

Neoliberalism Where You're From

This is a homework to help understand neoliberalism, the current phase of capitalism we are in (see definition below) by researching your own hometown. It will probably be easier if you do the David McNally readings before you start to have a better grounding in what Neoliberalism is. We strongly encourage you to use this opportunity to connect with older people in your family or political community. We imagine you'll also want to do some research on the internet (hint: if you've got a local library, sometimes librarians can be really helpful on finding information like this). Some of this information may be hard to find, and we don't expect you to be able to answer every question, just do your best!

Definition of Neoliberalism

(This definition built from many years of learning from organizers of color, including, Arnoldo Garcia & Betita Martinez)

The current phase of capitalism we are in, which began in the 1970s. Neoliberal policies were crafted to decrease the power, organization, and wealth of people of color and the working class, and to increase the power, organization, and wealth of the ruling class on a global level. Neoliberalism is characterized by: 1) "Free Trade", eliminating regulations of private industry on an international scale, which leads to extreme labor exploitation, "outsourcing" of jobs to locations with cheaper labor due to this exploitation, and environmental degradation 2) cutting of public services like healthcare, welfare, education, unemployment benefits and job training, and investment in public works such as transportation. 3) privatization of public services such as healthcare, water, education, snow clearing, transportation, libraries etc.; public space, such as parks; and shrinking or eliminating the parts of the government that used to coordinate these services. 4) shrinking the amount of taxes that rich people and corporations pay 5) an increase in policing, imprisonment, and the military. 6) a set of ideas that is extremely individualist, and that believes that the free market will solve all of our problems

Questions to research:

How has the economy of your town, city, or region changed since the 1970s?

- What kinds of jobs and businesses have left the area? What kind have come to your area? Who occupies the jobs that are considered "high skill" and well-paid? Who occupies the more dangerous, low-paid, and "low skill" jobs?

- How have public services (healthcare, welfare, unemployment, education, transportation, libraries) and public works (roads, bridges, tunnels, etc) changed during this time? Have there been cuts? Have things been privatized that used to be public? Who has this impacted? Were racist ideas used to make any of these changes?
- Were there regulations on private industry that were cut during this time? For example environmental regulations or worker protection regulations?
- How have policing and imprisonment changed in your area since the 1970s? How has this impacted communities of color? White communities?
- How have taxes on the rich and corporations changed during this time in your area? Nationally?
- How have you/your community been impacted by ideas that we should all individually be able to take care of all of our needs, and not need to rely on community or a government to meet them? How do race and racism impact this?
- What are a few ways people where you live organized against neoliberal policies? Were these fights grounded in racial justice?