The Sea Alphabet of Social Justice

Khmer Edition
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & PURPOSE

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This booklet is a list of social justice terms that are relevant to the current issues of today. We hope you use this as a resource tool specifically for engaging with Southeast Asian diaspora communities to spark dialog, conversations, and serve as reference for those who work directly with Southeast Asians.

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Sources:
American Sociological Association
Lewis & Clark College
Quizlet
University of Washington - Tacoma
Racial Equity Tools
Dalhousie University
University of California - Merced
LETTER TO COMMUNITY

Dear Community,

In America, the language for justice doesn’t always translate into equity for our Southeast Asian and other refugee and immigrant communities. SEAD translated these social justice terms into Hmong, Khmer, Lao, and Vietnamese so these concepts are more accessible to our communities by sparking dialog and engagement. This is no way a list of comprehensive and exhaustive terms. We share this gift with you knowing that there isn’t a right or wrong approach on how to have deep and challenging conversations on sensitive topics of social justice.

SEAD isn’t the voice of authority on how to have conversations with these social justice terms, so we encourage you to share with us the ways you’re using this booklet in your day-to-day life; whether that’s organizing on the streets or talking to elders about justice.

These concepts can be complex, and so are our languages, but we aren’t new to understanding and talking about justice from a decolonized lens. Sometimes, the exact vocabulary doesn’t exist in our heritage languages, and we have to get creative and negotiate. Our team has taken intentional care to collaborate with experienced translators, community reviewers, and cultural advisers to create contextually accurate and relevant translations that are as fluid as our languages.


We know there’s much more work to do on language justice, but we hope this is a start.

Solidarity and Love,

The SEAD Family
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The SEAD Project
The Alphabet of Social Justice

A–C

Photo by Kat Eng

Photo by Zinko Hein (unsplash.com)
Abolition: Abolish means to put an end to a harmful system. The abolition movement started from the fight to end slavery in the United States. Today’s movement seeks to abolish policing due to the deaths of Black people by police.

Example: The current abolition movement wants to end the harm due to policing and reimagine community safety by addressing root issues like poverty, addiction, homelessness, and mental health crises.

Ableism: Unfair treatment of people living with differences in physical, mental, and/or emotional ability.

Example: Having ramps for people with wheelchairs at an event is a way to address ableism.

Accountability: Hurting someone and taking responsibility for the pain. When someone harms another, they accept their fault and work with those harmed and/or with the community to change their behavior.

Example: The family of George Floyd want the police to face accountability for the wrongful death of George Floyd.
Advocate:
To speak up for themselves and their community, actively supporting a certain person, group, or cause.

Example: Students advocated for Asian American history to be included in their class.

Agency:
The capacity to act independently and to make free choices.

Example: Immigrants can gain agency over their health when they have forms translated in their languages.

Ageism:
Unfair treatment of people based on age, whether young or old.

Example: Older job applicants are often rejected because of ageism.
Ally: People who address their privilege and work to be in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for shared liberation.

Example: The Asian community is asking for allies to listen, show up, and take action against increasing anti-Asian racism since the pandemic started.

Anti-Blackness: Behaviors, actions, and practices that are opposed to or hostile towards Black people. Anti-Blackness describes the inability to recognize Black humanity.

Example: Believing that all Black people are criminals is a form of anti-Blackness.

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color): This term stands for Black, Indigenous, People of Color. It is meant to unite all people of color in the work for shared liberation while intentionally acknowledging that not all people of color face the same levels of injustice.

Example: Companies can help create better leadership pathways for BIPOC leaders.
**Bias (បាយស្ហិ) / ភាពលីំអេឺង:**
A conscious or unconscious unfair judgment.

Example: Judges who are biased often give Black people harsher criminal sentences.

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**Black people (បុត្រ បុរស) / នាយកសងគម្រួយ:**
People who self-identify their genetic ancestry with roots from Africa.

Originally used as a derogatory term in the past, now being used as a way to reclaim pride.

Example: Black people, like Martin Luther King Jr., paved the way for racial equity in America.

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**Black Lives Matter (BLM):**
A movement to address systemic state violence and discrimination against African Americans.

Example: Through their organizing, the Black Lives Matter movement has helped the world see that Black lives should not matter less than others.
Colonization:
The conquest of territory and people by imperial forces.

Example: The French colonized Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Cisgender:
A term for people whose gender identity matches the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

Example: Someone who identifies as a woman and was assigned female at birth is a cisgender woman.
Classism: Treating people unfairly and unequally based on how much wealth they have.

Example: Judging people without housing or cars are forms of classism.

Colorism: Discrimination against people based solely on the darkness or lightness of their skin tone. This is often seen in prejudicial treatment given to people with darker skin in comparison to people with lighter skin.

