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Don't Shoot the Messenger

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Don't Shoot the Messenger

By

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B.A. Western Illinois University, 2007

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With a Major in Printmaking

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There are many crises that now plague America, the housing crisis, rising
gas prices, the threat of terrorist attack, the growing divide between rich
and poor, infant morality rate, rising cost of health care, and the
deregulation of corporate America. Being a former construction worker
who was laid off, I searched for the reasons why so many like me were out
of work. My research has led me to the doorsteps of corporate America,
and how business here was being conducted. The corporation is what the
monarchy and the church were in the past, their rule represented the
ideas of a few and these few had the power to exercise their will by force
on the masses. After my alarming findings I wanted to inform the public
about corporate America. My hope is to inform people through my art, thus
creating a spark that might motivate people to bring about a change in
how corporations do business. My art touches mainly on the issues of
corporations polluting the environment, massive layoffs, breaking up
unions, controlling the media output and sometimes creating situations
that harm people, with no accountability. My fear is that we in American
are losing our democracy and those who would be activist are being
hushed up and vilified by the media.

I began my research by reading books from Kevin Phillips, Bad Money,
and Noam Chomsky's, Manufacturing Consent. I also watched the movies
"Wall street" and "Capitalism". These books and movies along with my
loss of employment inspired me to research this thing called a
“Corporation”. Corporation comes from the Latin word “corpus” which means “a body”.

In 1601 Queen Elizabeth the first created the East India Trading Company. This was the first known modern corporation. The idea was to bring likeminded investors together to fund a larger project. In the case of East India Trading Company the project was exploration. They were created to do a specific job, and they were given a certain amount of money to do so. This was called a “corporate charter”. This usually meant mining or creating railroads or performing a specific service to the government.

In America’s beginning corporations were small and used for small purposes like banking or seafaring. At this time once their job was over, the corporation no longer existed. Also at this time corporations could not make political contributions, and owners were responsible for actions of their company. Because of the industrial revolution (1820-1870) corporations began to grow; less dependency on Britain meant America had to form its own goods and find a way to transport these goods. Corporations were chartered to create railroads and canals. Often if corporations weren’t meeting up to the government’s standards their charters were often revoked. CEO’s with their lawyers came up with a way to extend their profits by removing finite contracts. In 1819 the Supreme Court ruled in Dartmouth College v. Woodward that states could not alter
a contract granted by a previous legislature, this left Dartmouth’s King George III-granted charter intact, this created a framework for the protection of corporations against the state.

In May 1886 Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad the Supreme Court ruled that Santa Clara County could not tax Southern Pacific Railroad saying that the corporation had rights as a person under the 14th amendment. Through the 14th amendment corporations with the courts help were able to become “Individuals”. The 14th amendment was originally created to protect the rights of newly freed “slaves” (Tyler 2). Now corporations were given all rights given to an actual person. They have the right to sue, lobby the government, and the right to speak freely, corporations also had the right to own property as a flesh and blood person. They gained these rights through something that’s called “legal fiction”, where the courts deem that something is true when in fact it isn’t. Everyone in the court knew that a corporation isn’t a “real” person, but in order for corporations to be able to sue someone the same laws that apply to a person would now hold true in a court room without having to change the books.

The funny thing is corporations aren’t just humans they are immortals. The only way to get rid of a corporation is to have it dissolved. Corporations never die and they don’t need food, they don’t feel pain, nor can a corporation go to prison.
The problem with corporations is that they are only concerned with the bottom line. The bottom line for corporations is its profit, and loyalty to its stockholders. Corporations have destroyed environments, had persons killed, produce products that cause cancer, and target children as consumers. Their concern doesn't involve the welfare of the citizens. Their goal is to expand across the world, enslaving the people of the host nation. David Kortens quotes the words of Charles Exley, CEO of National Cash Register in his book, *When corporations rule the World*, “It has become a matter of pride and principle for corporate executives to proclaim that their firms have grown beyond any national interest. Typical is the statement of Charles Exley who says “National Cash Register is not a US corporation. It is a world corporation that happens to be headquartered in the United States” (Korten 95). The only time corporations proudly claim a nation as its own is when they are seeking some tax-break. With corporations what amount of “profit” is enough? The answer is that there is never enough. There is always room for more profit. Corporations find ways to subvert governments for more profits. One could compare corporations to monsters that devour more and more profits with an insatiable appetite. Corporations could be easily defined as monsters.

