

Get Involved!

scienceforthepeople.org @sftporg



Join a **working group**



Direct Action Network

We use science as direct action by matching scientific skills and resources with grassroots organizers and campaigns.



Climate Change and Divestment

We organize STEM to work with student, community, indigenous, and labor groups on divestment, energy democracy, and other climate justice activism.



Education We work to infuse in STEM education an understanding of the political contexts of knowledge and a commitment to science that promotes social justice.



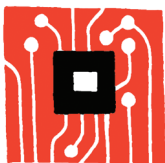
Reproductive Justice

We pursue a contribution to the ongoing struggles against continued assaults against reproductive justice.



STEM Intellectuals Under Attack

This group summarizes patterns in attacks by right wing groups against STEM intellectuals (K-20) who address issues of identity, power, and social justice.



Technology We develop radical analysis and action against corporate and state use of technologies for private gain and oppressive social relations.



Militarism We analyze the effects of militarism and military funding on science, scientists, and domestic and international policy.



Nuclear Disarmament

We work to develop resources and campaigns aimed at the abolition of nuclear weapons and the prevention of nuclear war.



Sociobiology We work against the misuse of sociobiology, biological determinism, evolutionary psychology, and other forms of "race science."



Labor Organizing labor is critical in our struggle for social justice. We contribute solidarity, share skills, and research into labor dynamics affecting STEM workers.



Puerto Rico We collaborate with local partners in Puerto Rico to identify community needs and organize solidarity campaigns through a decolonial lens.



Publication We're relaunching the magazine first published by SftP members almost fifty years ago, with the same radical and thoughtful critique of science's role in society. Join our publishing and outreach efforts!



LOCAL CONTACT:

The Dual Nature Of Science

illustrations by M. Farinella

Why do we "March for Science"?

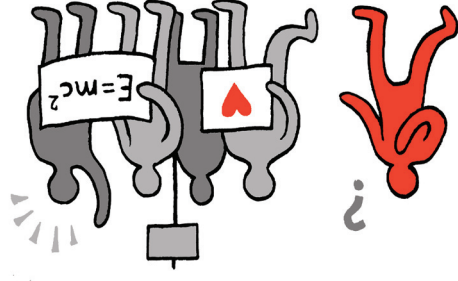
A central impulse is to fight the exercise of power for private gain at the expense of broad interest; oil companies ought not determine the quality of climate science!

However, if we generalize this impulse we risk making science into a neutral counter-power to be deployed merely through Evidence-Based Policy. But defense of science is not enough. **We need to transform the role of science in our world.**

Science for the People engages with what

ecologist Richard Levins called **the dual nature of science**. That is science as "an episode in the growth of human knowledge in general, and as the class, gender, and culture-bound product of Euro-North American capitalism in particular." Levins noted that two common reactions to the intersection of science and politics, scientism (the ideology that science is always correct and just) and antisience, fail to grasp this dual nature:

"Both scientism and modern antisience are one-sided. This is not the same as "extreme," the ultimate reproach of liberal criticism. "Extreme" implies as its preferred opposite "moderate," a solution with the implication that the truth is a little bit of this and a little bit of that, or "not all black or white, but some shade of grey," an optimal middle ground defined by the extremes that are rejected."



Both scientism and antisience fail to address the real challenges facing scientists, society, and the planet today. A few examples show that a sensitivity to the dual nature of science is the necessary backbone of our movement.

Militarism Science tends to satisfy capitalism's need to constantly innovate in the pursuit of profit, and as a result becomes the center of a misleading progressiveist ideology. But progress for whom? More than half of American government science funding is channeled through the military. The invasion and occupation of Iraq killed over half a million Iraqis and cost \$2.3 trillion. The total budget of the National Institutes of Health over the same period was about \$225 billion. The US spent ten times more killing over 500,000 people than it did on research to improve healthcare!

Reproductive Justice Science is often integrated into profoundly anti-democratic policy. Writing in *Science for the People* magazine in 1977, Linda Gordon noted that the birth control movement started with an emphasis on women's liberation, but the entry of doctors and other professionals infused the movement with elitist values such as population control, often due to openly eugenicist views. The fight for reproductive justice continues today. Black women die at a rate four times higher than white women in childbirth and abortion access has been declining for decades. Our movement must not repeat these errors of technocracy and elitism, but must join broad democratic struggles.

Eugenics and Biological Determinism Too often, scientific acceptance promotes injustice. The Eugenics Movement reached mainstream scientific status in the early 20th century (with many universities hosting Eugenics Departments), justifying tens of thousands of sterilizations of black, poor, and disabled people up through the 1960s.

Ideas that later are deemed reprehensible can exist even today. Eugenics is a cruder version of the general science of biological determinism—the justification of social violence and inequity through their naturalization as biologically inevitable—which is alive and well.

How should scientists organize politically?

The discrediting of biological determinism was the joint victory of the women's movement, the Black freedom struggle, and the radical science movement. Radical scientists contributed by publicly exposing ideological motivations through careful, sustained, confrontational argument. And the fight continues. So long as structural injustices persist, so too will their naturalization, from Charles Murray's "color-blind" notion of biological class, to James Damore's claims that women are underrepresented in tech because they are innately inept.

Science is not an abstraction removed from society. Science is produced by our labor. But the conditions of this production and the use of science are controlled by the wealthy and powerful. We must fight for a science that serves all people, organizing wherever science is produced or applied alongside all those fighting for justice.

Against any tendency to antisience, we should remember: knowledge is won with our labor and any tendency to scientism: our movement lives and dies with the broader left; technical knowledge alone never delivers justice.