CLIMATE VANGUARD

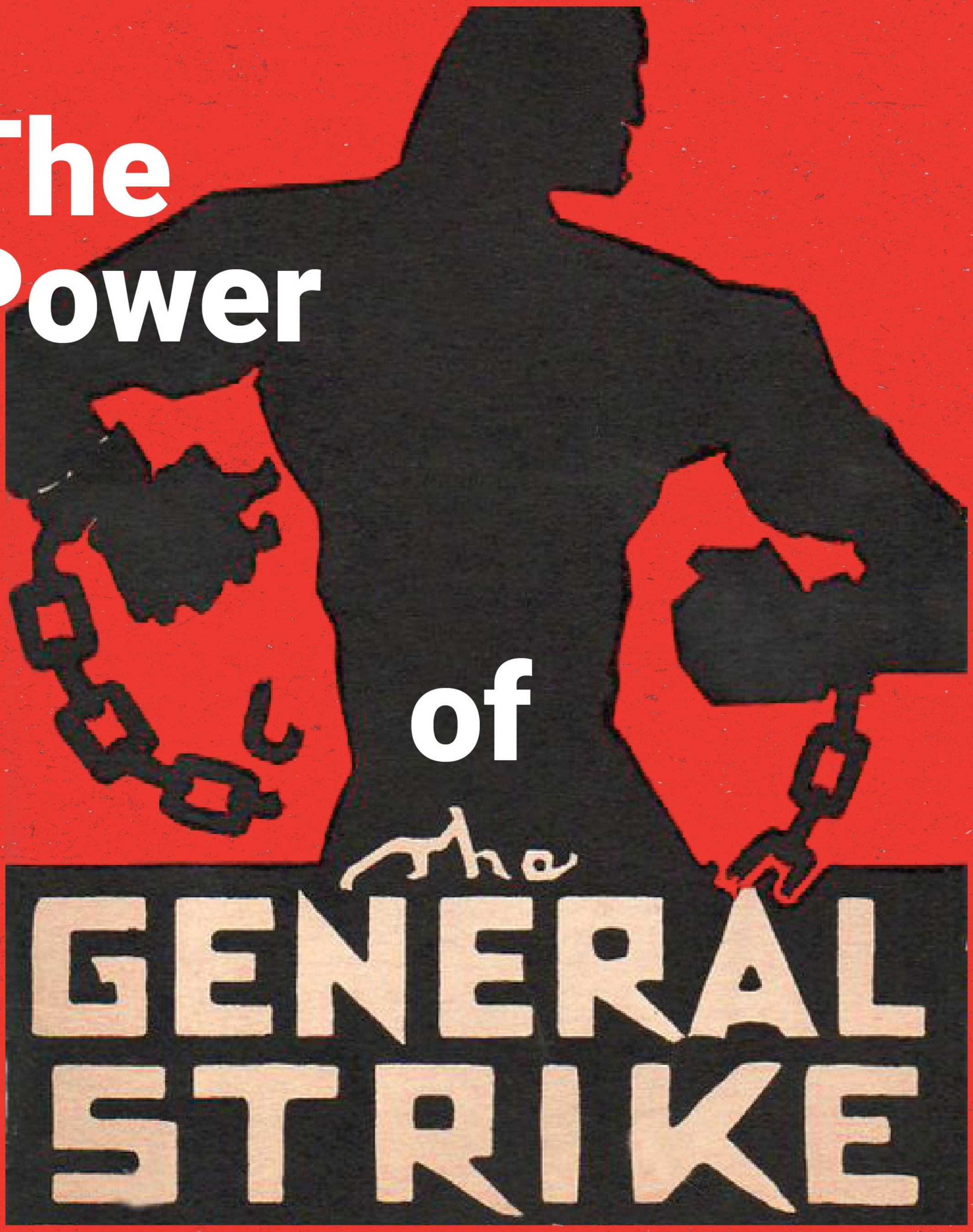


Image: *Cover of the pamphlet "The General Strike for Industrial Freedom", Chicago (1933).*

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People's capacity to work (i.e. their labour-power) is the source of capitalists' profits. When workers remove their labour-power, the gears of capital are gummed up, increasing the working classes' power over the exploitative ruling classes.

