer people see themselves outside of traditional binaries of gender and sexuality.

RACISM: Power plus racial prejudice, a system that leads to the oppression of, or discrimination against, specific racial or ethnic groups. People of African, Asian, Latin American, Native American, and Middle Eastern descent have historically faced and continue to face rampant racism, including at Harvard University.

RIGHT TO ORGANIZE: The right of workers to freely associate with one another,

and to organize themselves into unions to maintain and improve the conditions of their life and work. The right to organize is recognized as a fundamental human right under Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and as a civil right in the U.S. under Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act.

SEXISM: Sexism is a form of oppression that perpetuates the system of patriarchy, where men hold power and privilege and where women and genderqueer people are subordinated to men. Harvard has a long history as a sexist institution, maintaining quotas on women until 1975, excluding female professors from jobs, condoning male-only spaces such as final clubs, and refusing to create spaces for women's needs until very recently.

SILENCING: Situations in which people from dominant social groupings, such as white men, tend to dominate discussions or dominate space.

SIT-IN: A form of direct action that involves a group of people nonviolently occupying a space to demand social or political change. Harvard has a history of famous sit-ins, including the University Hall sit-in of 1969 (in protest of the war in Vietnam) and the Massachusetts Hall sit-in of 2001 (in protest of Harvard's labor policies).

SOLIDARITY: Unity based on common goals, interests, and sympathies among people. In a social movement, solidarity means fighting with rather than for the people affected. For example, Harvard Student Labor Action Movement (SLAM) strives to act “in solidarity” with campus workers, to support struggles and campaigns led by these workers, and also works “in solidarity” with movements around the world.

SURVEILLANCE: The practice of constantly monitoring and spying on people by the government or other large institutions. Recent examples of U.S. government surveillance include the warrantless wiretapping of phone lines and federal access to records from libraries and businesses. Surveillance also abounds on college campuses. Harvard was recently revealed to have 200 surveillance cameras hidden in and around the Yard.

SWEATSHOP: A workplace where workers are subjected to abuse and exploitation and denied basic rights and protections. Sweatshops are often linked with poverty wages, unsafe workplaces, union busting, child labor and even slave labor. Sweatshops have been most famously exposed in the apparel industry, in which Gap clothes, Nike shoes, and even Harvard University gear was all traced to sweatshops in the Global South.

TEACH-IN: A form of both protest and education for people to question, debate, and learn about issues of social importance. The teach-in arose on college campuses in 1965 as a protest against the U.S. war in Vietnam.

TOKENISM: The presence of members of an oppressed group without meaningful participation. Tokenism is often used as a band-aid solution to help a group or institution put up an image of racial or gender equality.

TRANSGENDER: The definition of transgender often overlaps with those of transsexual and genderqueer. Although many people use the term in their own ways, transgender usually means a person who identifies as a gender other than the one they were given at birth. A coalition at Harvard recently won the recognition of discrimination against transsexuals in the university's official non-discrimination policy.

TRANSPARENCY: The principle that large institutions should be open to scrutiny by the public and the press. For example, the Harvard Corporation is an institution that lacks transparency, releasing little information to the public and therefore having little accountability to the Harvard community.

TRANSPHOBIA: The fear and persecution of transgender/transsexual persons, rooted in a desire to maintain the gender binary, which hides or belittles the experiences of persons who do not identify with either category.

UNIONS: A union is a group of workers who form an organization to gain a voice in the workplace, respect on the job, better wages and benefits, and a counterbalance to the unchecked power of employers. Active unions on Harvard's campus include the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (UNITE HERE), Maintenance Trades Council (MTC), and the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW). Today, Harvard security guards are also trying to organize a union with SEIU.

WAR PROFITEERS: Corporations that reap huge profits from war and military spending, such as Halliburton, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, United Technologies, and General Electric. Companies like these have extensive government connections, and have secured lucrative contracts with the Pentagon worth tens of billions of dollars. They've also secured tens of millions of dollars in investments by the Harvard Management Company.

WHITE PRIVILEGE: A privilege is a right, favor, advantage, or immunity, specially granted to one individual or group, and withheld from another. White privilege is a system of preferential treatment of white people based solely on their skin color and/or ancestral origin from Europe, and exemption from racial and/or national oppression based on skin color and/or ancestral origin from other places.

WHITE SUPREMACY: White supremacy is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system and ideology of subordination of peoples of color by white peoples as well as nations of the European and North American continents, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

WORKERS RIGHTS CONSORTIUM (WRC): An independent organization that monitors factories producing college apparel in an effort to help universities enforce their Codes of Conduct. The WRC was formed by students, labor experts, and university administrators, and Harvard joined the WRC in 2003.

WORKING CLASS: A social and economic class, often contrasted with the middle and upper classes, made up of those who have to sell their labor to survive. People in the working class often have limited access to basic services, health care, property, capital, and often higher education. Harvard still has fewer working class students than most other universities in the United States.

WORLD BANK AND IMF: The World Bank and International Monetary Fund are the world's largest public lenders, but also the world's biggest loan sharks. Many development countries remain mired in debt owed to the World Bank and IMF, which offer relief only on the condition that debtor countries open up their economies to foreign corporations without any provisions for the rights of local communities, workers, farmers, indigenous peoples, or the environment. These institutions also have deep ties to Harvard: Ex-President Summers was chief economist at the World Bank, and the current manager of the HMC was an official at the IMF for 15 years.

WTO: The World Trade Organization has worked for over 10 years to remove all “barriers” to international commerce, including laws protecting human rights, education, health care, and the environment. The WTO was shut down by a mass movement in the “Battle of Seattle” in 1999, and has been stalled ever since as the poorer countries, emboldened by the protests, have walked out of these unequal trade agreements.

XENOPHOBIA: The fear and persecution of immigrants or those perceived as such, often related to racism, based on a desire to maintain a homogeneous culture and a closed nation that excludes peoples from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East from living and working in the United States.