

THESIS

THE POSTER AND CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN PROPAGANDA

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## ABSTRACT

### THE POSTER AND CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN PROPAGANDA

Propaganda is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as: ideas or statements that are often false or exaggerated and that are spread in order to help a cause, a political leader, a government, etc.; the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person; ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause; *also* : a public action having such an effect.<sup>1</sup> Throughout modern history, posters have been used as a vehicle to distribute propagandistic messaging. The period preceding World War I, through World War II is perhaps the most notable period of propaganda in American history. After 1945 however, nationalistic propaganda seemingly disappeared in the United States. Memorable national icons such as Uncle Sam (Fig. 1) and Rosie the Riveter (Fig. 2), and the messages to conserve for the troops, or plant victory gardens, were relegated to the realm of nostalgia. This thesis investigates the role of the poster in contemporary American propaganda. It addresses the link between the disappearance of the poster as a major vehicle for the dissemination of propagandistic messaging in connection with the increase of technology, and proposes that the poster has transitioned from a governmental communication tool, to a underground, "street art" driven conceptual vehicle, designed to challenge deeper thought about today's underlying issues rather than just presenting the same controlled information that we are bombarded with through mass media.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis project began as an exploration into the lack of propaganda posters in contemporary American culture. Political posters were a primary and effective source of communication and information dissemination to the public in America prior to and through WWI and WWII, but after that time period they were no longer widely used for government communication. My initial premise was that in the information age, where information is disseminated instantaneously, a printed poster could be more effective than other forms of media, because it would cause the viewer to stop, look and think. Political posters are still widely used as a means of public communication in Eastern Europe, Cuba, and South America, and their absence in American culture seems like a missed opportunity for public interaction, agitation and involvement. In the book *Political Posters in Central and Eastern Europe 1945-1995: Signs of the Times*, Marta Sylvestrova suggests that the absence is due to the political structure of the United States. She states that America has freedom of speech, and that the nature of political, propaganda and anti-propaganda posters stems from countries where speech is controlled by the government.<sup>2</sup> The ability to push messaging through television, and now other forms of electronic media has also decreased the perceived value of printed propaganda. When considering how the poster could still be a relevant form of communication in American culture, the question of effective messaging is raised. If public buy-in and communication to the masses is the goal, the extreme bipartisan rift in our society is the obstacle. After reaching this point in my research, the focus of my thesis became to address the questions of what type of messaging and imagery would be effective in reaching both sides of the political spectrum. What is the common ground? I began looking at the current polarizing issues in American society, and determining what the dominant messaging was for each side, considering both liberal and conservative viewpoints. Through research, experimentation, and my own political involvement, it appeared that the issues themselves are used as propaganda tools by our media outlets, in

connection with the political parties, lobbyists, and other contributors that control them, to maintain the divide. The messaging is not that different on either side, rather the presentation is simply shifted. The way that posters can communicate to the public without being slanted to one viewpoint, is by shaping their messaging to expose the underlying social, political and cultural issues that created the rift in the first place, and by highlighting how we, as a society, are manipulated by our media and our own social stereotypes of what are considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, mindsets, and opinions.



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND OTHER INFLUENCES

Throughout modern history, posters have been used as a vehicle to distribute propagandistic messaging. The period preceding World War I, through World War II is perhaps the most notable period of propaganda in American history. After 1945 however, nationalistic propaganda seemingly disappeared in the United States. The cause of this shift was in part due to the dissolution of the Office of War Information (OWI). The OWI was a government agency formed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1942 to distribute propaganda, and help shape public opinion during WWII.<sup>3</sup> In 1945 when the OWI was dissolved, many of its practices were taken over by the State Department. Once that happened, the type of propaganda used by the OWI was reserved for promoting positive American messaging in foreign countries. Since 1945, overt, nationalistic propaganda has been banned inside the United States. Though we no longer see those same persuasive messages posted on walls, and projected on movie screens, that were once so prevalent under the OWI, there is no doubt that we are still bombarded with propagandistic messaging every day. With the emergence of electronic mass communication technologies in the digital age, the type of visual communication that the poster had to offer in the WWII era has taken a backseat to the availability of twenty-four-hour news, and the instant gratification of social networks.

The advances in technology in the information age are not the only factors involved in the disappearance of the propaganda poster in America. Our increasingly consumer-driven culture is also a factor. Modern posters have shifted from the propagandistic messaging of wartime, to an effective and widely used advertising tool, as is evident in the amount of product marketing we are bombarded with on a daily basis. Many people might not consider advertising as a propaganda tool, but consider the dramatic change of the American social landscape after both world wars. Advertising was used after WWI to pull the country out of its depression after the shock of the war. As a country we had a feeling of guilt about moving on from such a devastating

event, and did not know how to come back from that feeling. Advertising told the nation that it was okay to be happy again. Advertisements in *Harper's Bazaar* (Fig. 3) told the upper class that smoking Lucky Strike cigarettes could help us feel better, while the *Saturday Evening Post* (Fig. 4) told the middle class things like eating Quaker Oats, or drinking Coca-Cola could do the same thing. That formula is what made the shift to more blatant propaganda messaging during WWII so effective, and also made the shift into the mass consumerism of the 1950s so successful. G.S. Viereck, author of *Spreading the Germs of Hate*, stated that "Americans were the best at propaganda in WWII because they were the best advertisers...". He also stated that using advertising in that context was not labeled propaganda, but rather 'invisible government'.<sup>4</sup> In wartime, advertisers used patriotism, and fear of the enemy to sell more products. The same methods of manipulation that caused us to buy products that used profits to buy war bonds are still at work today. The products we are told to buy shape our attitudes on social issues, and the roles of everyone in our society. We're told if we look a certain way we should buy this product, while if we look another way another product is right for us. Consumerism has become the tool most widely used to communicate with the general public, and is an accepted form of the 'invisible government' that Viereck spoke of.

While advertising is present all over the world, there is a difference in the amount of focus on consumerism between capitalist countries, and socialist and communist countries. That seems to be one correlation between countries where political posters are still present, and those where they are not. Since social constructs are so influenced by advertising in American society, political messaging is kept 'invisible'. Where as in socialist and communist societies, there is a different and more direct visual style.<sup>5</sup> The graphic vernacular of socialist and communist propaganda was established during the first part of the twentieth century in Europe during the Russian Constructivist period (Fig. 5) up through the Nazi propaganda of WWI and II (Fig. 6), and in Cuba and South America during the revolutionary periods when Castro

came to power (Fig. 7) and during the violent regimes of Allende and Pinochet (Fig. 8).<sup>6</sup> The style is characterized by forceful, persuasive language and imagery. While that style is slightly different between Europe, and Cuba and South America, there is an obvious visual connection in the bold messaging and strong, direct imagery used. The influence of the sharp angles and red, black and grey color schemes of Constructivism, and the graphic simplified images of the Modernist movement are visible throughout European poster designs. The posters of Cuba and South America use some of the same influences, but have a much more varied appearance shown through multiple illustration styles, and bright color schemes. The majority of the American public has been conditioned to have a negative response to the visual language of that type of propaganda, which is another reason why political posters have not been widely used. Those with a more liberal viewpoint may be more accepting of posters inspired by the style of socialist or communist propaganda, but from a conservative viewpoint the message would be drowned out by the visual response, even if it represents a conservative message. Understanding that there is a reaction not only to the message, but to the visual style of that message has helped direct my process, and inform my designs to determine what type of posters would be most effective to a broader audience.

## RECURRENCE

I have always been drawn to the Constructivist, and Modernist styles that came out of Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. Perhaps it stems from the influences of my grandfather, a German immigrant who came to America in 1952 and went to work in advertising in Chicago. His style had an engrained European sensibility, and echoed the strong colors and bold typography of those styles. Interestingly, my grandfather tried to distance himself from his socialist roots and embraced a conservative political position in America. My father adopted that same position, and subsequently I was raised in a very conservative environment. In spite of my conservative environment, an appreciation of that modern aesthetic was still present and continues to influence my own design style today.

When I began trying to convert my research into my own designs I focused on issues that I thought were worthy, and demanding of political posters to convey their importance to the public. The beginning of the design process for my thesis began in spring of 2012, and coincided with the beginning of the Ninety-Nine Percent movement, and also with the attack on labor unions and social services by the state governments in Midwestern states like Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota. The issues that public servants and unions were facing were not new issues. They were reminiscent of the issues surrounding the Solidarity movement in Poland under Lech Walesa in the 1980s, and even further back to the workers rights movements in America at the turn of the century, when the Robber Barons were building their empires on the backs of workers. Those issues fit in seamlessly with the message of the Ninety-Nine Percent movement, which was highlighting the still present distance between the haves and have-nots in the United States.

I began by responding to the issues being discussed daily on talk radio, and formulating the language that would represent those issues in my posters. The themes that emerged were: the importance of putting people first over corporations; recognizing the importance, and valuing the roles that our public servants (teachers, nurses, firefighters, policemen) play, and supporting them

in those roles; exposing the hypocrisy of the conservative politicians who were arguing against workers rights, and the right to collective bargaining; and again, the extreme distance between the super rich in this country and the rest of us. I took my inspiration from posters created in response to these same issues throughout the twentieth century, and recreated a contemporary take on a traditional constructivist and modernist aesthetic. For these particular posters I was not concerned with communicating to a middle ground. The focus was on recreating the direct language, simple color schemes, and strong images of the posters that were created to highlight these issues in the past. The same color scheme and typeface was used across all of the posters to create a unified and cohesive theme.

