



SET 3: TIRED OF CAPITALISM

**PRINT
AGIT PROP**

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Josh MacPhee

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A collection of

15 screenprints

4 risograph posters

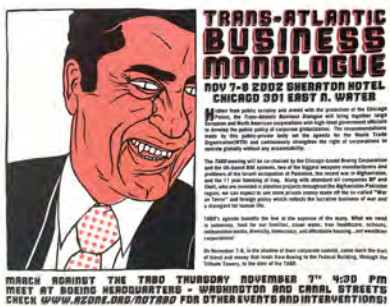
2 offset printed posters

1 spray paint stencil print

All produced between 2004–2022

Edition of 4

I began producing political posters and prints in the mid-1990s. This was a simple pivot from designing materials for the punk music scene, shifting the same skill sets to bear on social justice issues. I initially worked on posters and materials for campaigns around political prisoners and challenging mass incarceration, but quickly expanded and began working with a diverse set of groups and issues, including housing struggles, immigration reform, labor unions, access to healthcare, environmental justice, police reform, right to the city, and more. Many of this print agit prop was produced in association with—and at the behest of—very specific organizations, while some of it I created on my own in hopes of contributing the struggles. Some of it I was paid for my work, others I donated my labor. Many of these posters were mass produced and widely distributed, used in public demonstrations or organized street art campaigns. All of the work speaks to the complex interplay between visual culture and social movements, and the unique place of the artist and designer in political organizing.



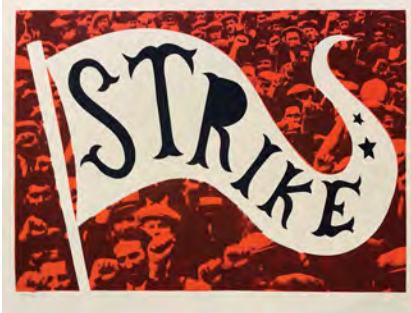
Trans-Atlantic Business Monologue
2004, 24" x 18", screenprint

This poster was designed and printed as part of the organizing in Chicago against the Trans-Atlantic Business Dialogue (TABD), a World Trade Organization-style international closed-door meeting of state and corporate elites, with everyone else locked out. At the time I was part of an artist protest collective called Street.Rec, and these posters were printed and wheat pasted around the city as part of our work mobilizing in opposition to the TABD.



¡Si Se Puede!
2006, 17" x 22", screenprint

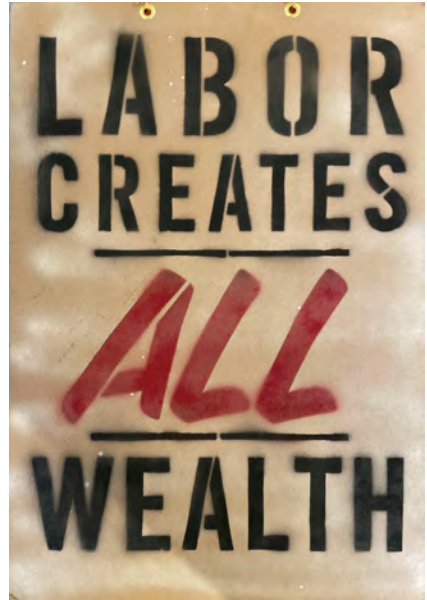
"¡Si Se Puede!" is a classic Latin American political slogan and chant which means Yes We Can! I originally designed and printed this in 2006, it has since been re-purposed for a number of publications, murals, shirts, SEIU award plaques, and dozens of other uses. They've also shown up in many union halls, offices of state Labor Secretaries, and countless rank and file homes. While cleaning my flat files I found these six copies printed on regular paper stock, each with some imperfections, but overall still nice prints. I've created this short edition of six, just to get these back in circulation.



Strike

2006, 19" x 25", screenprint

A giant flag bearing the word "strike" flies above a stylized historical photograph of a crowd of anarchist workers during the early 20th century in Russia.