Corporations are “persons”, but what type of persons are they? Corporations want us to believe that they are good upstanding citizens with pure intentions at heart. Monsanto is a food and agricultural
corporation that manufactures seeds and milk products for farmers. The
“Our Pledge” section of their website reads: “The Monsanto Pledge is our
commitment to how we do business. It is a declaration that compels us to
listen more, to consider our actions and their impact broadly, and to lead
responsibly. It helps us to convert our values into actions, and to make
clear who we are and what we champion.” Some of the products that
Monsanto sells are harmful and unsafe to its consumers, but yet they
continue to sell these products. I will discuss this later in the paper. What
kind of person would lie, kill, and target children? I think most of us would
consider this person some kind of monster.

I first toyed with the idea of the corporation being a monster or some kind
of animal in my print called “Vulture” (Fig 1). In “Vultures”, I begin to go
into the idea of corporations stealing the rights of citizen’s for profit, and
eating away at the carcass of America. I show a large blue vulture
carrying away a tattered and torn United States Constitution. In the
background I have a vector image of America being surrounded by other
vultures. The Vultures represent corporate America’s agenda, and how
that agenda is destroying the fabric of modern America by flying away with
its constitution. This breaking down starts with “Reaganomics”; this is
where Reagan reduced the restrictions on corporations in 1981, giving
them more freedom to operate. Reagan’s policies allowed for fewer taxes
to be paid for corporations and more for the public, it signaled the
beginning to a slow end for the American people. On the bottom of the
piece in blue I have the definition of "Plutocracy", which is the rule by the wealthy. I placed this definition there so that the viewer would have a better understanding of what a Plutocracy is as opposed to a true democracy. A true democracy takes an educated population according to Plato in his writings called the "Republic". My view is that we are moving ever closer to a Plutocracy rather than a true democracy. The wealthy of this country make up three percent of the population. This can also be called "Oligarchy", which is a rule by a few, as opposed to "democracy" which is rule by the many. Oligarchy can be seen as operating as a monarchy, dictatorship through the military, or corporation and the power or wealth is handed down from wealthy to the wealthy. According to CBS (Chicago Broadcasting Service) Rahm Emanuel's campaign chest was well into the $11.7 million range. The Biggest contributors to Rahm Emanuel's campaign were the Pritzker family, which contributed $200,000; the Crowns, $175,000; and the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, $200,000,000. (CBS). The past Chicago election was just a race for mayor, not a government seat. When these donations are given to a Candidate that person is indebted to those who helped (financially) to put him in office not to the people. This form of governing relies on a public servitude to exist, so we will slowly begin to see more laws and regulations being put on the people, so that those in power can have complete control. The people, the workers, aren't being represented at all. The laws are in the hands of those who are able to influence elections
through wealth. We are now living under what some would term Corporate Oligarchy or Corporatocracy.

Since power lays in the hands of those who have the most money to give to candidates, corporations are now shaping law and have less and less fear of government. Any hurt done outside the transaction of doing business is chalked up as an unavoidable situation due to the cost of doing business. This cost of doing business is a corporate justification, termed "externality" by economists. "Externality" is a business transaction between two parties that affect a third outside party. This third party could be considered the people, and the environment. Some externalities would be the criminal treatment of workers throughout the world by Coca-Cola, one of these being China. A report from Students & Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior states that two university students were threatened and one beaten up, after asking for back pay when he resigned. Xiao Liang who was 24 at the time suffered bruises to his left eye and left hand after being beating up by two factory managers. Later Liang a college student was taken to the hospital where he was said to have suffered a ruptured eardrum. \(^1\) Coca-Cola eventually settled this case out of court.

The transaction between Coca-Cola and consumers has affected the human rights of Xiao Liang.