The recurrence of history seems to elude much of our society. Though we have access to more information about our past mistakes and triumphs, our sound bite and talking point driven culture seems reluctant to discover that history. These posters, with their provocative messaging, and symbolism are meant to be a mechanism to shed light on our forgetfulness, and expose the recurrence of our folly.

*Human Need Over Corporate Greed* (Fig. 9), addresses the anger of the majority of Americans regarding the indifference demonstrated by Wall Street over the inequity of the distribution of wealth in America, and the blind eye turned to the corruption that exists to allow that inequity to exist. It was inspired by a Polish, workers rights poster from the 1930s (Fig. 10).

*Fat Cats* (Fig. 11), also represents the inequality of the distribution of wealth in America. It was inspired by an American labor poster from the 1930s, that talked about the “Fat Cat” union bosses. In this design, the fat cat represents the heads of corporations who are more concerned with increasing their own private wealth, over providing for their workers.

*Workers Over Corporations* (Fig. 12), is a commentary on the current idea supported by Citizens United that corporations are people, and points out that the idea of corporations being more valuable than the people who work for them was also held by the Robber Barons. Our

monopoly laws were created to prevent that kind of greed from happening again, but that point is conveniently forgotten when there is an opportunity for more money to be made. The image is of John D. Rockefeller.

*My Work Helps You!* (Fig. 13), was created in response to the attack on public servants by state governments in the Midwest in 2012. In keeping with the symbols and clothing items that were used in other posters in this collection to represent the different messages, I used the recognizable image of a nurse's cap to represent public servants. People forget that many of the roles that people in our society perform, rely on public funding, and unions to make them possible. This message is meant to remind people of that, while at the same time stirring up a nostalgic feeling to generate a sentimental and personal response.

*The Time Is Now* (Fig. 14), was inspired by the members of Generation X. I am from that generation, and know only too well of the general apathy, and lack of desire to get involved. It's not that we don't care about things. It seems to have more to do with rebelling against the involvement of our Baby Boomer generation parents. *The Time Is Now* is a call to action to my generation to get involved, and a statement that we can no longer afford not to. The boot symbolizes the Doc Martins worn by the counter culture groups coming of age in the 1980s.

*One Percent* (Fig. 15), presents a stark contrast to the workers boot represented in *The Time Is Now*. The shoe on the pedestal is modeled after the most expensive man's shoe on the market. It is an Italian, Testoni brand shoe, which retails for \$38,000 per pair. The message, "The Middle Class Works Hard for My Money" is a comment on the lack of understanding of the real world, by those who don't have to function in it.

*Unemployed* (Fig. 16), carries the issue of the lack of support of our public servants to a different level, focusing on the lack of support given to our military personnel when they return from war. Our soldiers are willing to give their lives for our country, and our country does not take care of them in return. Soldiers face extreme issues when they are reintroduced into society

after being in a situation where they have had direction and clear objectives, and are rapidly transitioned into a civilian world where simple decisions can become overwhelming. As viewers commented on this poster, they also interpreted it as a commentary on the lack of jobs available in the United States — comparing being unemployed to a war zone at home where workers are fighting for jobs.

*When Reagan Speaks...* (Fig. 17), is a commentary on the hypocrisy of the Republican Party regarding the issue of collective bargaining. It was the republican politicians in Wisconsin, Minnesota and other Midwestern states driving the attack on public servants, claiming that collective bargaining was not good for the economy, and should be outlawed in their states. The hypocrisy comes from the frequent praise of Ronald Reagan's presidency, and the expressed desire to have a republican like the sainted Reagan back in office. The very politicians attacking the right to collective bargaining often raised President Reagan's name, though he himself had been the president of the Film Actors Guild Union, and was a vocal supporter of the Solidarity movement in Poland during his presidency. The t-shirt and youthful appearance refers to the fact that many protestors were saying the same thing that Reagan had said, yet politicians would not even consider their comments. The Reagan quote on the shirt, "Where collective bargaining is forbidden, freedom is lost.", and Reagan's face, are meant to draw the attention of conservatives who would normally ignore this type of poster because of its resemblance to the posters used by Socialist countries. I showed this collection to my father, a very conservative retired Air Force General, and he validated my theory. He glossed over the other posters, dismissing them as socialist, and paused at the Reagan poster because of his party-line respect for this great republican figure.

This collection was an effective study in the perception attached to the visual style of the propaganda posters that came out of Europe throughout the twentieth century. There was an immediate connection to Constructivism and Modernism, and those viewing the pieces from

a liberal perspective embraced that and celebrated it. Those viewing it from a conservative perspective were met with a feeling of apprehension and discomfort. While the series is successful in the design and messaging of the pieces, it showed that I could not use the same style and approach if I was trying to reach a middle ground. I needed to rethink how I was approaching everything from the issues I was presenting, to the manner in which they were presented. My focus then shifted to trying to find the common ground on the polarizing issues most prevalent in our country at the time. Being an election year, those issues were being presented and discussed frequently, which gave me the opportunity to observe the messaging and reaction from both sides.



## THE BARRIERS OF PARTISAN MESSAGING

In an attempt to clearly understand the position of both the republican and democratic parties and voters on polarizing issues, I volunteered to help campaign for the presidential election. Admittedly, I was campaigning for a particular party, so I went in with a bias. In order to be effective in my campaigning, I needed to be able to talk to people who supported both sides of the political spectrum, or right down the middle, and have an open dialogue with them. What I learned was that the message did not matter. The facts were not important. Even though the difference in the positions in many cases were not that different, and fears about many issues could be calmed by listening to facts surrounding the issue, it didn't actually matter what the information was. In most cases, people had made their decisions based on the media spin that they had chosen to expose themselves to most frequently. Talking points from Fox News or MSNBC were often referenced, and people were not interested in the data that I was showing them. That reaction made it increasingly difficult to choose issues that I would be passionate enough about, and not annoyed by to present effectively in my posters. The misinformation and talking points that were being recited back to me were a result of media manipulation, and that issue was overshadowing everything else. My focus shifted from finding the middle ground on the polarizing issues prevalent in our society, to exposing the media outlets that were causing the rift in the first place. When I began looking at issues from this perspective I could see multiple examples of media spin. My goal now became focusing on the consistent underlying issue of the control of information that is distributed to the public. This issue is non-partisan, and common to all of us.

## /SPUN/ (THESIS EXHIBITION)

As I started developing designs around topics where the spin of that issue had become a controlling factor in our society, my passion and clarity returned. When looking at reproductive rights for example, the messaging became about the roles and perceptions attached to women in society. Women have had rules applied to their bodies for centuries, and have been persecuted at varying levels for not following the rules, or for trying to question them. The posters, *Marginalized* (Fig. 18), and *Criminalized* (Fig. 19) highlight the media manipulation techniques used to distract the public and gain support for issues where women are key players. The resulting collection of posters represent the ways that messages are manipulated by the media. Political, social, cultural messages are spun to influence public opinion, drive policy, control outcomes, force financial trends and shape the perceptions that exist in our society. Each of these posters represents how looking at an issue from a different perspective, or with a subtle shift in language or image can spin the message. Though the subjects may seem to reflect one clear opinion, they represent issues in the media and society, where if the message is subtly changed, it can appeal to, and speak to a different audience. People bring their own prejudice when confronting issues, and a carefully structured message can intentionally have multiple meanings. Even the issues that seem most polarizing can be broken down to reveal the same origin, with only a different destination for delivery in mind for the result. My goal in presenting the messages this way is to encourage the viewer to think about how pivotal issues and talking points are presented to the public, and consider the spin that has been placed on those issues in order to control public opinions and responses.

Though posters are still visible in street-art culture, the traditional propaganda posters that were so popular as communication tools in the past are no longer a dominant tool for widespread, public communication in American culture. The political, social and cultural messages presented in poster designs are meant to be seen by the people who are reflected in those messages. This

collection was mounted on concrete to simulate the outdoor spaces where they would be most accessible to the public, allowing the images to spark thought and discussion about the controlled messages that we are confronted with daily. The colors and illustration styles differ from the WWII era style of the *Recurrence* series in an effort to get past the negative connotations attached to that style. This collection was more closely inspired by the Cuban and South American propaganda poster designs of the later twentieth century. The strong yellow and black color scheme in the immigration themed posters (*Let's Fly Kites Across the Border*, and *Run for Your Lives*), and the racism poster (*The Faces of Racism*), can be seen repeatedly in Cuban designs. Another element that is reflective of both styles is the variety of illustration techniques and range of color schemes presented. Since there is not one clear design style represented in the posters of Cuba and South America, the messages of those posters are not immediately dismissed for being perceived as nationalistic, or antagonistic, like the posters coming out of Europe during WWII were.<sup>7</sup>

*Fear. Patriotism.* (Fig. 20), was designed in response to the type of fear mongering used by Bill O'Reilly and Fox News to drive political buy-in for the republican party. Although the subject matter includes Bill O'Reilly in particular, the message is broader and speaks to any of the media outlets that use this brand of yellow journalism. Whether the topic is a specific political platform, a school shooting, or a terrorist attack, our reactions are manipulated by the media coverage surrounding the issue. The more fear that can be put behind an issue, the more useful it becomes to control us in the future. One example of this is the media coverage of 9/11. We were shown the collapse of the twin towers so many times that it is burned into our memories. The fear generated by that coverage has fueled a hatred of Muslims in this country in the name of patriotism since that day. The period placement highlights the notion that fear is patriotism. The red, white and blue color scheme also highlights the idea of patriotism.