Labor Creates All Wealth

2006, 26" x 38", stenciled placard

These were one of a series of labor slogan-festooned placards I designed and printed for a performance and protest in Troy, NY. Every year around Christmas the city of Troy holds a "Victorian Stroll" to celebrate its history and encourage holiday shopping downtown. Much of the city's business and political class dress up in Victorian outfits and stroll

around, but only the attire of the rich. In 2006, a group of us dressed up as workers, formed a fictitious union ("United Victorian Workers"), produced an early 20th century news-sheet, and marched around wearing these placards handing it out. The Chamber of Commerce was not amused, and sent the police, themselves wearing 100-year-old police costumes—to removed, creating an amazing spectacle!



Strike While It's Hot

2007, 19" x 25", screenprint

I borrowed a slogan from the labor movement and an aesthetic from the Russian Revolution to generate this playful print celebrating working class action.



Huelga

2007, 19" x 25", screenprint

"Huelga" means strike in Spanish. Printed in 2007, this was my Art Deco-esque homage to the then recent uprising of immigrant labor in the US. These are from one of my first screenprint editions, and have the quirks of the learning process, with non-exact registration, some light spots, stray ink, etc. This design would become the basis for other future work, including *Arte Para Todos* and *Agua Para Todos*.



Hudson Mohawk Mayday
2007, 17" x 23", screenprint

This 5-color screenprint was made for the 2007 Hudson Valley Mayday celebration in Troy, NY. The image combines multiple aspects of labor history from the Northeast US, including the clothing industry from New York's capital region, and Sacco & Vanzetti, who were murdered by the state of Massachusetts 80 years earlier in 1927.

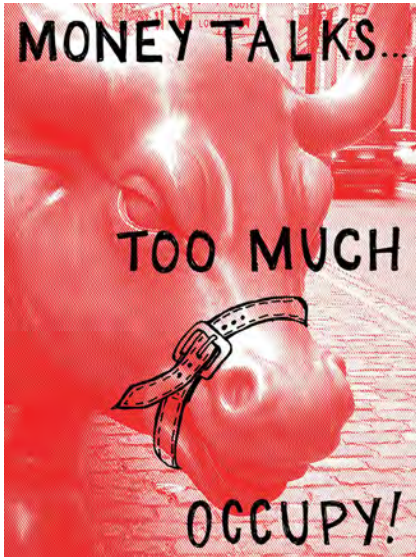
To Each According to Need
2010, 23" x 35", screenprint

An experiment for me, this was my first 8-color screenprint. I also tried



to move away from my usual big blocks of color, and try out more subtle textures and organic lines. This is definitely the biggest, most labor intensive poster I've printed yet, and wouldn't have happened without the help and studio of our member Jesse Purcell.

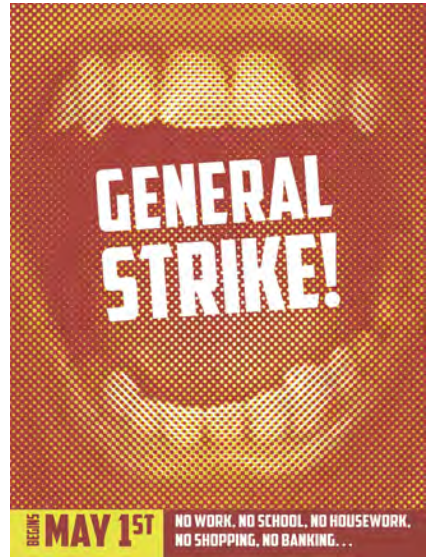
The slogan, "From each according to ability, to each according to need," was first popularized by Marx in the 1870s, but quickly became the rallying cry for real world attempts at liberatory and anarchist communism, from the British Diggers movement to the revolution in Spain in the 1930s. As a simple maxim to keep in mind when envisioning a new world, it holds as true today as it did 150 years ago.



Money Talks Too Much

2011, 19" x 25", screenprint

I designed this poster for Occupy Wall Street, and had Bushwick Print Lab in Brooklyn print a run of about 200 copies to be distributed for free at the first massive OWS march here in NYC. The image was also produced as a risograph by the informal Occupy Writers and Artists group (which also produced the *Occupy! Gazette*, the first issue featuring this image on the back cover). In addition, it was part of the Occuprint Portfolio, as well as being featured in a half dozen books about the Occupy movement and/or political poster art.