Throughout history, the general strike* has proven a uniquely powerful and effective tactic. It has been key to popular victories, including the minimum wage, the eight-hour work day, occupational safety standards, critical advances in racial and gender equity, and national liberation.

Here are some examples of significant general strikes from across the world →

***Note:** A general strike is when unions from different sectors go on strike at the same time.

***Source:** Hoffman, Freedom Socialist Party (2011).*

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Carpenter's Association banner promoting the ten-hour workday, 1835



Philadelphia General Strike (1835):

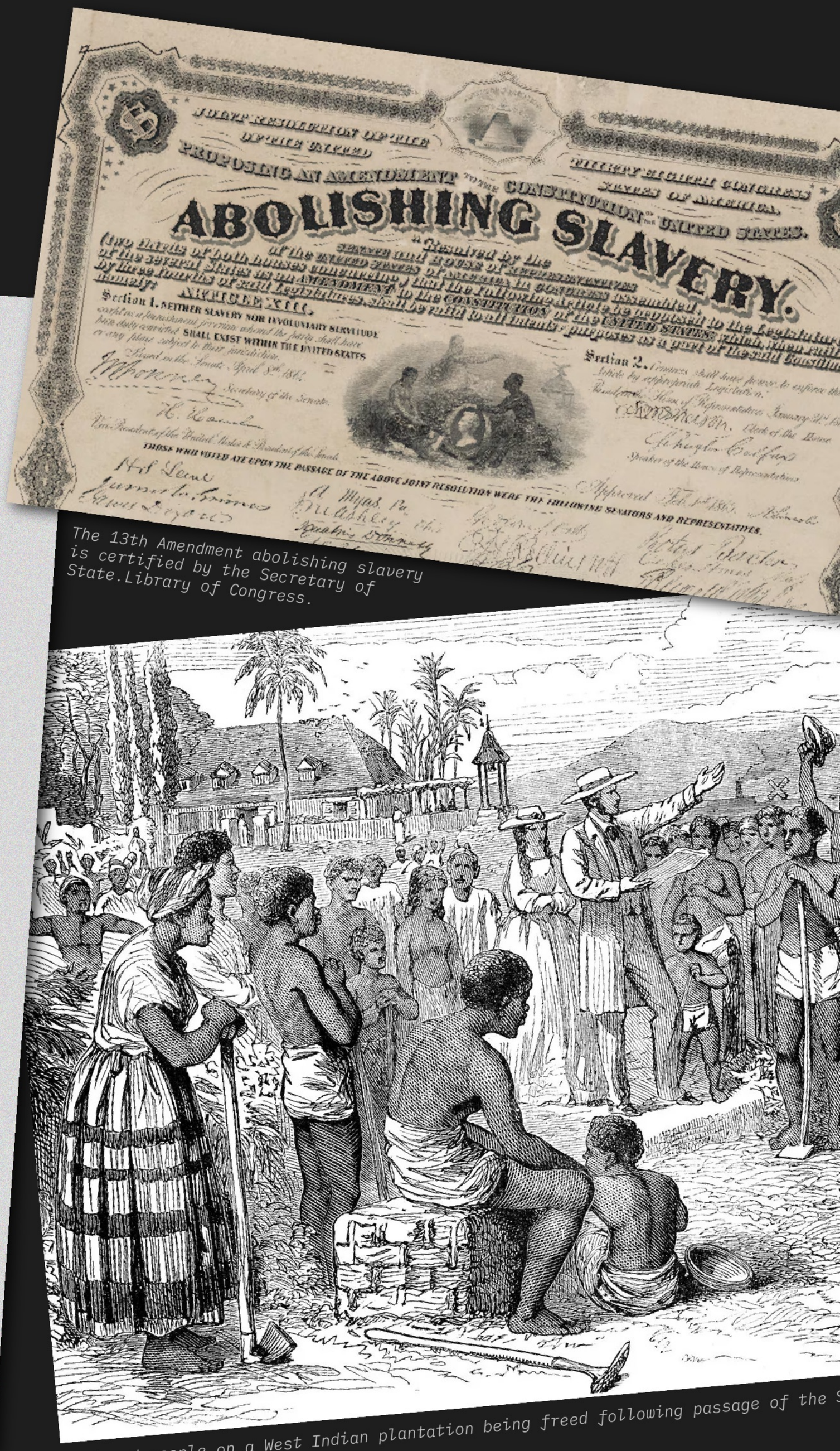
The coal heavers strike for a ten-hour work day inspired 20,000 workers across 40 different trades to join them. Under immense economic pressure, the Philadelphia City Council granted their demands and by the end of the month the ten-hour workday was implemented.

