

do in the short term (though not in the long term). A privileged elite controls these interlinking systems of power, and it is this elite that decides on what basis people should dominate or be dominated. Clearly they structure the measurement so as to benefit themselves, and there is no self-evident reason for the forms of domination that they have implemented (Ex. discrimination by skin color does not make sense – except to white members of the ruling class who benefit from it.).

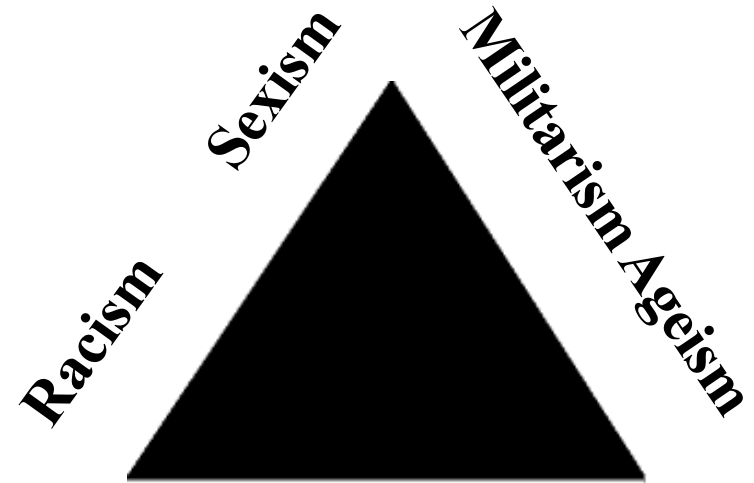


Now you can either choose to accept systems of domination or resist them. Some people have chosen the path of resistance and are replacing domination with liberation. Replacing “power-over” with “power-from-within.” Those on this path seek to empower people, to have them realize their potential instead of exploiting them for our own ends. SEAC believes that relationships between people, animals, and nations should be based on mutual dependence, respect, and love – not exploitation. We are building interlinking systems of resistance and love, working together to transform society.

In practice, if you agree that interlinking systems are important, then you can see why you would want to work in coalitions with many other activist groups who are addressing a non-environmental angle of this multi-dimensional system of domination. Also you should sometimes step-away from the traditional environmental issues (or traditional peace issues if you are in a peace group), broaden the focus of your own and your group’s activism. SEAC tries to be consistent and embrace an explicit multi-dimensional liberation (or “anti-oppression”) analysis in everything we do. For instance SEACers working to Free Burma are trying to end human rights abuses (such as forced labor), and also protect the Burmese teak rainforest. Other students are building connections between the use of dioxins both in tampons (an issue of women’s health) and in chipmills (environmental). Finally you should try to practice equality in your own life. Treat other people respectfully as equals, not as ends to a goal. Develop organizational structures that use group consensus instead of having one or two leaders make the decisions for everyone.

History is on our side. Dominating systems are falling. The right to vote has been extended to non-property owners (the working class), then to people of color and women. Activists have built powerful new social movements challenging racism, sexism, heterosexism, environmental destruction, ablism, and animal exploitation. Let’s build connections and liberate.

Systems of DOMINATION



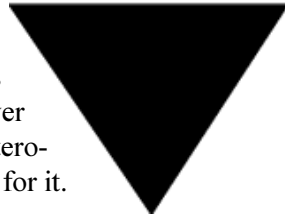
Environmental Destruction

Activists work on many issues. As SEACers, most of us work on environmental issues (such as paper procurement and forest activism), however many of us work on issues that aren’t traditionally associated with the environment. For instance, SEACers recently joined the April 16th protest against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in DC. SEACers at UNC Chapel Hill have supported their housekeeper’s attempts to get a fair wage, and others are trying to get their campuses to stop buying sweatshop apparel. Why do some SEACers do this?

At a first glance, there appears to be many different forms of activism and 101 different issues, but in fact they are all connected. This pamphlet will try to demonstrate how and why these connections exist and show how every activist (this means YOU) makes up a part of a much broader “Movement”. Our unity is power!

What are we, as activists, up against? What are we trying to change?

Mainstream society is a hierarchy. If you look at the primary institutional forces that shape it, you will discover that they are all based on the principle of “power-over.” The “power-over” principle accepts and encourages the domination of one group by another. One group exploits and the other is oppressed. Not everyone in the dominating group is conscious or directly involved in the exploitation, however all of them privilege from it (Ex. white/male/heterosexual/class privilege) and are thus responsible for it.



Examples of privilege / domination

- Racism: domination of people of color by white people - from times of slavery to the current prison system
- Imperialism: economic and/or military domination of weaker states (mostly Third World) by the strong (notably the U.S.)
- Militarism: determining what is right and wrong based on armed force
- Specism: torture and slaughter of animals for human use
- Sexism: men over women
- Ageism: discrimination against young and/or old people.
- Heterosexism: gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transsexuals face harassment and abuse.
- Environmental destruction: domination of humans over the entire planet.
- Classism: the rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and these two facts are directly connected.
- Ablism: people with disabilities are treated as “less-human.”

Not only do these systems exist as one-dimensional forms of oppression, but they also tie together to create a larger self-reinforcing interlinking system of oppression – sometimes known as “The Man” (though male dominance is only one part of the whole).

They are connected at the first level through parallel methods of justification or reasoning. If you can argue for one of these systems of domination, then you can similarly argue for another. For instance if you believe that whites have the right to enslave blacks (based on your belief that whites are superior), then it would be easier for you to accept the possibility that men

should dominate women (also due to superiority). Because once you accept domination on the basis of one arbitrary characteristic (race, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, class, or species), then it is easier to accept it also on the basis of another. On the other hand if you start to question one form of domination, then you are likely to start questioning the others.

The second level of connection comes from the systems of domination working together to reinforce each other. For instance:

- Management try to divide workers on lines of race and gender, to break unions, so they can maximize corporate profit / worker exploitation. This combines class oppression, with that of race and gender.
- Corporations try to divide the environmental movement by race and class. Ex. The question of “jobs or owls?” which falsely implies that you cannot have both.
- Heterosexism reinforces binary gender stereotypes, and thus contributes to sexism. People who deviate from traditional gender roles are often labeled as homosexuals, whether or not they are, and then must face oppressive homophobia.

You may have noticed that conservative politicians support sexism, militarism, heterosexism, classism, corporate-sponsored environmental destruction, racism (etc.), with varying degrees of openness about it (note: they are very open about discriminating against queers). Liberal politicians might favor mild reforms to these oppressive systems, however their reforms will still leave the domination intact.

Working together, these systems of domination try to monopolize the power in our society. They control critical methods of socialization such as the media, schools, religion, and the state; and use these institutions to indoctrinate people to accept their ideology. When most people do not learn about alternative social systems, because they are intentionally excluded from the “acceptable” limits of discussion, it is not surprising that oppressed people will often take on the ideology of the oppressor. At times, workers will identify with the interests of the boss, or slaves with the slavemaster. Accommodation to dominating systems, may be the easiest thing for an individual to