General Strike

2012, 18" x 24", offset print

Original poster produced by Occuprint in 2012 as part of the "General Strike" initiative of Occupy Wall Street to bring together Occupy, labor, and immigrant movements in order to shut down several major US cities on May 1st. These posters were printed in New York City by Occuprint and distributed around the US, in order to be handed out and wheat pasted on city streets.



One Big Union

2012, 18" x 24", screenprint

The inspiration for this print was an exhibition in Milwaukee focusing on the artistic and political legacy of Carlos Cortez, printmaker, illustrator, union organizer, and all around rabble-rouser with the Industrial Workers of the World. The slogan, "One Big Union," was popularized by the IWW over 100 years ago, and this is my contemporary—and somewhat oblique—interpretation of it.



Exhausted by Capitalism

2012, 18" x 24", screenprint

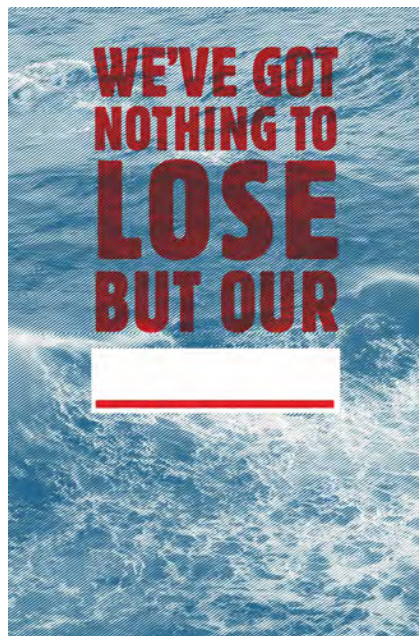
I know I am...



_____ *of the World, Unite!*
2013, 25" x 40", screenprint

We've Got Nothing to Lose but
Our _____
2013, 25" x 40", screenprint

These are two large-scale prints I created at the Justseeds' exhibition *Uprisings! Images of Labor* in Milwaukee in 2013. The idea behind the exhibition was to create representations of contemporary labor, but I find it increasingly difficult to clearly articulate what labor looks like in the US in 21st century. With cell phones, tablets, blanket wifi, and more and more precarious jobs, there is an expectation that we can and



will be willing to work all the time. For more and more people there is no longer clear geographical distinctions between the work place and anywhere else, and less and less temporal distinctions as well. I'm trying to get at some of this precarity and lack of clarity by highlighting two prominent phrases from the *Communist Manifesto*, but removing the operative words. What is the social body that needs to unite? Is the work that we all do similar enough for us to coalesce around it? What is the only thing we have to lose? For Marx and Engels, it was "chains" and these chains were imposed on us externally. Now we are so integrated into our own caging,

the chains of labor often look like “fun” activities: narrating our lives on social media, promoting our favorite books, movies, music. My goal with these pieces is to answer these questions, but to ask them.

Fuck Work

2016, 10” x 13”, screenprint

This is both a simple statement about the nature of wage labor, and a complex joke about the history of political graphics.

May and June 1968 saw the biggest political protest in the history of France since the Paris Commune. The majority of workers and students went on strike, and brought the country to—what appeared at the time to be—the brink of revolution. A group of engaged designers and art students occupied the art schools, and converted the print facilities into “People’s Workshops” (Ateliers Populaire). These groups cranked out tens of thousands of screenprinted posters within a few short weeks, and the images they created are some of the punchiest and most enduring political graphics of the 20th Century. The protagonists of the Ateliers were extremely workerist in political orientation, and a significant portion of the posters



are either solidarity images with workplace occupations or encouragements for workers to take control of the means of production. Funny thing is, while these images have become a visual stand-in for the movement and politics of France in 1968, the vast majority of workers had no interest in occupying their workplaces. Instead most just decided they had more interesting places to be—their actions didn’t proclaim “Better Work!” but instead, “Fuck Work!” Move one of the factory roof peaks to the left of the smokestack, and an oppressive work place becomes a hand holding up a middle finger. This print is dedicated to all the workers that have ever decided to just stay home. In regards to wage employment, let’s recap the immortal words of Bartleby, the Scrivener: “I would prefer not to.”