Sources: *Grubbs, The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia (2017); Lazare, The Nation (2024).*

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Black Resistance to Slavery (1860s):
W.E.B. Du Bois* (1868 – 1963) argued that the hundreds of thousands of enslaved domestic and plantation workers who fled or took up arms during the American Civil War effectively enforced a general strike. Industries were disrupted and their actions catalysed the abolition of slavery in the US in 1865.

***Note:** W.E.B Du Bois was a black American sociologist, Pan-Africanist, and civil rights activist.*



The 13th Amendment abolishing slavery is certified by the Secretary of State.Library of Congress.

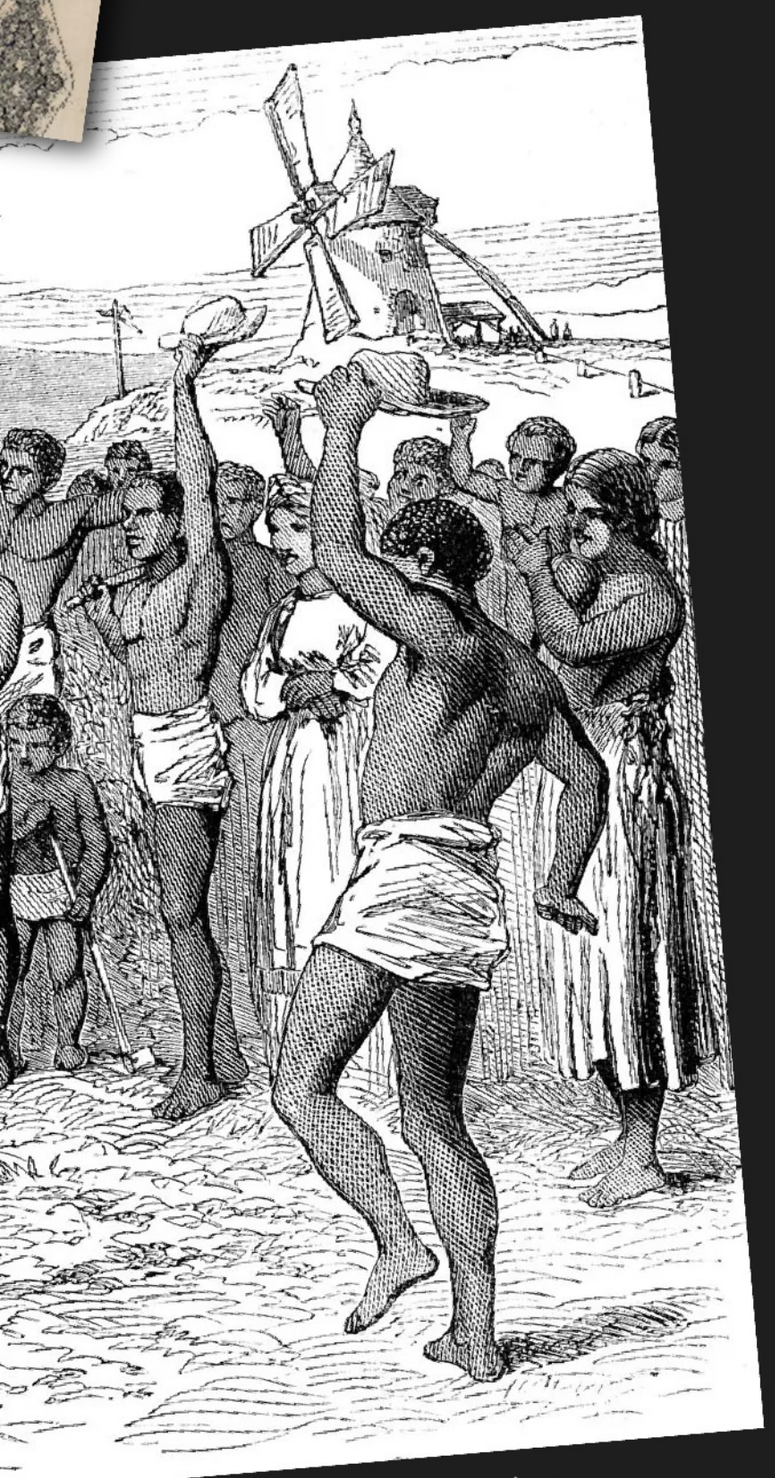
Enslaved people on a West Indian plantation being freed following passage of the