Example: Colorism in families occurs when children with lighter skin are praised for their beauty but their cousins with darker skin are told to stay out of the sun and to use whitening lotions.
Decolonize (ឈុងចូលមកបោះ) / ឈុងចូលមកបោះរួម្យួល: 
A liberatory process for Native Americans and other communities of color that were colonized by imperial forces. The goal of decolonization is to move toward self-determination for communities reclaiming their lands, governance, resources and cultures.

Example: For many Native American people, reconnecting with traditional arts and spiritual practices is important to decolonizing their way of life.

Defund (ឈុងឆុង) / កាត់់ថឹវិកា: 
To stop providing funding and resources to institutions and systems which are harmful to communities.

Example: The campaign to “Defund the Police” is asking cities to move funding from police budgets to social services that address basic community needs such as housing, education, employment, and health care services.

Demilitarize (ឈុងរុកមូលយាង) / ការធុងបោះណាម៉ា: 
To remove military equipment and tactics from policing that are commonly seen in war zones such as weaponized drones, grenade launchers, and armored vehicles.

Example: After a SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) Team killed an innocent, unarmed woman named Breonna Taylor in her bed, there have been increasing calls to demilitarize the police.
**Diaspora** (ដាយ អ៊ែីស្ហិបូរ៉ាូ) / ភាពស្ហិហ្សឹគមន៍ ជីន ចិំណាកត្រូស្ហិកូ: Dispersed communities of people who live outside their place of origin due to historical events that caused them to leave their homelands. They remain connected to their homelands by preserving languages, cultures, and histories.

*Example:* After the wars in Southeast Asia; Hmong, Khmer, Lao, Vietnamese, and other ethnic groups make up more than 3 million in the Southeast Asian diaspora living in France, Australia, U.S, and other countries.

**Diversity** (មាត់វ៉េស៊ីីធី) / ភាពចិត្រូមុះ: Having people with different experiences, values, beliefs, and characteristics. In the U.S., residents have a wide range of national, ethnic, racial and other backgrounds. The term is also used to include aspects of gender, sexual orientation, class, and much more.

*Example:* In a workplace, diversity means your staff is made of people who have different backgrounds and perspectives.

**Discrimination** (ឌីីស្ហិត្រូគីមីអេស្ហិីន) / ការអេរីស្ហិអេីង: The unfair treatment or unequal allocation of goods, resources, and services, and the limitation of access to full participation in society based on individual membership in a particular social group.

*Example:* Not being hired for a job you are qualified for because your name sounds “foreign” is a form of discrimination.
Disenfranchised: Being deprived of power and/or access to rights, opportunities, and services.

Example: Latinx children who cross the border are disenfranchised when they are separated from their parents.

Equity: A fair outcome achieved by giving people access to the amount and types of resources they need. While equality focuses on the equal distribution of resources, equity focuses on equal results. Equity seeks to bring justice by deeply considering structural factors that benefit some communities and not others.

Example: Schools are working towards equity by providing English as a Second Language classes for refugee and immigrant students.

Ethnocentric: A belief that one’s nation or ethnic group is superior to others.

Example: An ethnocentric belief among some Americans is that their country and culture is superior to every other nation in the world.
Feminism:
A theory that believes in social, economic, and political equality of all people, regardless of gender, sexuality, race, body size, class, ability, or religion. Feminism centers the struggles of women and LGBTQIA+ people of color.

Example: The success of the #MeToo movement was primarily led by feminist thinking.

Genocide:
The intentional attempt to completely erase or destroy groups of people based on their specific identities through structural oppression and/or open acts of physical violence.

Example: During the Khmer Rouge regime, also called the Cambodian genocide, almost 2 million Cambodians died.

Gentrification:
The displacement of historically poor and/or oppressed communities in neighborhoods, in order to make way for privileged and wealthy individuals and businesses.

Example: When companies tear down houses in poor neighborhoods to build luxury condos, they gentrify the neighborhood and increase the costs of housing for everyone.
Hate Crime: A form of violence where a perpetrator intentionally targets someone based on their race, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.

Example: During the pandemic, COVID-19 was called “China Virus” by some in the media, which led to an increase of hate crimes against Asians in America.

Homophobia: An irrational fear or dislike of people who identify as homosexual or LGBTQIA+. It’s also the structural discrimination that prevents those who identify as homosexual from having access to resources and opportunities, and prevents them from feeling safe or acknowledged in society.

Example: Homophobic beliefs stop many church leaders from recognizing same-sex couples.
**Immigrant** (អុីមីទូក់/យុវស្សិ): An immigrant is someone who makes a conscious decision to leave their homeland and move to a foreign country with the intention of settling there permanently.