\(^1\) http://www.killercoke.org/crimes_china.php
In another case the lawsuit Colombian Human Rights vs. Coca-Cola in 2001, International Labor Rights Fund and the United Steelworkers, and AFL-CIO sue the bottler on behalf SINALTRAINAL the union representing Coke workers in Columbia. The case of the plaintiffs however was denied on technicalities In Columbia Coca-Cola is accused of the murder of two union workers Isidro Gil and Adolfo de Jesus Munera. In artwork I depict a can of Cola(Fig 2) holding a handgun, with the title “union buster” and “Killa Cola” beneath that in the traditional Coca-Cola font.

Another example of an externality would be the contamination of the environment, from careless handling of toxic chemicals. An externality toward the environment would be the recent BP Amoco oil spill. Deep sea drilling has been going on for twenty years now, in those twenty years this the first time a rig has exploded and caused damage to this extent. This isn’t however the first time an oil based corporation has caused damage to the environment and endangered the lives of people. The Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska in 1989 cost 20 billion dollars to clean up and that doesn’t include the billion more for in legal fees. The Gulf spill caused damage to the wildlife, and hindered business across that region. So far the cost of the spill has been upward of 20 billion (Verschoor, 85).

However, this isn’t even the first time BP has had problems. In 2005 an explosion in Texas City, Texas killed 15 BP workers and injuring 170

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2 (Harvard Law Review)
Experts believe that the environmental effects of the Gulf spill will affect wildlife for years to come. My piece called “Oil Spill” (Fig 3) is a Serigraphy print that depicts BP as this corporate monster. This monster is a glob of oil in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico. He is the center of the piece and he represents BP Amoco and the recent oil spill. Coming towards him from the top right and bottom left are two fighter jets, the top jet is saying in word bubbles “MAYDAY, MAYDAY the Blaque Plague is destroying the environment!” by using the fighter jets I wanted to show the urgency of the situation. When there is a hostile enemy in our midst the army always sends out fighter jets. Behind the monster is an oil rig and oil tower. The title written in bold is “DIRTYCITYPIGEON comics presents.” along the upper left side of the print are the traditional notation for comic’s books that shows the month and the issue, and logo of the comic book. The background was again a rainbow roll, representing the sunset. On the bottom of the rainbow roll is a bright yellow the next color up is an orange, and a light red or a dark pink, and above that color is aqua blue. I thought that this was representing the evening sunset. The left top corner is the price of the comic book, this copied the previous comic book covers that I have seen in the past. I also included the “Approved by the Comics Code logo”, which is found on all comic books.

The third externality involves a corporation call Monsanto. Monsanto is an agricultural company that specializes in the food industry. They describe themselves on their website as “helping farmers throughout the world to
produce more”. However, from 1962 to 1971 Monsanto produced a chemical called “Agent Orange”, in what was to be called Operation Ranch Hand. This chemical's purpose was to kill vegetation and trees so that the Vietcong fighting against American soldiers would not have a place to hide (Boyne, 13). This chemical gave cancer to many US vets serving in the Vietnam War. On the website of the Department of Veteran Affairs, one can find that a class action lawsuit was brought against the major manufacturers of the chemical herbicides, the manufacturers decided to settle out of court in 1984 for one hundred and eighty million dollars. This still doesn't cover the pain a soldier feel everyday knowing that he served his country only to be harmed by company who depicts itself as a friend to the United States and its citizens.

This “Agent Orange” was the reason I used the carrot in the print I call the Monstrous Mutant Monsantero (Fig 4), it was a direct reference to the use of the chemical in the Vietnam War. It also was a reference to GMO’S (Genetically Modified Foods). My print shows a Monster Carrot which is representative of Monsanto and their “Agent Orange” chemical, walking through the city as a tall monster. People are running away from this carrot and entering the foreground in terror, in front of a large cloud of smoke. I also included the bar often found on products to be sold. I felt that this would give a more realistic feel to the comic book cover. The hands of the Carrot Monster are holding the sides of buildings and pushing them aside. The posters make the statement in red “when genetic
engineering goes too far!!!” The title of the print is “the Monstrous Mutant Monsantero”, named after Monsanto. The people running are the color blue, because they are under the delusion that Monsanto is looking out for their best interests, of course this is not true. The colors to this print are cold and warm colors, blue and orange. In Monsanto’s pledge they have the words Integrity, Transparency, and Respect, however given their past actions towards consumers none of these seems to be true.