Strike/Huelga

2017, 12" x 18", risograph print

A flag drawing for May Day; also an experiment with the risograph. After years of planning and designing ideas for screenprinting, it was an adjustment to learn how to make things that take advantage of what the risograph does well (which is not large, flat fields of color like on a screenprint). It does much better capturing texture and changes in color density, so I printed this in a way that shows off the details of it as a drawing, as opposed to a graphic. I also repurposed this into a 3-color screenprint for a shirt design which was printed in 2017 to raise money for the opposition to Trump's agenda.



Three Steps

2018, 13" x 20", screenprint

I believe this is the 5th edition of this print, which speaks to the power of this hundred year old labor slogan! I originally designed it in 2010 from an earlier sketch, and it has since been screenprinted, offset printed, risograph printed, put on t-shirts by the Industrial Workers of the World, printed on stickers, and translated and printed in French.

"Agitate, Educate, Organize" was a slogan of the IWW in the early 20th century, and has been used on and off by

the labor movement ever since. It's profoundly concise as a strategy for unionizing (or many things, actually). Since I initially designed this graphic a lot has happened. First, the *Hunger Games* books were made into movies, popularizing the three finger salute as one of solidarity. When I originally designed the image, I had no idea it was something in the book, and it certainly wasn't part of popular culture. In 2014, the gesture jumped from entertainment media into real life—on May 20th, martial law was declared in Thailand, leading to a military coup two days later. Dissent was suppressed, and protest banned, so young people took to the streets in small groups, raising the three finger salute as a coded and silent form of dissent. The connection between the gesture and the protest is somewhat unclear, but many claim the fingers symbolized the three demands of the movement: freedom, elections, and democracy. In 2021, the iconic gesture jumped to Myanmar/Burma, becoming a dominant visual gesture of the uprising against military dictatorship. Not only were people holding three fingers up in the streets, but thousands of posters and social media graphics were created featuring the three finger salute.



No to the University as Factory
2018, 11" x 17", risograph print

This is one of a series of images I've been reworking from the Ateliers Populaire in Paris 1968. I changed the image and slogan slightly in order to speak to the dire situation of neoliberal educational institutions, and printed hundreds of them which were initially distributed for free the weekend before 2018's May Day demonstrations in New York City. The image has since been used as an illustration in multiple books and as agit prop within the labor struggles of adjunct professors in both the US and Canada.



Labor Creates All Wealth
2019, 17" x 11", risograph poster

A risograph recreation of one of a series of stenciled wooden signs I created in the early 2000s, all emblazoned with historical labor slogans.



Red for Ed
2019, 13" x 19", offset poster

I designed this poster for the National Education Association Representative Assembly in Houston in July 2019. It was one of seven offset posters that were printed and given away for free to educators and union members. These posters are now up in classrooms across the US.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership

Membership and its responsibilities are open to anyone, regardless of gender, class, race, politics, or religion.

2. Democratic Member Control

Members actively participate in setting policies and making decisions.

3. Members' Economic Participation

Members contribute funds equitably and democratically control capital, revenue, and surplus.

4. Autonomy and Independence

If cooperatives enter into agreements with other organizations, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

5. Education, Training, and Information

Cooperatives educate and train members, staff, elected representatives, and the general public—particularly youth—so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives.

6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Cooperatives serve their members and strengthen their movements by working with other cooperatives locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

7. Concern for Community

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

THE SEVEN
PRINCIPLES OF
COOPERATION

The Seven Principles of Cooperation 2020, 11" x 17", risograph print

I worked with the Cooperative Education Association of New York City (CEANYC) to produce these posters promoting the seven principles of cooperation, with the intention of them being displayed in cooperatively owned workplaces as pedagogical tools.



Direct Action 2022, 25" x 25", screenprint

I initially created a stencil version of this design back in 2005 as a 8 ft x 8 ft mini-mural on plywood, painted live as part of the Albany, NY Hip Hop & Labor Festival. The mural (at least temporarily) ended up installed at the Workforce Development Institute in Troy, NY. In early 2002 I dusted off the old sketch for the mural, and reworked it into a 5-color screenprint. Printed at Repetitive Press in Toronto.