**Example:** A family who decides to move to another country for better opportunities are immigrants.

**Indigenous** (អុីនឌីីជីីអេនីស្ហិ): Ethnic groups of people who are the original or earliest known inhabitants of an area or land and have the longest relationship to it.

**Example:** Native Americans are Indigenous to what is currently known as the United States of America.

**Injustice** (អុីនចាស្ហិ): An unfair situation or violation of someone’s rights.

**Example:** The murder of George Floyd by police brutality was an injustice.
**Inclusion**: Bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power and welcoming spaces.

**Example**: Creating *inclusive* policies and practices that ensure that all people from different social groups have access to resources.

**Intersectional**: Intersectional theory looks at how different communities are affected by overlapping systems of power. It is a holistic way of identifying a person’s struggle by taking into account the larger forces that shape their social experience, such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, legal status, education levels, access to food, and so on.

**Example**: *Intersectional* environmentalism looks at how the health of the Mekong river is also connected to the health and wellbeing of the farmers living around it.
**Internalized Oppression** (រូម៉ូែេទុំនៃការដឹកនាំ) / ការដឹកនាំខ្ឝឹសន់សុខភាពអន្តរជាតិ典范：

Destructive patterns of feelings and behaviors experienced by the people who are targets of oppression, turned inward upon themselves and directed at other members of the target group.

Example: Because of internalized oppression, communities of color may not speak up as much in meetings because they are afraid it won’t be seen as important enough.

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**LGBTQIA+** (សារការប្រឈមសម្រាប់អ្នកដែលរួម​ក្នុងកិច្ចព័ន្ធដូច្នេះវិញ) / ស្ថាបត់សព្វថ្មី: 

The umbrella term for a community of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and more.

Example: In 2015, the Supreme Court declared same sex-marriage a constitutional right, a historic moment for the LGBTQIA+ community.

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**Marginalize** (ម៉ូអែផីលីរំលីង) / បំដួលកូសេអារៈ: 

To push to the edges, outside the mainstream spaces. Marginalized groups of people are often denied access to resources and their voices, histories, and perspectives are ignored.

Example: Marginalized people are often denied employment because of their immigration status.
Microaggression (ឈុតិង់ីតុពីុមិុងស្តិ្): The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages that are primarily experienced by marginalized groups.

Example: A microaggression could be something as simple as a manager continuing to say their employee’s name incorrectly, even after working together for many years.

Model Minority Myth (មូនូស្តិ្ន៌ីរុីូស្តិ។ / មូនូស្តិ្នីរុីូស្តិ្នីមិត): A stereotype that is often used against Asian and other ethnic, racial, and religious groups; the myth is that minority groups who are assumed to have achieved a higher degree of success than other groups are seen as the ideal model for assimilation in which other groups are unfairly compared to. This success is typically measured in income, education, etc.

Example: The model minority myth is heavily used against Asian Americans, who are upheld to high expectations and pitted against other people of color. This often leads to ignoring or dismissing their concerns.
**Movement (អេវីមិន) / ចិលីនា:**
The effort to organize people to address systemic problems or injustices while building an alternative vision or solution.

*Example:* Black Lives Matter has been a global movement, increasing visibility of the disfortunate rates that Black people are killed by police brutality.

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**Patriarchy (អេផត្រូទីអាកឃីី) / របូបូបូតាធិបំគោតយូ:**
A social system where men have primary power and influence in the political, social, economic, legal, and familial spaces. Patriarchy favors male-dominated thinking, decision-making, and is centralized on the male narrative or perspective of how the world works and should work.

*Example:* In a family dynamic, patriarchy means only the man of the house is allowed to make decisions for their partner and children’s well-being and future.

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**Police Brutality (ផូលីីស្ហិត្រូបូីូថាលីធី) / ការ អេត្រូបូី ហ្សឹងា អេដាយ បូលីីស្ហិ:**
Excessive use of force. State sanctioned violence against community members, including verbal harassment, property damage, assault, and death.

*Example:* The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Fong Lee, and others by officers are forms of police brutality.
Power: The ability to access certain privileges and influence, such as wealth, jobs, resources, and behaviors.

Example: The principal of a school holds more power than teachers to change its student detention policies.

Prejudice: A negative assumption of others based on stereotypes popularized by society. Prejudices are learned and can be unlearned.

Example: A White neighbor who has never interacted with his Southeast Asian neighbors holds prejudice against them that they may not know English.

Privilege: Holding special access to social, political, and economic power including preferential treatment given by society to members of dominant groups, such as White people and those who are wealthy.