The “Dirty City Pigeon” name I thought would be a perfect name for a ground root movement. Unlike most birds pigeons were close to the ground and weren’t afraid of people. I think that if the common blue collar worker had to choose a mascot the pigeon would be the perfect representative, if you were within the big city. The pigeon is amongst us every day struggling to survive in an environment that’s foreign to what he’s used to, just like many of us are today. The pigeon has even been a victim of discrimination, white pigeons are seen as symbols of peace while darker pigeons are considered flying rats, and viewed negatively. Since most of my art is informative, and sends a message I felt that this paralleled the past life of the rock pigeon, which was that of a messenger. What better creature to send my message to other peoples of the world. The messenger portion of the pigeon also represents freedom fighters, prophets, and activist who worked hard to get the message out to the people.
I work mainly in Intaglio and Silk Screen. Intaglio is a process where ink is applied beneath the surface of steel, zinc or copper plate. The lines of the plate are created by a needle that's usually metal. The plate is then covered in ink, and then the ink is wiped away. The ink that was trapped in the needle cuts make up what will be the artwork. The inked plate is then placed beneath a wet piece of paper covering the plate and ran through the press. The result is the artwork being transferred to the paper. Some of the different forms of Intaglio are engraving, etching, mezzotint, aquatint and dry point. I choose dry point because it gives me the opportunity to use line drawing much like the drawings I use in my silk screens. Silk Screen also known as Serigraph is where inked is pressed through a prepared screen onto the paper or fabric surface.

Because many of my prints are considered to be poster size, I wanted to get some background on posters and why they were used. So I begin to study poster art. In studying posters I was lead to Propaganda posters of World War I and II, and Nazi Germany.

In World War I there wasn't any television, internet, or movies so the main method of spreading propaganda was through radio, posters, books, and newspapers. Citizens of Germany spent their lives surrounded by propaganda posters. Posters were always used throughout many countries, but never before had propaganda been used to inspire like in
WWI. Adolph Hitler along with Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels of Nazi Germany understood the importance of understanding the goal of his propaganda posters in “Selling The War” by Zbynek Zeman. Hitler writes, “The task of propaganda is to attract followers of a movement...its also acts as a agent of natural selection: The more radical the propaganda was, the more it frightened off weaklings”. To learn more about this idea of propaganda I started my search with one of the masters of propaganda Walter Lippmann. He was advisor to Woodrow Wilson during World War I. He served at the same time as George Creel who was in charge of wartime propaganda. He found that one way to lead the masses is through propaganda. The Creel Committee was set up by Woodrow Wilson who needed to excite the American people into a war time frenzy during World War I. At the time citizens of the United States were indifferent to the ideal of war. In time the committee did succeed in winning public support. The method that they used to gain support was pamphlets, cartoons, magazines, movies, and pro-war paraphernalia. What I read about the Creel commission showed me was that people’s politics could be influenced by art. Posters were a big part of the process of influencing the population. My posters are to inform viewers who about people and politics as well as motivate the viewer to action against corporate crimes. In the print called “Villain”( Fig 5), I turn Bobby Seal, Michael Collins, and Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos into cartoon character mask for children. I did this because corporations have been known to use
cartoon characters to indoctrinate children and adults into buying products. Cartoon characters are disarming and friendly however, these products cause obesity in children and are overall bad for children's health. Now I'm using the comic book ad style to help adults become aware of the propaganda corporations use to get them into buying products.

As I have mentioned above posters prompt the viewer to make a decision or take action about something. That something can be a political thought, a product, a person or people, or a nation state. The designer has a number of things to keep in mind. Who his audience is, the frame of mind the viewers will be in while viewing, and what's the purpose of the poster. I want the poster to invoke thought, inspire the viewer to take action by learning more about corporations.