*Fear Patriotism.* (Fig. 21), is also a response to fear mongering. However, rather than pointing out that the reaction to that type of messaging is viewed as patriotic, the change in

punctuation communicates that it is negative, and should be feared. Hate and fear are not patriotic. The color scheme in this version includes acidic greens and yellows that are more reminiscent of a circus tent, or freak show, in contrast with the nationalistic red, white and blue scheme of the other.

*Cultural Control* (Fig. 22), suggests that we are more manipulated by our consumer culture than we are aware, or care to think about. Mickey Mouse is the ultimate icon of consumerism around the world. In most countries he is the representation of ugly America, but we defend him as a cultural hero. The corporations behind cultural icons like Mickey Mouse, and countless others, know of our loyalty, and they use that to gather information about our habits, and shape our behavior. On a recent trip to Disney World, I was confronted head on by this fact when I approached the entrance and discovered that everyone visiting the park was required to have their digital finger print taken upon entry. I found it alarming that they were gathering that type of personal information about me in the name of security. This struck me as yet another instance of using fear mongering to convince people that having their civil liberties violated at this level is no big deal, because they will be safer at the big, scary amusement park. I am confident that the information being gathered by Disney is shared with a host of databases that have nothing to do with the security of the park visitors.

*The American Spirit* (Fig. 23), represents the disheartened feeling in America today. There is complacency about doing anything to make things better, so most of us just go along with the status quo. I was walking through Time Square in New York City in the summer of 2012, when I saw the man in this poster stop his patriotic duty of selling tickets to the statue of liberty, take of his costume and sit down in this dejected manner. I thought at the time that it was a perfect representation of the current mood of our country. The illusion that he is the statue of liberty, representing the greatness of our country and the welcoming arms of our shores, was broken. The man had no concern about breaking that illusion. Going somewhere away from the

eyes of the children who think those characters are real might have interrupted his break, and he might not have had time to finish his enormous energy drink.

*The Faces of Racism* (Fig. 24), is a reaction to the media manipulation surrounding the Trayvon Martin murder case. Media coverage on both sides of the case was fueled by fear, anger, and sentiment that colored the way everyone in America viewed what happened. Trayvon was depicted as either an innocent teenager, or a violent thug. His hoodie, which is now a symbol of solidarity was considered both menacing and archetypal of teen culture. The focus on the hoodie, and the existence of hoods in connection with the history of civil rights in this country felt to me like it needed to be addressed. The poster is split down the middle to show the contrasting examples of racism in our country. The values have been reversed to show the ugliness being reflected back, with Trayvon being shown in a light hoodie and the traditional KKK hood being replaced with black. The direct gaze of the eyes is designed to engage the viewer in an uncomfortable manner, to bring the issue face to face with each individual's prejudices, and preconceptions.

*Loopholes* (Fig. 25), was also inspired in response to the Trayvon Martin murder, but is representative of every victim for whom justice was not served. So much time is spent trying to find loopholes in our legal system, instead of focusing on the 'and justice for all' part. From tax shelters that help protect corporations from having to pay taxes, or pay their employees retirement plans, to murderers walking away because of a technicality, the loopholes are seemingly endless. There is an extra loophole coming off of Florida in the poster. It was initially meant to represent the Trayvon shooting, and the Zimmerman trial, but Florida has a laundry list of things that could apply to its extra loophole, so it can be perceived as representing a host of offenses.

*Let's Fly Kites Across The Border* (Fig. 26), is part of a commentary on immigration into this country from Mexico. There is a highway in California that runs along the Mexico border from Anaheim to San Diego. On one particular stretch of that highway there are road signs featuring the same family depicted running through this poster. The original road signs represent

the families trying to cross this incredibly busy highway to get to the freedom and opportunity of American soil. The road signs have become the symbol of immigration in southern California. The families depicted on the signs are risking their lives to enter our country, and many of them don't survive the run across the highway. It is a sad and disturbing statement that their lives have been so trivialized by these road signs, that their plight is reduced to the symbols represented on them. This poster is part of a poster series depicting various attitudes surrounding fallacies on immigration to our country. This scene in particular represents the misinterpretation from potentially both sides, that immigrating to our country is as easy as an afternoon at the park. It stems from that idea that the road signs suggest; that a family crossing a busy five-lane highway to get to a better life is no big deal. Depicting the family as symbols on a road sign has dehumanized those immigrants to the point that they are not thought of as real people who will potentially not survive their trip.

*Run For Your Lives* (Fig. 27), is another poster in the same series that shows the most contrasting viewpoint in the group. The family runs away from the border with a sniper tracking them the whole way. Though there are not snipers shooting immigrants as they try to cross the border illegally, there is a sentiment by some people in our border towns that they should take it upon themselves to carry out that kind of vigilante justice. For some, this might be a depiction of how they think the border should look. Whether realistic or not, this is more representational of the seriousness of the situation of a family planning a border crossing in these areas. Whatever the scenario, they are not thought of as real people, and that is a viewpoint that needs to be corrected in our country. There will never be immigration reform, while those immigrating to our country remain symbols or statistics, rather than people.

*Marginalized* (Fig. 18), is a statement about how women have been marginalized and politicized in the media to control and manipulate a host of social issues and stereotypes surrounding them. Though the woman in the poster is shown with shells and symbols covering

her breasts and genitals, she is striking a provocative pose suggesting that she is not as demure as one might think. The snake coiled around her, and the tree in the background, suggest the Eve figure, hinting at the stereotypes and punishments that have been placed on women since the Old Testament. Women are praised for their ability to reproduce, and shamed for it at the same time. They are expected to be chaste, and bear children at the same time — a feat that is physically impossible. Until we stop accepting the roles forced upon us by the media and society, we will continue to be manipulated.

*Criminalized* (Fig. 19), was inspired by the arrest and ongoing imprisonment of the members of the punk band, Pussy Riot. The women were jailed for participating in a protest held at Moscow's main Orthodox cathedral in 2012. They are represented in this poster primarily by the balaclava covering the woman's face, and also by the provocative pose and bright, acidic color scheme. They wear the balaclavas to create tension and cause people to react uncomfortably, as well as maintain anonymity. The same is true for the woman represented in the poster. The mask represents the way that women acting out against social injustices against other women have been criminalized by society throughout history. Women have been marginalized, criminalized, politicized and victimized in an effort to keep them subdued. The goal of this poster is to highlight that treatment, and make viewers think about how images of women in the media reinforce those ideas and stereotypes.

## CONCLUSION

The absence of political posters in American culture punctuates the apathy that has developed as a result of our capitalistic, consumer driven culture. The ability for the rapid dissemination of information has helped fuel the extreme polarized political and social views dominant in our country today. The poster of the past has transitioned from a governmental communication tool to a conceptual vehicle, used to challenge deeper thought about today's real issues, rather than just presenting the same controlled information at we are bombarded with through other forms of mass media. The posters that I have developed throughout this thesis process have been an attempt to reflect that shift. They have provoked the types of reactions that were intended, and created a dialogue among viewers.

The type of provocative and powerful messaging presented in my work is meant to be shared outside of galleries, and web collections, and exist in public spaces where the information can be experienced by everyone, not just those who seek it out. This process has inspired me to continue with that goal, and further explore the aspects of our culture and society that are manipulated to control and shape our opinions, shopping habits, and political choices. This is not a project that will end with the success of one collection of posters. It will be an ongoing venture in the pursuit of political awareness, social involvement, and our emancipation from the thought control exercised on us by our media and information driven culture.



FIGURES



Figure 1. James Montgomery Flagg, *I Want You For the U.S. Army*, 1917,  
Color lithograph, Library of Congress



Figure 2. J. Howard Miller, *We Can Do It*, 1942, Color lithograph, National Archives and Records Administration

**20,679 Physicians**  
*say* **LUCKIES** are  
*less irritating*

**I too prefer**  
**LUCKIES**  
*because ...*

Toasting removes  
dangerous irritants  
that cause  
throat irritation  
and coughing

**LUCKY STRIKE**  
*"IT'S TOASTED"*  
**CIGARETTES**

**"It's toasted"**  
Your Throat Protection—  
against irritation—against cough.

© 1930, The American Tobacco Co., Inc.