Example: Due to their privilege, wealthy celebrities and political leaders were involved in a bribery scandal that helped their children get into elite schools.
Prison Industrial Complex (ព្រឹះសារសែសម្រាប់ពន្ធរឹងតែផ្រែប់ចូល / សង្គមមនុស្សការពាររដ្ឋប្រជាជន) / ប្រទេសប្រជាជនការពាររដ្ឋដោយដំណើរការអាជីពនាងការពាររដ្ឋរដ្ឋប្រជាជន: ប្រទេសប្រជាជនការពាររដ្ឋដែលមានពន្ធនាគារដែលមានពន្ធនាគារក្នុងប្រទេសប្រជាជន។ ដើម្បីឲ្យប្រឆាំងជាមួយព័ត៌មានប្រទេសប្រជាជនពាក់ពីពន្ធនាគារដែលមានពន្ធនាគារក្នុងប្រទេសប្រជាជន។

Example: The prison industrial complex is a form of modern day slavery by using prisoners as free or cheap labor for many jobs including dangerous occupations like construction and fighting wildfires.

Punitive (ភីូនីមេ) / សង្គមមនុស្សការពាររដ្ឋដែលមានពន្ធនាគារដែលមានពន្ធនាគារក្នុងប្រទេសប្រជាជន: សង្គមមនុស្សការពាររដ្ឋដែលមានពន្ធនាគារដែលមានពន្ធនាគារក្នុងប្រទេសប្រជាជន។

Example: A punitive practice in schools is punishing students who are late for class by putting them in detention.
R–Z
Race: Refers to groups and cultures who share certain distinctive physical traits and characteristics. This is different from ethnicity, which refers to shared cultures, language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs.

Example: The Asian race includes numerous ethnic groups and nationalities, such as Hmong, Korean, Taiwanese, Laotian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian and more than hundreds of ethnicities.

Racism: A belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

Example: The death of George Floyd has highlighted the racism that many Black Americans experience at the hands of police.

Refugee: People who have fled war, violence, conflict, and/or persecution from their country of origin and have crossed borders to seek safety and asylum in another country.

Example: Minnesota is home to more than 500,000 Southeast Asian refugees after the Vietnam War and Secret War, including Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese and other ethnic groups.
Resilience: The ability to withstand, rebound, recover, and grow from challenging experiences.

Example: Survivors who go through war, trauma, poverty are resilient.

Rights (civil and human): Rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.

Example: Having the freedom of opinion and expression is a human right.

Self-Determination: The process of one’s freedom to live as one chooses and to have the ability to control one’s own destiny, without consultation and interference by anyone or anything else.

Example: During the pandemic, communities worked towards self-determination by starting their own system for mutual aid through free meals and cash assistance.
Social Justice: Work that aims to build a society in which all people have the same rights, opportunities, and access to resources.

Example: Southeast Asians veterans from the Vietnam War and the Secret War advocating for the same burial rights and benefits as other American veterans is a form of social justice.

Solidarity: Shared unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among groups with common interests, objectives, and mutual support.

Example: People of different races can come together and show cross-racial solidarity by advocating for Black victims of police brutality.

Stereotype: Harmful assumptions and widely held beliefs that are fixed and oversimplified images and ideas of a particular type of person or groups of people based on specific characteristics about them.

Example: Many Asian students are stereotyped as being good at math and submissive to their peers.
**Systemic Oppression (ព័ត៌មានដ្ឋាន/ការជីះជាន់) / ការជីះជាន់**:

Discrimination by institutions (schools, banks, businesses, and government agencies) against groups of people due to their identity (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, language, etc).

Example: Refugee communities often face systemic oppression like agreeing to high interest rates on a loan because they don’t understand complex English terms.

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**Transformative Justice (ប្រការយ័ការប្រើ/សម្រាប់ប្រការ) / ប្រការយ័ការប្រើ:សម្រាប់ប្រការ**:

A community-based practice that describes ways community members can address harm, violence, and abuse by engaging in ways to stop, reduce, or lessen the harm without relying on police and the criminal system. Transformative justice seeks to support people who have experienced harm, as well as the people who have caused harm.

Example: A project led by people who have caused gender-based violence engages in therapy, community service, and agreement of boundaries with those they have harmed is a form of transformative justice.
Whiteness: A term used to describe the beliefs, behaviors, and laws that uphold the power structure that gives privileges to people who are politically, socially, and/or racially White.

Example: Policies that require Black athletes to tie down or cut their natural hair are rooted in whiteness.

White Supremacy: The belief that White people are superior to people of all other races and should be dominant over them.

Example: Nazis in Germany were white supremacists whose actions have motivated modern day groups to plan violent acts of terrorism.

Xenophobia: Fear and hatred against people, ideas, and things that are strange and foreign.

Example: The political climate around the COVID-19 pandemic has fueled anti-Asian xenophobia.
When we nurture love, we grow possibilities of abundance.