Most of these posters were very big and had bright colors. Colors are a major part of how human beings think, within a culture. In *The Color of Money*, Leatrice Eiseman, director of Eiseman Center for Color Information and Training and Executive of director of Pantone Color Institute is quoted as saying “Children are inevitably fascinated by brighter colors from early infancy”. The article goes on it says that for adults color is a cognitive cue for something that’s familiar. Colors like yellow and red were used very often in marketing and in other forms. In Chinese
Propaganda posters the color red was used to signify the Communist party (Fig 6).

There are other ways to use this color as well, red is also a color that can be seen from a great distance. This is why fire engines are red. In the article *The Color of Government*, by Gary Sturgess explains, “and where we do find a splash of color in government, it is usually where it is necessary to identify a letterbox or a fire engine amidst the bustle of city streets”.

Red is the color of love, and heat and is often used by weather forecasters to signify warmth. Red is also said to be the most powerful color. Red is said to be the color of command which means it commands attention. Red often shows danger, which is why it’s the color of stop signs. As far as nations go red is used in a variety of ways. The flags of some nations like Turkey and Japan have a representation of the sun as red. Red is the color of blood and sacrifice. When the president walks down to the microphone from the White House to address the nation he often walks on the citizens and soldiers who sacrificed their lives for America.

Yellow is the color of caution, and can be seen even in a dense fog from a great distance. This is why yellow is seen on fire hydrants, and school buses, street signs, the lines that divide our streets, and yellow stop lights. It is also the color closest to “light”, if seen through a prism. Yellow is also the most visible color to the human eye. Yellow stands out more than any other color to the human eye. In my undergrad at Western Illinois University I took a advertising class and one assignment was to go the store and look down the toy and cereal aisles, without actually walking down them, then we were to record what colors we saw first.
Overwhelmingly, yellow was the first color in both aisles that could be seen.

Green is the color of nature, the color of the leaves and the grass. It is the color of Life. This was the reason the dollar bill chosen to be green. Green is also used as a backdrop. Any color that’s placed on a green background will automatically be pushed forward. When I use a Photoshop program to edit a subject out of one background to another, I always take the subject’s picture in front of a green background, because it makes the subject easier to see and cut the subject out of that background later. Green is also used for the background of street signs with white letters on top to contrast against the green background. Green is also the color of money which is why I made the print I call “green” (Fig 8) the color of money, the root of all evil.

I made these people from models in magazines and scanning the images in Adobe Photoshop, once scanned I subtracted all color and darken the images. Once all the images were darkened I combined all my layers to create the final piece. The image of Liberty represents the idea of justice; however when money is involved like in the movie “wall street” people can become corruptible. The Green is also the color of everlasting, like the evergreen tree, which is why the American dollar bill is green. However, we can now see the crumbling of Capitalism as well as the value of the dollar. The idea was to make the poster resemble a dollar bill. The falling
apart of the fonts represented the breaking down of capitalism. I wanted this to be the first poster to be seen in the gallery, I felt that it created the tone for the rest of my artwork.

Pink and Blue are both gender colors, of course pink is for girls (femininity) while blue being for boys (masculinity). Blue as well as Orange and Red are colors that represent temperature. Blue being a colder temperature and is often used by weather forecasters. In some religion Blue was said to be associated with falsehood, because the color of the sky gave the illusion of blue, while at night the true color of the sky was revealed. Pink is associated with sweets or candy or bubble gum. It's also used to signal softness. The way I used pink in my work called "The Villain", was to remind viewers of the bubble gum ads once found in "Bazooka" bubble gum. This poster was inspired by the ads found within older comics. In the print called "Villain", I turn Bobby Seal, Michael Collins, and Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos into cartoon character mask for children. I did this because corporations use cartoon characters to indoctrinate children into buying products. Often these products cause obesity in children and are overall bad for childrens health.

One of my heroes Bobby Seale member of the Black Panthers created a program in inner city areas to help children exercise and stay fit. However the Black Panthers image was destroyed in the media by the FBI. The FBI stopped any funding for the panthers, the FBI also put false propaganda to
cause internal strife among panther members. The FBI would create false pamphlets and leaflets and leave these false information packets where new recruits were known to frequent. This operation was called CoIntelpro (Drabble 20). This propaganda was given to the media to broadcast. This prompted Malcolm X (fig 10), a deceased civil rights leader to say, "The media's the most powerful entity on the earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the mind of the masses." These words by Malcolm X were very powerful to me.