Figure 3. Harper's Bazaar, Lucky Strike Ad, 1930, Color lithograph

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST



“**MY HAT’S OFF to**  
*the pause that refreshes*”

Old Santa, busiest man in the world, takes time out for *the pause that refreshes* with ice-cold Coca-Cola. He even knows how to be good to himself. And so he always comes up smiling. So can you. Wherever you go shopping, you

find a cheerful soda fountain with ice-cold Coca-Cola ready.

The Coca-Cola Co., Atlanta, Ga.

•  
LISTEN IN  
Grantland Rice—Famous  
Sports Champions—  
Coca-Cola Orchestra.  
Every Wed. 10:30 p. m.  
Eastern Standard Time.  
Coast-to-Coast  
NBC Network.  
•

OVER NINE MILLION A DAY . . . IT HAD TO BE GOOD TO GET WHERE IT IS

Figure 4. Norman Rockwell, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Coca-Cola Ad*, 1931, Color lithograph



Figure 5. Georgi Vladimirovich Kibardin, *Let's build a squadron of dirigibles in Lenin's name*, 1931, Color Lithograph, 105.5 x 75 cm



Figure 6. *Nazi Propaganda Poster, 1937, Color lithograph*

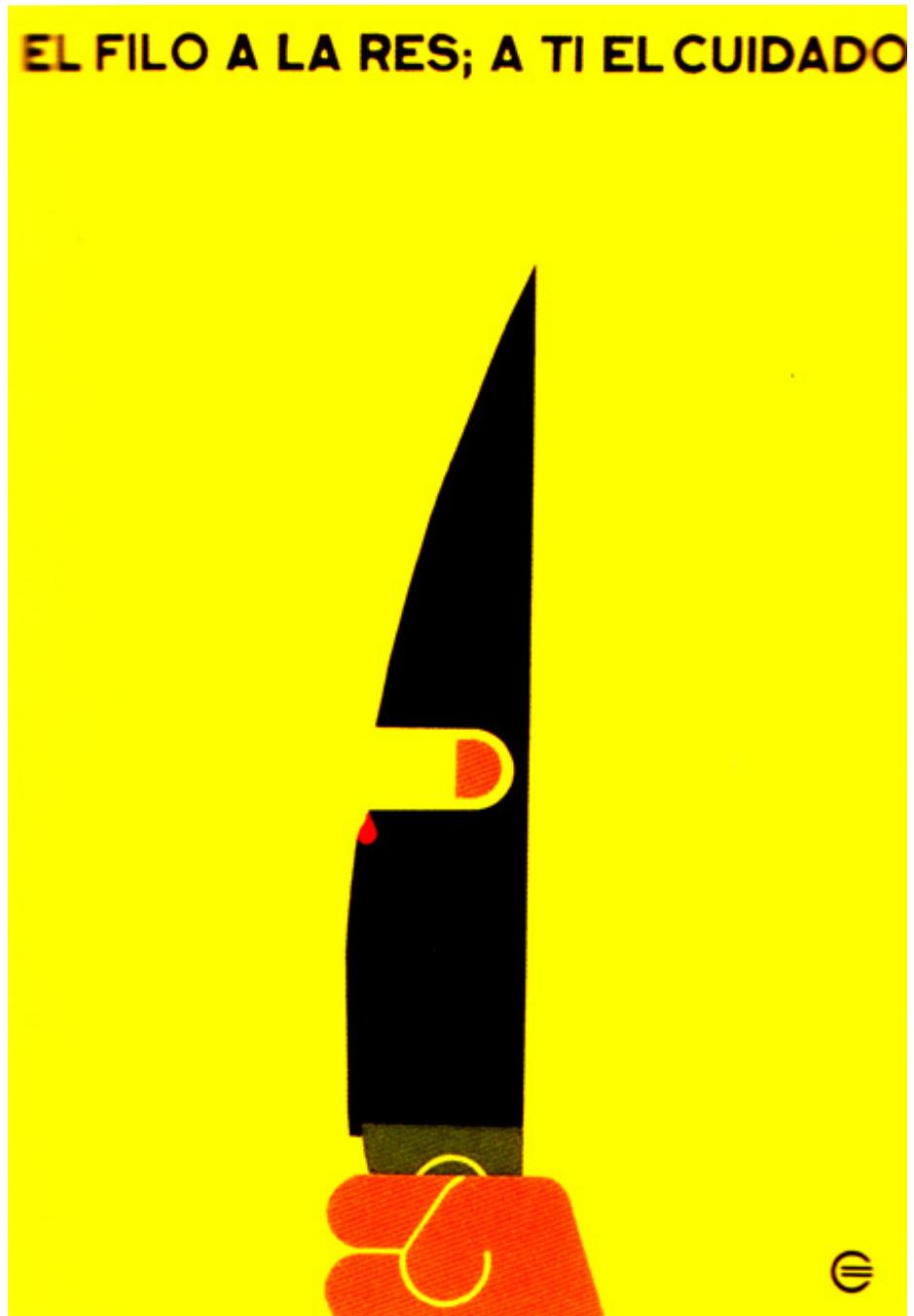


Figure 7. *Cuban Propaganda Poster*, 1979, Color lithograph



Figure 8. *Chilean Propaganda Poster*, 1979, Color lithograph





Figure 9. *Human Need Over Corporate Greed*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012,  
Digital print



