

HOW TO END PERIOD
POVERTY AND
ACHIEVE SOCIAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE

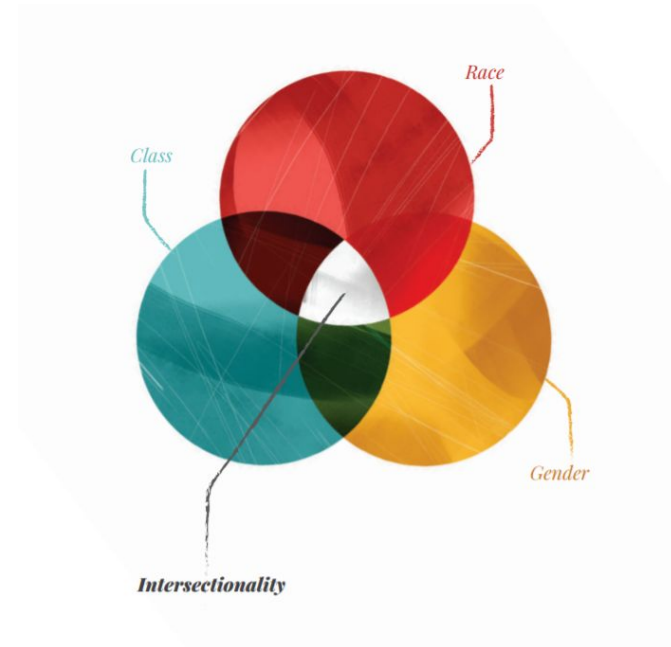
Ana-Marija Mileusnić, Zelena akcija / FoE Croatia

WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

- Intersectionality is used as a **framework** to describe how power structures emerge and interact
- It is defined as **the interaction** between **gender, race and other categories** of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and **the outcomes of these interactions** in terms of **power**
- The concept of intersectionality came from legal scholar **Kimberlé Crenshaw**, who explained how different forms of power and systematic oppression **interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels**
- Oppressive institutions such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, ageism and others are **interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another**

REINFORCING THE SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

- The systems of oppression do not compete with each other, rather they **interlink and mutually reinforce each other**
- Through this interlinking, **the elites in society hold on to their economic, political and/or social power** by oppressing and exploiting the majority: the **working class, women, transgender or non-binary people, people of colour, first nation or indigenous peoples, and people of non-dominant ethnicity**



CAPITALISM

- Globally dominant economic and socio-ideological model of our time
- It is based on a logic of profit accumulation, infinite economic growth, and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few
- The richest 1% of the global population received a huge 82% of the world's wealth
- This model of accumulation is **only possible through the control and exploitation of territories and work**, with hugely destructive consequences for nature, peoples and especially for women
- Although it disguises itself as “progress” and “development”, neoliberal capitalism (free market form of capitalism) – is a **system that works on the basis of inequality and therefore creates and reproduces oppression**

EXCLUSION AND OPPRESSION

- The elite or dominant class in a particular society concentrate power by **exploiting** the working class labour force and controlling capital (e.g. **wealth that can be invested and inputs to production such as machines and raw material**)
- In this way, **the elite exclude the working class majority from political, economic and social power** (and from decision-making)
- This **exclusion and oppression** has real, **measurable effects** in terms **of life expectancy, health, education, housing and contact with the criminal justice system.**

PATRIARCHY

- Patriarchy - the name given to the **system that oppresses and exploits women and non-cis men**, their **work** and their **bodies** for the benefit of cis-men as a social group
- The **patriarchal system** organises our societies through the **sexual division of labour**, and is **maintained by traditions, norms, education and material resources**
- Women's oppression is based on an **economic difference between men and women**, with women **often lacking money for their own needs** or those of their families, and often **financially dependent on their husbands or male family members**



Period poverty and the domination of single-use period products on the market

- Social inequalities are influencing the privileges and therefore purchasing power of menstruators
- Lack of privileges can affect the access to period products (but also hygiene habits of many menstruators)
- **Not everyone has access and knowledge about toxic-free reusable menstrual items**
- Currently, the EU marketplace is flooded with cheap single-use plastic, often **toxic period products** and in many cases they are the only mainstream option, therefore the only known and “accessible” option for the underprivileged menstruators

Period poverty and the domination of single-use period products on the market

- **Companies** prioritise their profitable disposable products over the environment and people's health - and **the decision makers (the “elite”)** are encouraging them do so
- Although better alternatives for period products, such as **reusable products** (i.e: period pants and cups) as well as toxic-free and plastic-free products **have existed for decades**, the population that knows about them or that uses them regularly is still the **minority**

Period poverty and inaccessibility of reusable period products

- **Period taboo** - menstruators are misinformed, discouraged and disempowered.
- **Misinformation & lack of education** - talking about periods seems embarrassing and shameful, menstruators feel intimidated and unconfident → education and information on the subject is not encouraged
- **Unavailability** - reusable and toxic-free products are not widely accessible in most EU countries - these products are **mostly available at online shops, specific handcraft markets and are generally rather hard to find**, in particular they are less available in the mainstream retailers, such as supermarkets and local commerce
- **Inaccessibility** - although reusable menstrual products can result in big economic savings in the long-term for menstruators, **the initial investment can be a barrier for some**, especially for those most in need

Companies' vs. consumers' responsibility

- Big **responsibility is placed on the “consumers”** - less privileged (more than) half of the population (women, trans, non-binary etc.)
- At the same time, companies are accumulating profit selling cheap single-use plastic products → the real price (external cost) is paid by the **health of menstruators, environmental pollution and citizens' monthly waste management bills**
- **Period poverty** phenomena is a **symptom of neoliberal capitalism** in hands of the elite
- In order to mainstream the non-toxic and reusable period products we need systemic approach → it mustn't be burden of underprivileged people without the actual power to influence the change

Solutions

- **Period education programs in schools and community centers** → so that menstruators can make informed choices about their period and body
- **Widespread availability of toxic-free and reusable menstrual products**, accompanied with **awareness raising measures on the benefits of reusables compared to single-use menstrual products (what we are doing now!)**

Solutions

- **Economic incentives for reusable menstrual products** to overcome barriers to entry (i.e: discounts for reusables and/or levies for single-use products); as well as strong encouragement for Member States to reduce or eliminate taxes on reusable menstrual product
- A legal obligation for manufacturers of menstrual products to **phase-out hazardous chemicals** and eliminate the use of toxins in their products, as well as to disclose the ingredients' list of their products
- **Free products** be made accessible to those in need

Resources

Friends of the Earth International: Why gender justice & dismantling patriarchy?

Young Friends of the Earth Europe - Toolkit for intersectional movement building

Break Free From Plastic - The Bloody Manifesto - A period manifesto for change

**Thank you for
your attention!**