I was drawn to the ideas of Freedom, Justice and Equality, because of the struggles of African Americans during the civil rights movements. I understand that without these struggles, I wouldn't have many of the freedoms that I now enjoy. In comic books there was always a clear cut hero and a clear cut antagonist character. I felt that the leaders of the civil rights movement were the heroes, and those who blocked human and civil rights were the bad guys or antagonist characters. Through comic books I begin to understand "balance". Without balance the scales would be tilted and the tilted scale would cause injustice and injustice would cause inequality, which was the cause of war. With all power in the hands of a few, the representation of all the people could not be achieved. However, the system of capitalism is dependent on inequality in order to survive. This creates a permanent class of have-nots.
My favorite comics were the X-Men. I was especially attracted to the illustrations of Jim Lee and the story lines of Stan Lee of Marvel Comics. Stan Lee was the first writer to give his heroes “human” qualities. Iron Man was an Alcoholic; Bruce Banner was cursed with becoming the Hulk; Spider-Man carried the burden of his uncle’s death, when he let the killer escape just hours before. The X-Men were hated by the very society that they swore to protect, their only crime was being mutants. The short coming’s and the everyday problems of these characters made them “human”, and because they were “human”, I was able to relate to them. Often propaganda was placed in the comics. The arch-Nemesis of Captain America was the Red Skull, a Nazi-experimental soldier with extraordinary strength and a fiery skull, this same Red Skull turned out to be Captain America’s own son. 1938 was considered the “Golden Age” of comic books by 1941 most heroes found themselves battling Nazi soldiers or Japanese invaders (Genter 3).

Of all those characters I related most to the X-Men. Like the X-men, my real life political heroes like Malcolm X, Dr. Huey Newton, Dr. Che Guevara, Dr Alberto Campos, Dr. Martin Luther King and Bobby Seale, Marcus Garvey, were viewed as enemies of the state, by J Edgar Hoover the then head of the FBI. Their only crime was pursuing freedom, justice, and equality for all oppressed people of America. They wanted to provide balance to America, equality for the rich and the poor, black and white.
This staged in my mind for a conflict between good and evil just like the comic books.

Because I loved the comic art of Jim Lee and Jack Kirby so much, I started to look at other artist who made their name from cartooning, and line drawings. Two artists that I discovered through my research were Thomas Nast and Honore Daumier. From these artists I learned techniques to shading my artwork, and how adding words in cartoons could make artworks more understandable to the viewer. By adding the words “capitalism leads too anomie”, to Figure 8 I felt my piece was following in the footsteps of Daumier and Nast.

Both Nast and Daumier were ridiculed for their illustrations by the ruling class, Daumier even spent time in jail. Nast is considered to be the “Father of Cartooning in America”, but he is also responsible for the modern day images of “Uncle Sam”, “Lady Liberty”, “Santa Claus”, and the modern images of the elephant and donkey as the Republican and Democratic party symbols. Nast’s art was very political he attacked political party leaders in the newspapers he worked for, the “Harpers Weekly”, and the “New York Illustrated News”. Nast’s main focus was on Boss Tweed, of Tammany Hall, who Nast depicted as a tiger in his Illustrations. He named the tiger “Tammany”. It was a very catchy name, and it stuck with the public. Tweed was so fearful of Nast illustrations and how the public responded to them that Tweed tried to bribe Nast with money to relocate.
Nast refused and through his illustrations exposed many wrong doings of the Tammany party leaders, who were eventually tried and convicted of fraud. However, Tweed did manage to escape and made it to Spain, but officials there discovered and arrested Tweed by using Nast’s cartoons illustrations.