Figure 10. *Polish Workers Rights Poster*, 1930, Color lithograph

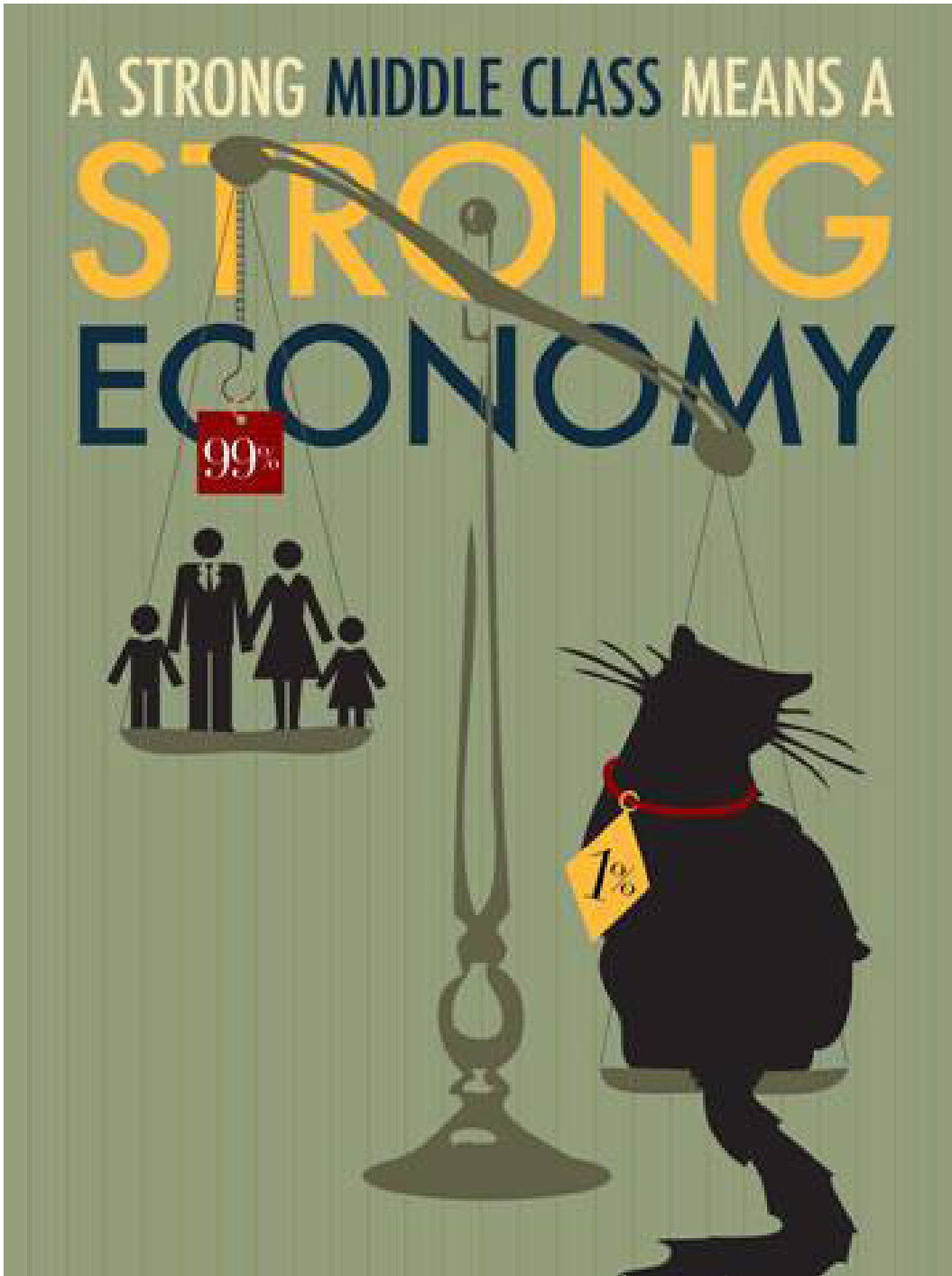


Figure 11. *Fat Cats*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print

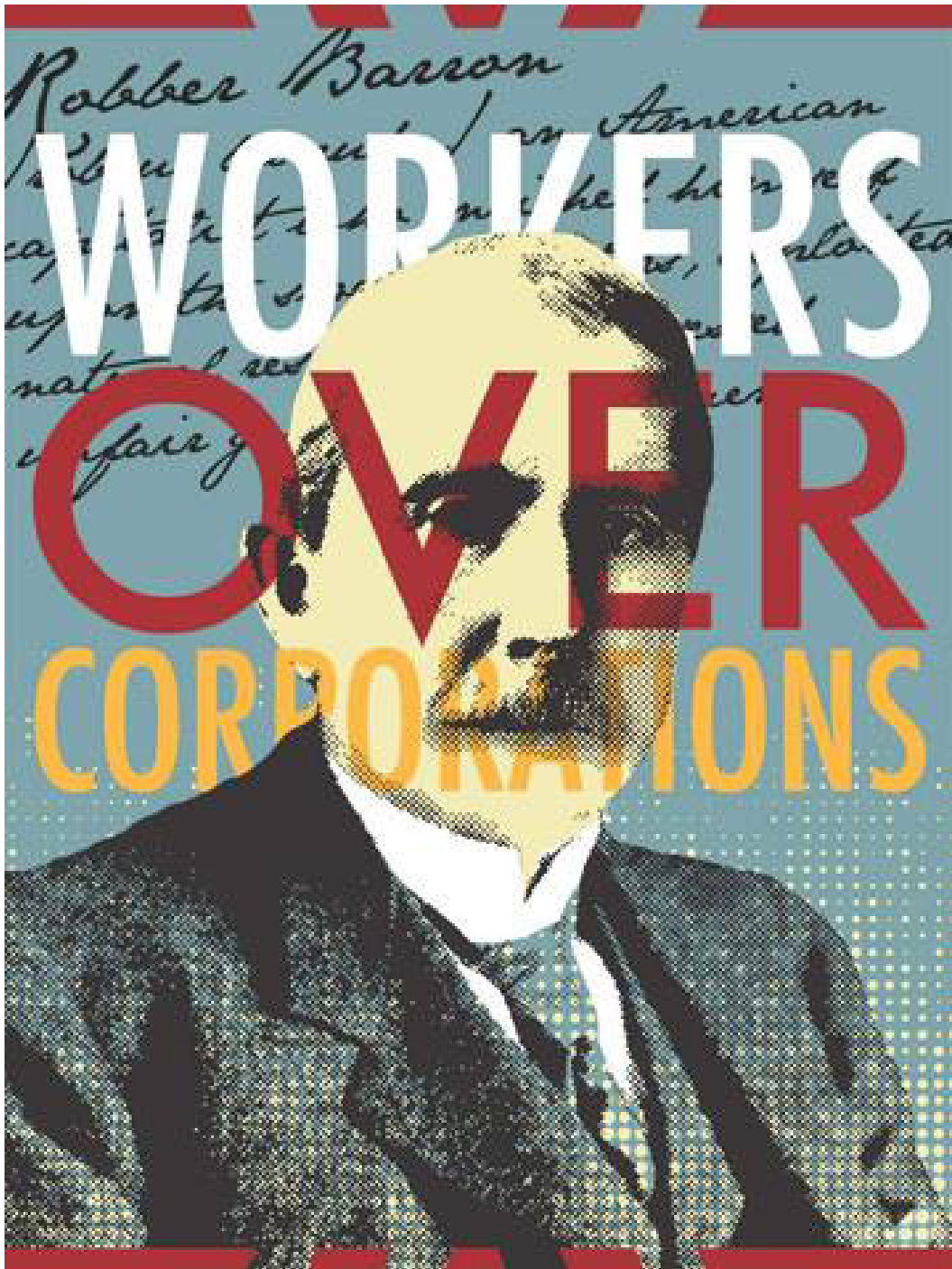


Figure 12. *Workers Over Corporations*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print

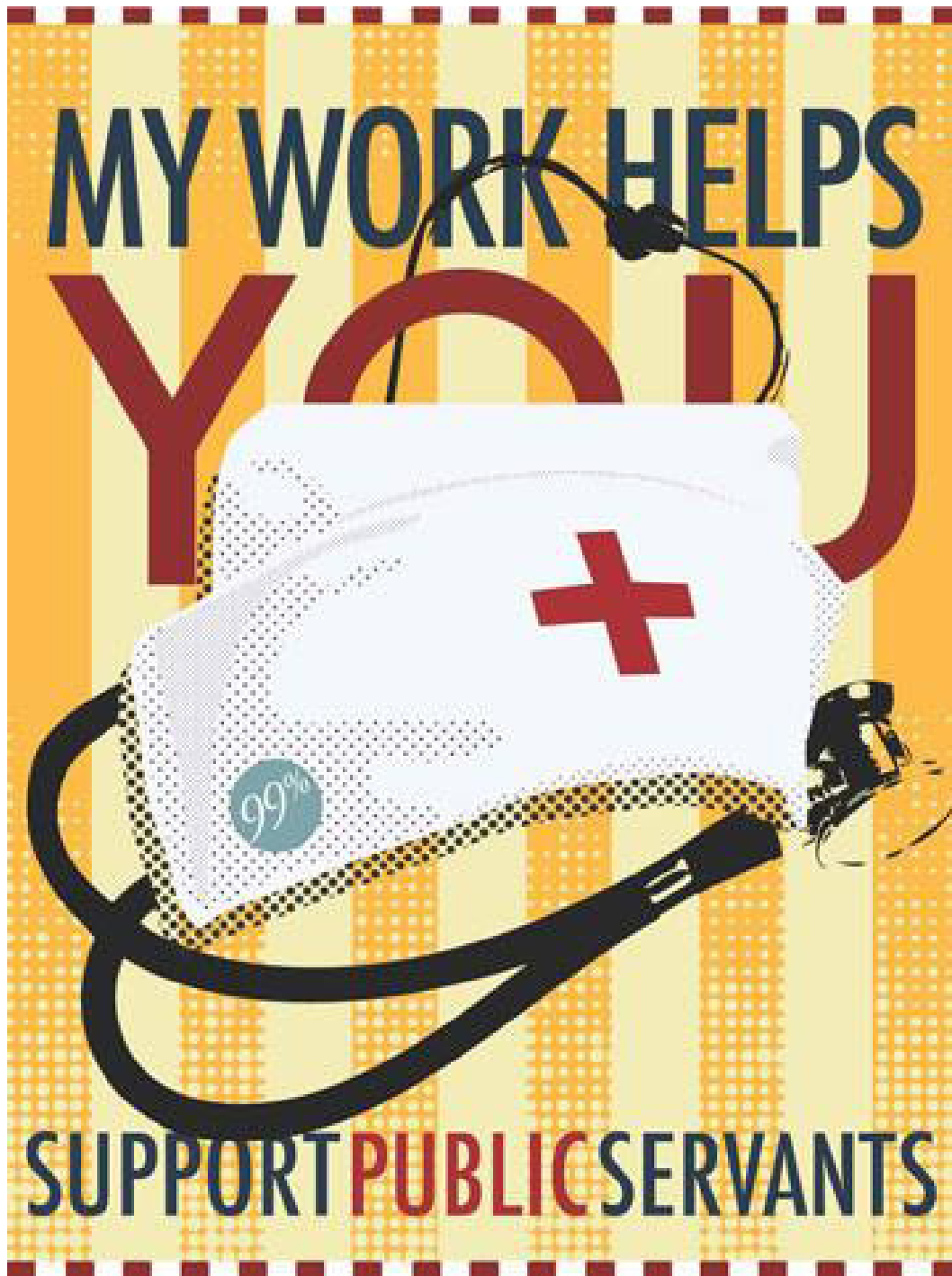


Figure 13. *My Work Helps You!*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print