Honore Daumier was another printmaker who lived from 1808-1879. He was hired by Charles Philipon to create political satire for Philipon’s comic journal called, “La Caricature”. Daumier joined notable artist like Deveria, Raffet and Grandville. All of whom were French illustrators and lithographers. Achille Deveria owned his paint shop in France, Denis Marie Raffet was student to Nicolas Toussaint Charlet and Jean Grandville was best known for his animals that were drawn in human clothes. Daumier was imprisoned, for his depiction of King Louis Philippe. In the print the king has a long tongue like a ramp and the citizens of France are struggling up the ramp dumping pounds of food and resources into the king’s mouth. This depiction of the king put the young Honore Daumier in a jail called St Pelagic for six months. Soon afterward the journal was shut down and a new paper emerged with Daumier as the main artist the paper was still own by Daumier’s previous employer, however this paper was less political, to avoid fines or worst being shut down.
The lives of these two newspaper artist helped me to realize the power and potential of political art. The power of art, and images was just as powerful if not more powerful than the written word. I also became aware that my line art could become something more, by adding color underneath my line art.

More recently because of the recession, the dropping value of the dollar, and the housing crisis, the lost of American jobs to China and Mexico, and the war in Iraq, I naturally become more concerned with the future of America and my children's place in it. In trying to understand more about Capitalism and the Media that delivers the news, I started reading books by Noam Chomsky and Kevin Phillips. I have become more concerned with the growing divides between rich and poor that has reached the highest gap since 1928 just before the Depression. In the studying Capitalism, I began to research other kinds of Economic Systems, one these was Socialism. Socialism was endorsed by Dr. Huey Newton, who was one of the Founders of the Black Panthers Party. Huey taught that individuals had the right to self defense against brutality, he inspired offshoot groups like the Young Lords Party and the white version the Black Panthers the White Panther Party. The media painted Huey as a racist, but he was of mixed heritage. Huey Newton was instrumental in the struggle for civil right yet almost nothing is known about him, as a civil
rights leader. Dr. Huey P. Newton’s iconic image (Fig 7) was the first printmaking project I did with politics in mind from the outset.

This Silk screen is a combination of images. The symbol of the dollar bill was scanned in Abode Photoshop, then blown up as a vector image and tiled in Abode Illustrator. I thought it would be interesting to take the very symbol that Huey was fighting against and put it into the background of the piece. It turns out looking also like a halo, which fits seeing as how he later became a civil rights martyr. The symbol along the side was a design along the side of a Dominican Dollar bill, which I thought would help balance out the picture. The actual picture of Huey Newton was tiled and turned into a vector image into Abode Illustrator. Also along the sides there are three smaller pictures from the top of the poster to the bottom. The first picture was of Martin Luther King Jr. who was also a human rights leader, but what many don’t know about him is that he died on his way to a Union protest. Dr. King had begun to see that the “civil” rights struggle was actually a “human” rights struggle. Making the Civil rights struggle into the Human rights struggle opened the door for not only black people, but all people who were struggling under the current regime. This brought in more people to help in the struggle. The picture underneath Dr. King was that of statue of liberty the symbol of justice. It was sent to America as a gift from France after America’s victory over Great Britain. The last image was the black power salute at the Olympics, which was started by the Black Panthers.
Continuing with the idea of Heroes and Villains/Monsters I made a silk screen about the expanding of corporations around the globe, the octopus that holds both Afghanistan and Iraq in its tentacles, this represents Imperialism. Imperialism is the after effect of what capitalism brings about. The expansion of McDonalds, Starbucks, and other western products in traditional eastern lands can be seen as the never ending hunger for profits. This expansion could be seen as an aggression by those in these lands because these products that corporate food sellers supply are not halal. Food that has not been prepared correctly could be considered haram and not permitted. It isn’t that McDonalds or Starbucks is purposely anti-Islamic, however their food does not fit into what is permitted according to the laws the Quran. Iran is a nation state whose government won’t allow the use of westernized haircuts, imagine how they feel about a Starbucks being placed in their lands. Despite the wars and death of both American soldiers and Iraqi and Afghanistan civilians, American corporations continue to plant foot holds in these foreign lands, despite protest by both foreign governments and civilians. In the print “Octopus” (Fig.9) I put the octopus on top of the earth to signify its dominance. His eight arms are stretched to every area of the globe. Within his arms he holds Afghanistan and Iraq.

Corporations have extended their reach not only across the globe, but also in the places where we get our news. Again to have a flourishing democratic society citizens should be able to make informed decisions
based on a variety of information. Media is the main medium we use to get our knowledge. This is why the media is covered by the first amendment. What if the press really isn’t free at all? What if the business community actually controlled the press?

Newspaper papers don’t make money from their readers buying newspapers. They make money from the advertiser who buys a spot in the circulation. How many times have you picked up the Sunday paper filled with sales ads, and advertisements from this business or that business. This is how circulations make their money. This holds true for television programs and radio programs. Their have been many times I’ve listened to a radio program, to be interrupted because they had to have a word from their sponsor. They had to make their money. The type of circulation dictates which advertiser will buy space from that circulation. Audio would never buy space in Source Magazine (a hip-hop music magazine for teens) but Nike definitely might. The trick is that readers don’t pay the cost of making the circulation so the readers have to be capitalized on by turning them on to the advertisements. If advertisers or those in the business community make sells from ads placed in the circulation then they spend more on ads thus making the circulation more money. It is most important to capitalize on those who have money. A circulation is edited for those who spend on the ads placed in the magazines.
Most newspapers get their news from only a handful of metropolitan news sources. The purchasing power in places like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and the bigger cities is so great that the major advertisers focus on these cities. The Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, The New York Post, USA Today, Chicago Tribune are some of the circulations that are responsible for most of the general news in the United States (Lippmann 206). While working for The Western Courier as a journalist and illustrator I would get news from one of these major news sources, seeing as how we at the Courier didn’t have the money to travel aboard and get the news ourselves.

What if the advertiser decided to buy the media outlet? Would the news only reflect the news for that advertiser? Well this has already happened. The annual reports for General Electric, Comcast, Westinghouse, Disney, Time-Warner TBS, and News Corporation LTD. for 2010 show the holdings and profits for those companies. Westinghouse owns CBS. Disney owns ABC and the History Channel. Time-Warner TBS owns CNN and a host of other stations. Owning the media output gives corporations the power to slant the news to their point of view.

NBC alone has over two hundred affiliated stations and sixteen owned Telemundo TV stations. All of these are under the General Electric and Comcast umbrella. If a social activist is speaking out against the interest of a corporation and its advertisers, all the station has to do is not air that
person or use the news to dismantle the persons reputation or villainize them in the media. By controlling the flow of information corporations become a threat to a true democracy.

Objective point views will never be heard. This why I created the prints with a newspaper background, for me it’s not the newspaper that’s in the background (Fig 11,12). What is in the background is the image of those who represents the corporation. The views points of the few (corporations) is behind the scenes who control their own social media propaganda.

My art brings to light, the problem of corporations and how these problems effect our lives here and now. My hope is that through my art people will begin to educate themselves about this giant that looms over our nation and the planet. By educating ourselves we can begin to change not only what goes on within our own borders but also what goes on beyond our borders. I don’t make art for arts sake, I make art that might hopefully change the world, one viewer at a time.
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Figure 1.
Wayon Collins
Vulture
2010
Silk Screen
22x17
Figure 2.
Wayon Collins
Killa Cola
2011
Silk Screen
13x17
Figure 3.
Wayon Collins
Oil Spill
2011
Silk Screen
13x17
Figure 4.
Wayon Collins
The Monstrous Mutant Mansantero
2010
Silk Screen
9x12
Figure 5.
Wayon Collins
Villain
2011
Silk Screen
13x17
Figure 6.
Chinese Government Poster
Mao
1976
Silk Screen
20x30
London: Taschen, 2003
Figure 7
Wayon Collins
Huey Newton
2009
Silk Screen
30x22
Figure 8
Wayon Collins
Green
2011
Silk Screen
22x17
Figure 9.
Wayon Collins
Imperialist Octopus
2010
Silk Screen
9x12
Figure 10.
Wayon Collins
MalcolmX
2010
Silk Screen
7x8
Figure 11
Wayon Collins
Ken Lay
2011
Intaglio
9x12
Figure 12
Wayon Collins
Bernard Madoff
2011
Intaglio
9x12