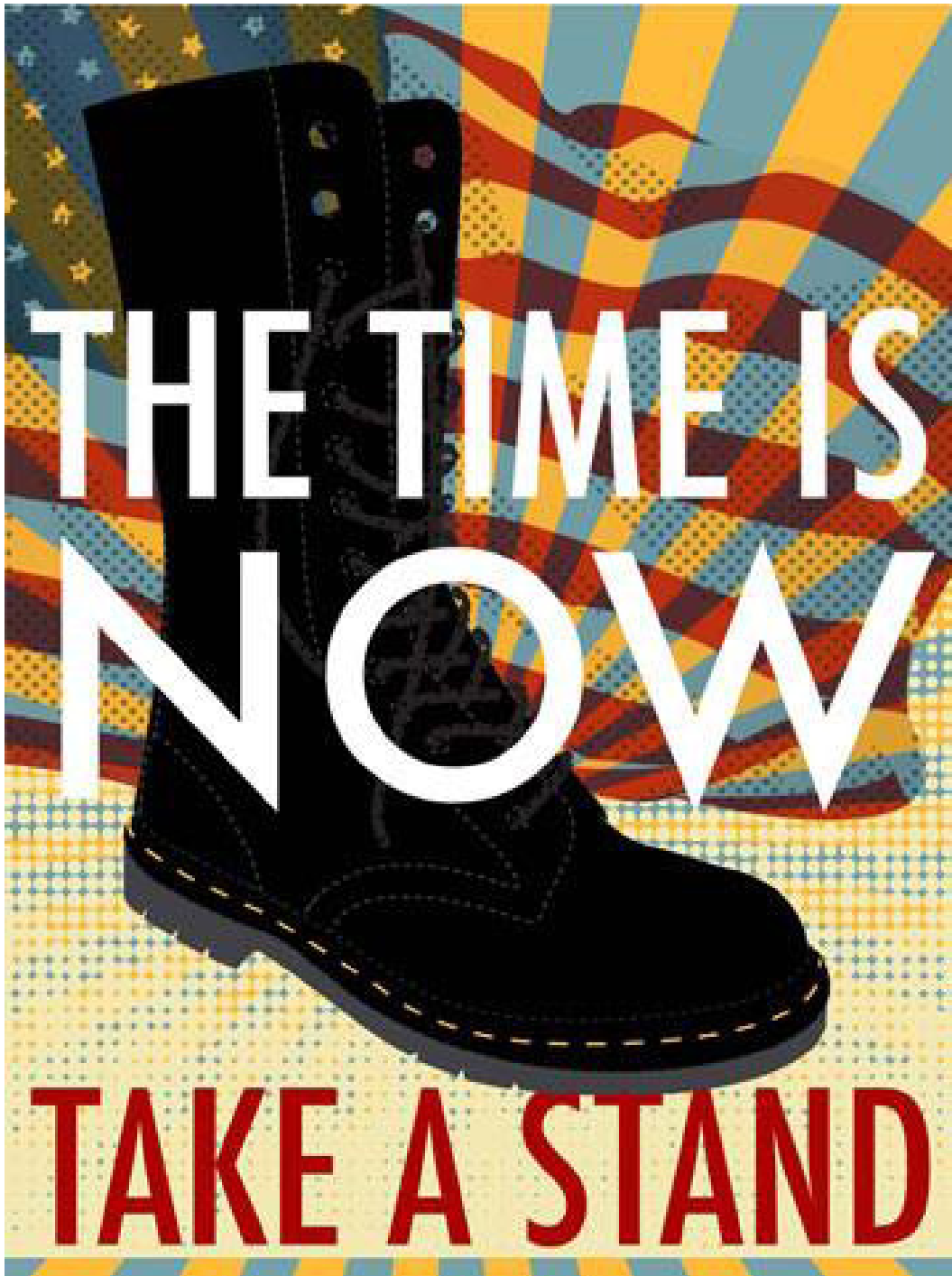


Figure 14. *The Time Is Now*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print

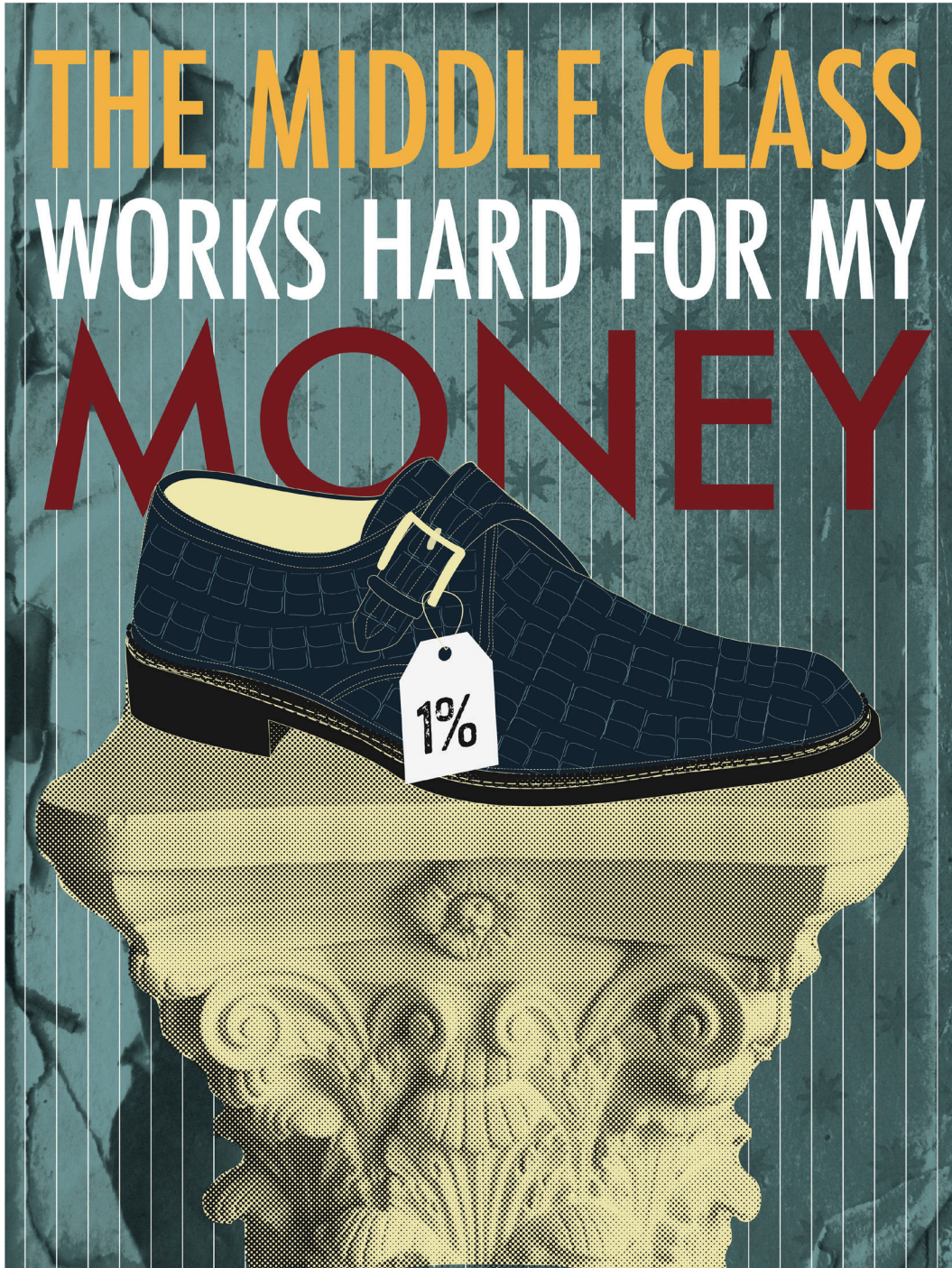


Figure 15. *One Percent*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print



Figure 16. *Unemployed*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print



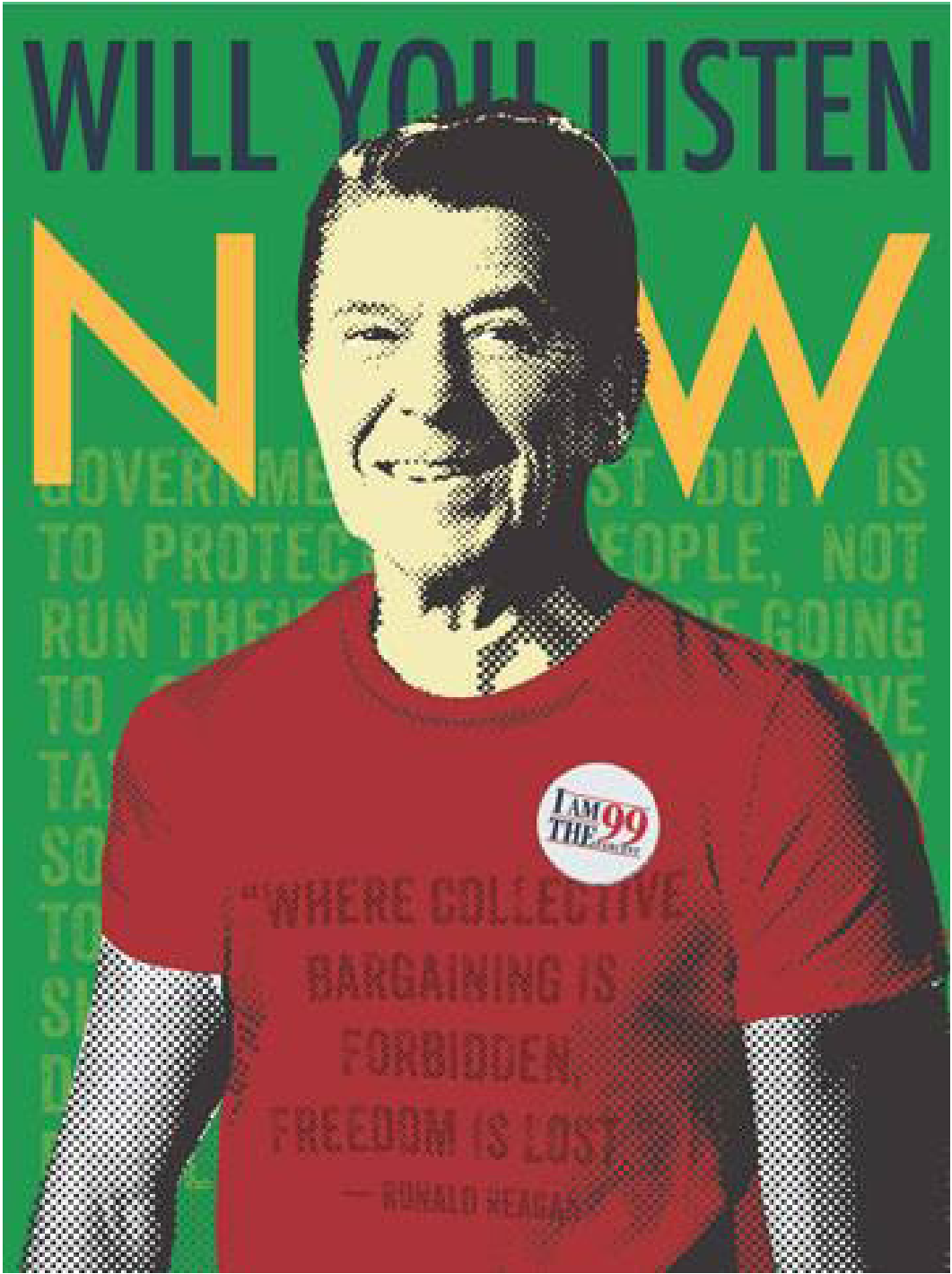


Figure 17. *When Reagan Speaks...*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print

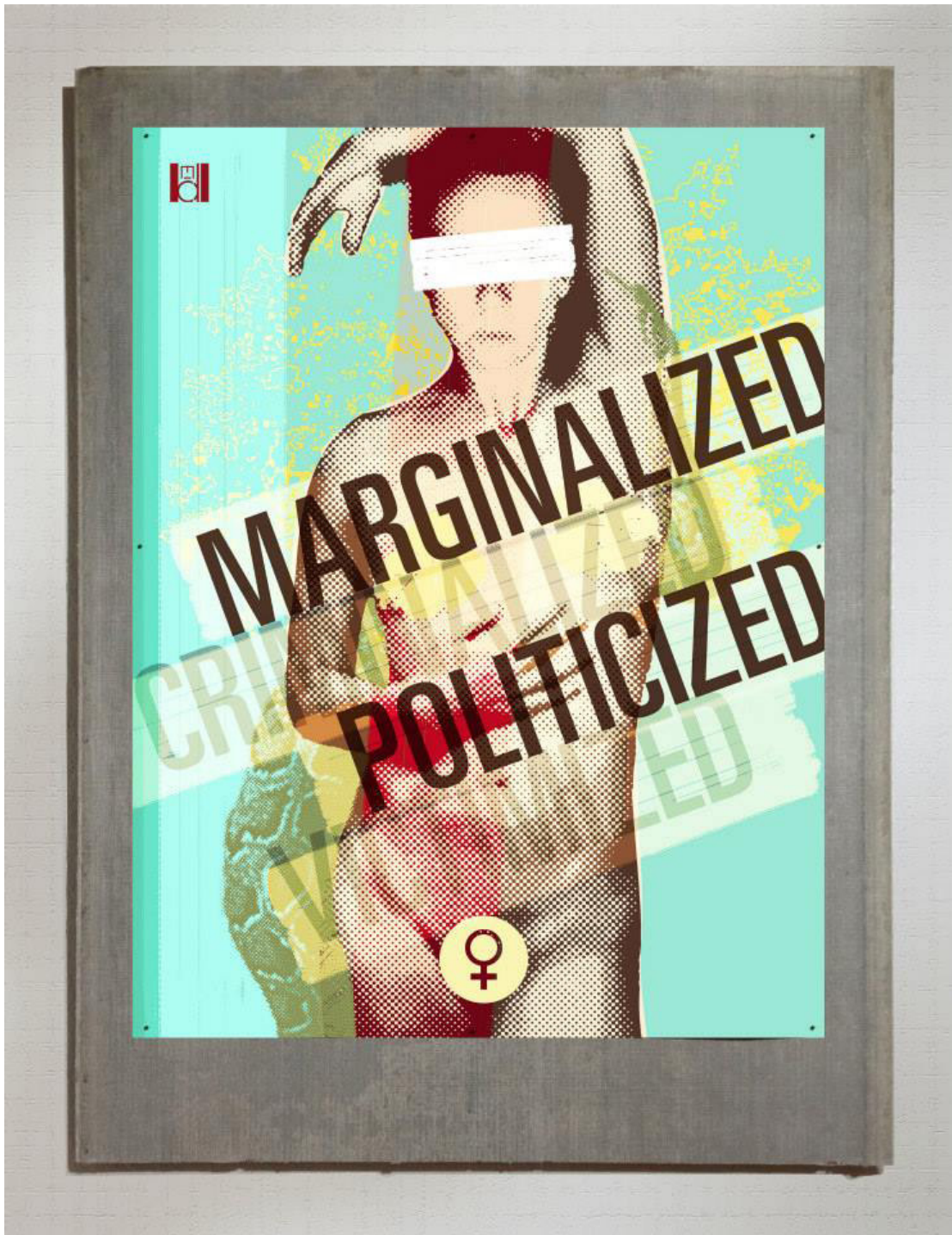


Figure 18. *Marginalized*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print

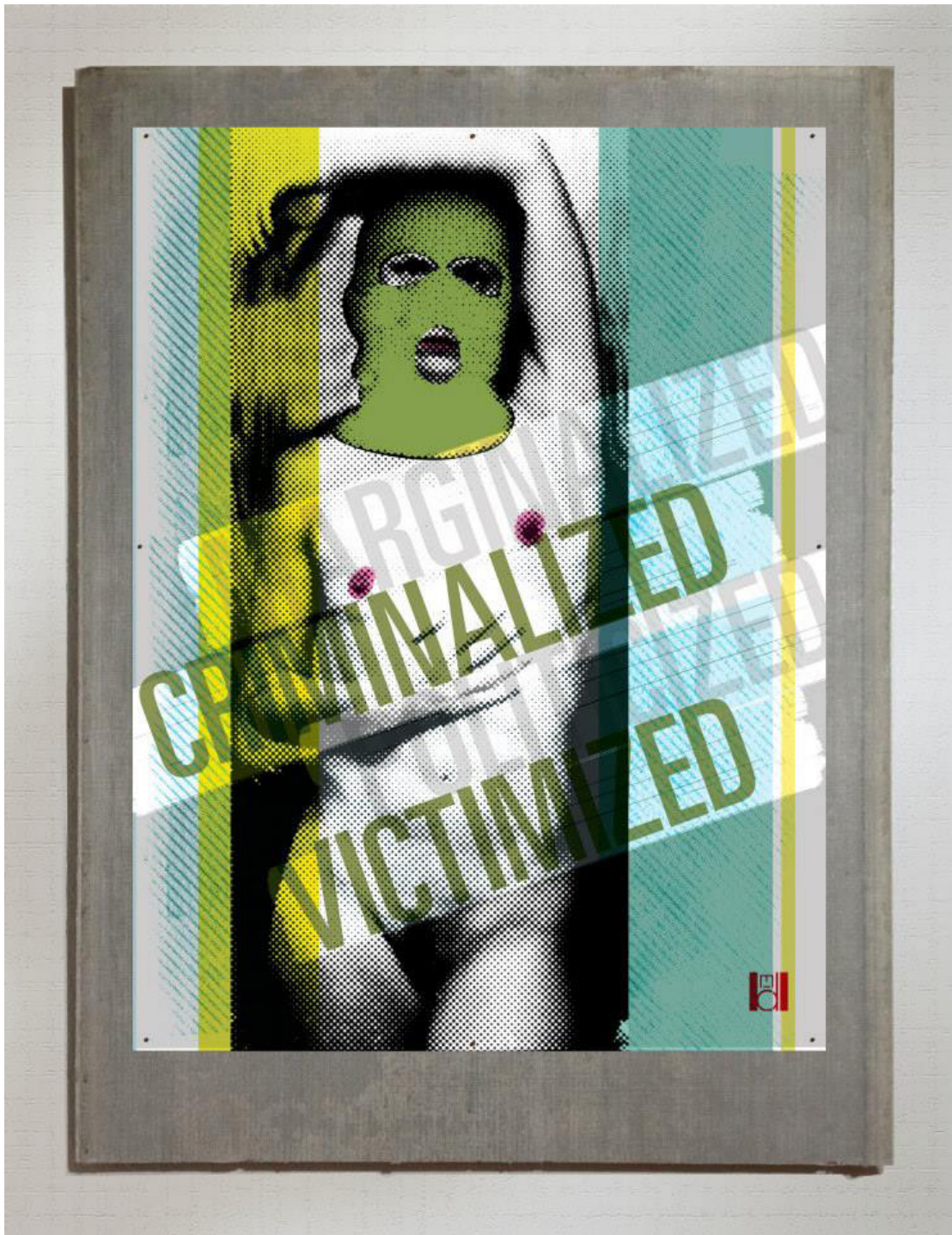


Figure 19. *Criminalized*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print

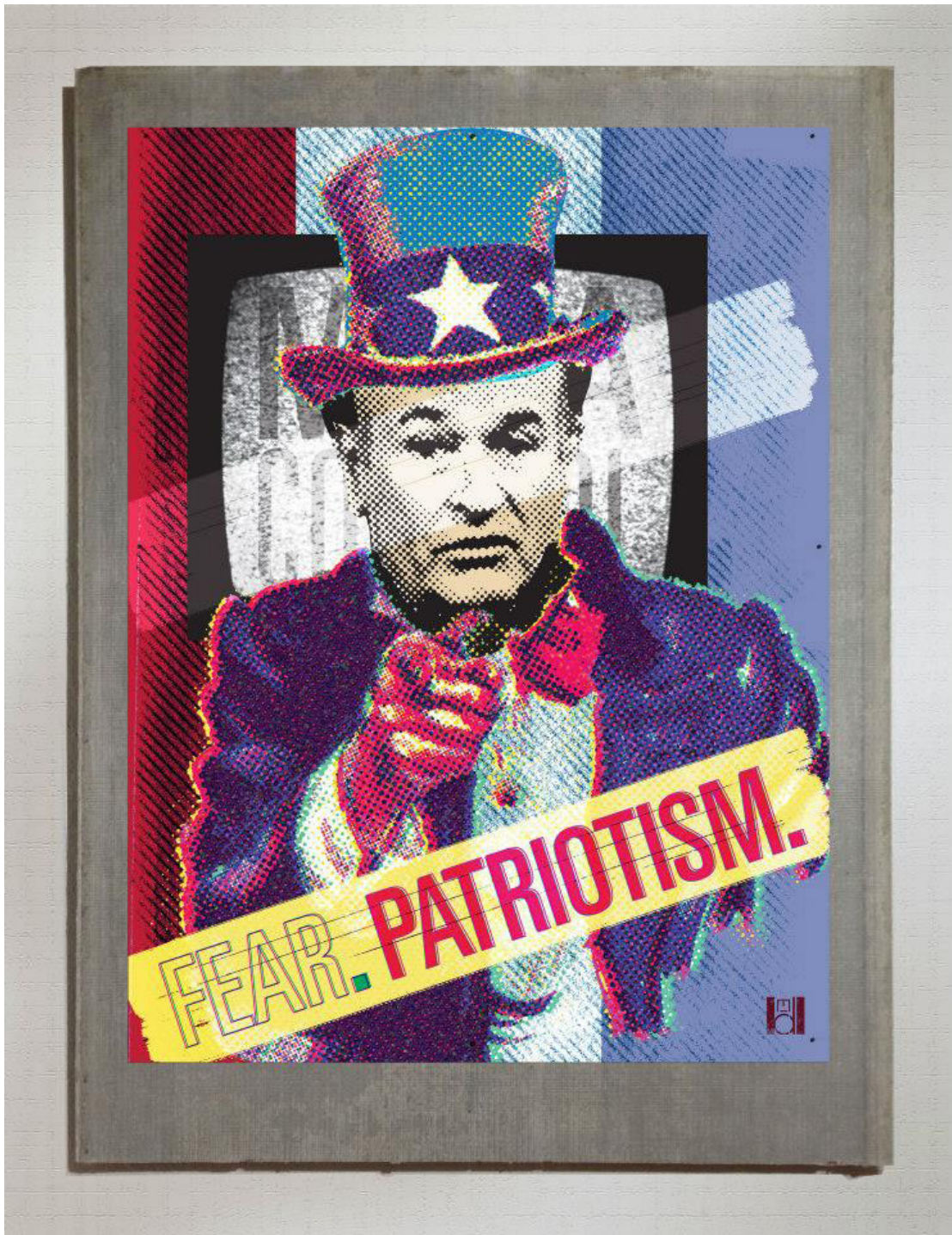


Figure 20. *Fear. Patriotism.*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print



Figure 21. *Fear patriotism.*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print



Figure 22. *Cultural Control*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print



Figure 23. *The American Spirit*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print



Figure 24. *The Faces of Racism*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print



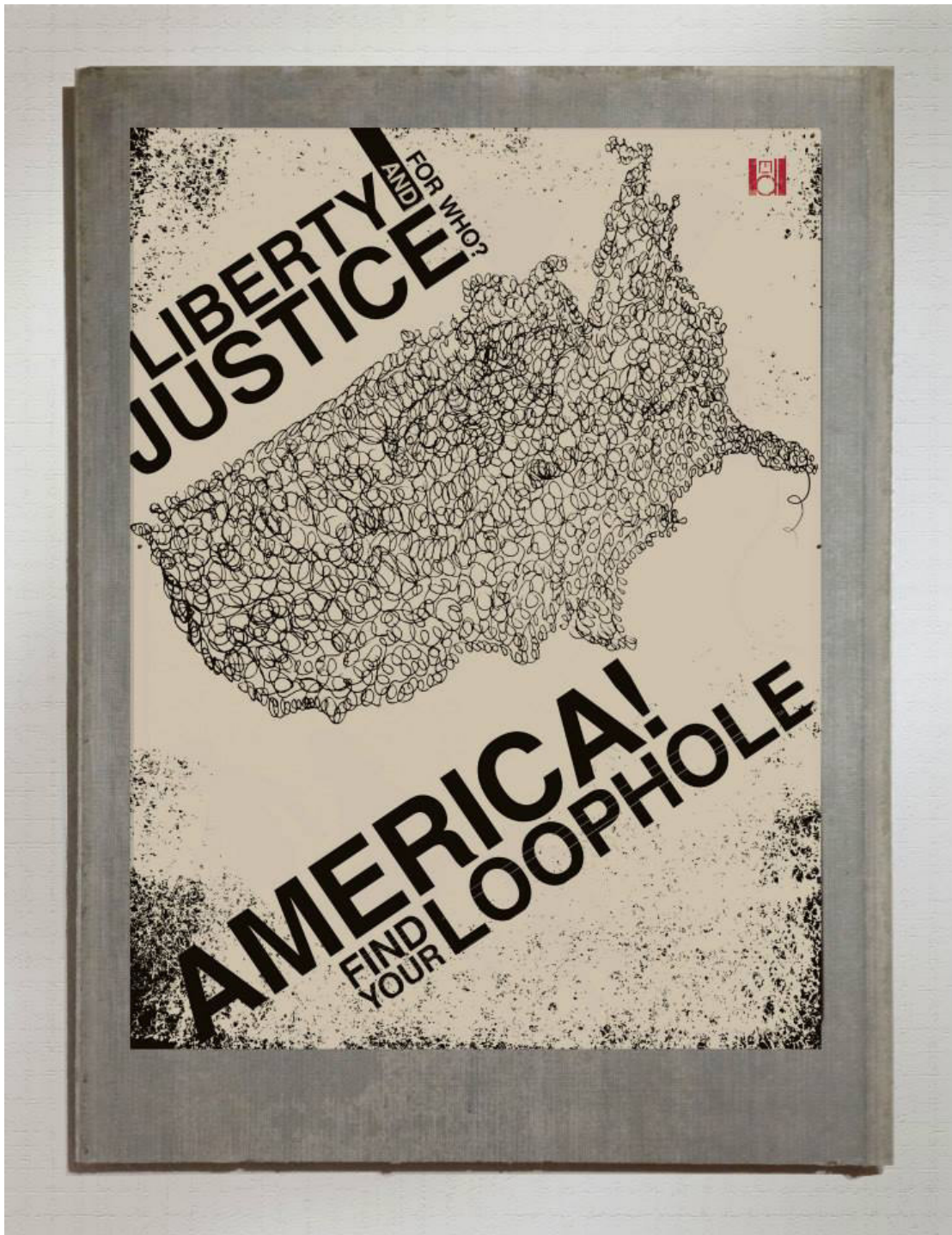


Figure 25. *Loopholes*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print



Figure 26. *Let's Fly Kites Across the Border*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print



Figure 27. *Run For Your Lives*, Deborah Mueh Craven, 2012, Digital print

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, m-w.com, s.v. “Propaganda.”

<sup>2</sup> James Aulich, Marta Sylvestrova, *Political Posters in Central and Eastern Europe 1945-1995: Signs of the Times* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, November 17, 1999 – January 31, 2000), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Snow, *Propaganda, Inc.: Selling America’s Culture to the World*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2010), 77.

<sup>4</sup> James Aulich, *War Posters Weapons of Mass Communication*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 13.

<sup>5</sup> “Cantor Center’s ‘Revolutionary Tides’ examines the language of political posters”, *Stanford Report*, November 30 (2005), <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2005/november30/crowds-113005.html> (accessed December 9, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> David Kunzle, “The First 9/11: Posters from the Chilean Allende and Pinochet Regimes (1970-1990),” *Exhibition in Palacio De Bellas Artes*, June 28 (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Liz McQuiston, *Graphic Agitation: Social and political graphics since the sixties*, (New York: Phaidon Press, 1993), 88.

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McQuiston, Liz. *Graphic Agitation: Social and political graphics since the sixties*, (New York: Phaidon Press, 1993).