Sources: *W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880 (1935).*

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Palestinians vote to endorse a general strike proposed by the Arab Higher Committee calling for the end of Jewish immigration and land theft as well as the non-payment of taxes to the British administration in 1936.



Slavery Abolition Act. Britannica.

General Strike in Palestine (1936): Palestinians waged the longest general strike in history between April 19th and October 16th, 1936. Striking workers from Nablus to Jaffa united to demand an end to Zionist immigration and land grabs.

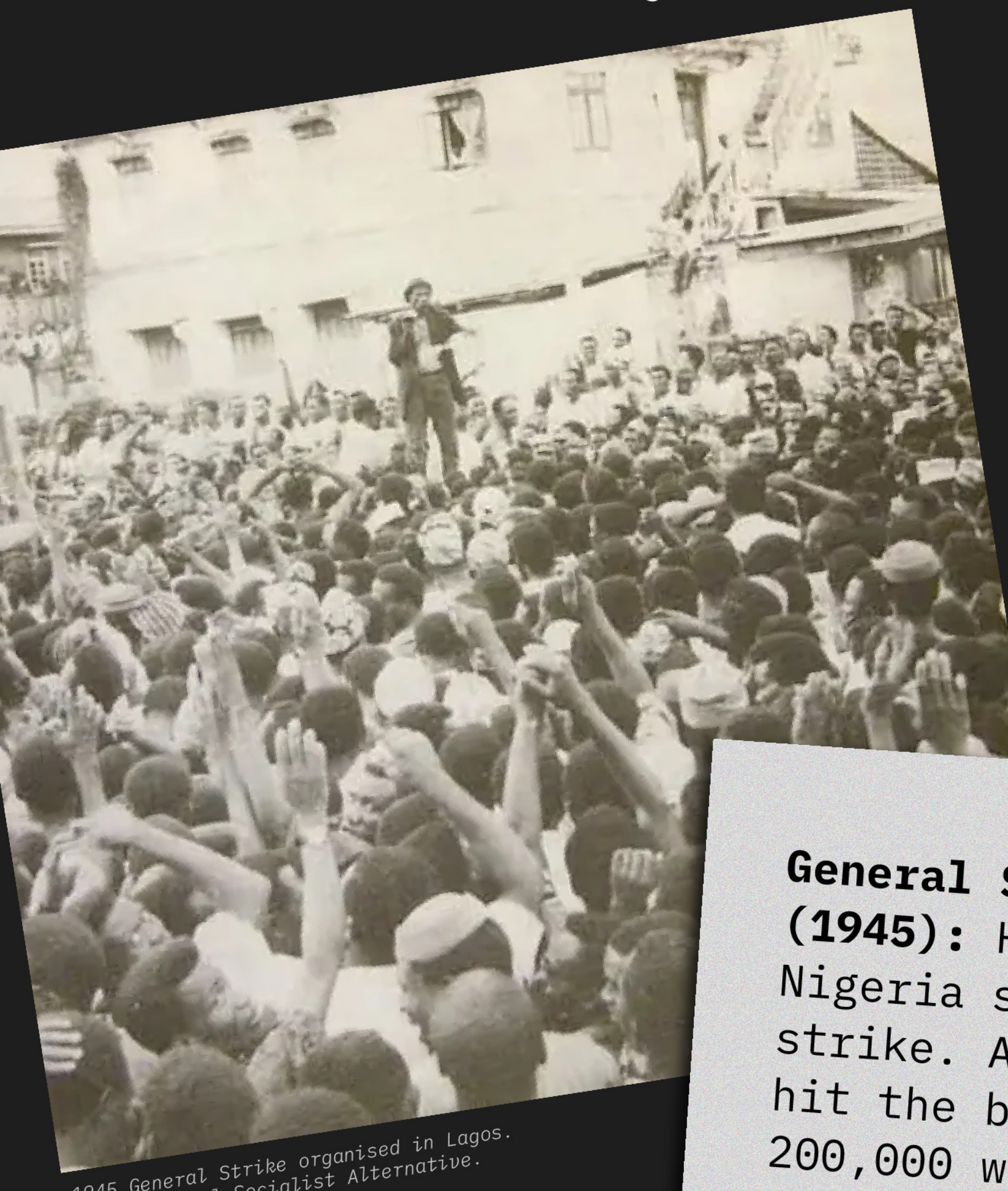
The general strike marked the beginning of the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt against British imperialism and Zionist settler colonialism. Although the revolt was ultimately crushed, in large part due to the treacherous leadership of Arab compradors*, it remains an important touchstone in the ongoing struggle against the Zionist entity.

***Note:** Compradors are a class of people who act as intermediaries between foreign capitalists and the local population of a country subject to imperialist domination.*

Source: *Beinin, Jacobin (2021).*

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1945 General Strike organised in Lagos. International Socialist Alternative.



General Strike in Nigeria (1945): Halfway through 1945, Nigeria saw its first general strike. After railroad workers hit the bricks in Lagos, some 200,000 workers (many of whom were women working in markets) followed and collectively shut down the economy for 45 days – shaking the ground under British colonialists' feet. Not only were workers granted higher wages, but the strike also "initiated the struggle" for Nigerian independence.

Sources: *Aminu-Ramatu Yusuf, Premium Times Nigeria (2024); Fidel, International Socialist Alternative (2022).*



CGT union demonstration at Place de la République in Paris on May 29, 1968. Fondation Gilles Caron.



Protests in May 1968. AP Photos.

May 1968 : On May 13th, France's two largest unions, the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) and the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT), marched in solidarity with the students of Sorbonne University, who were locked in escalating street battles with repressive police forces.

This sparked a wave of militant proletarian action, with workers across the country going on strike and occupying factories. The general strike peaked at the end of May, with CGT and the Communist Party of France opting for deliberation and concessions as opposed to sustained revolutionary struggle. May '68 remains the "largest wildcat* general strike in the history of capitalism."

***Note:** A wildcat strike is when unionised workers go on strike without the approval of union leadership.*

Source: *Strangler, The Nation (2018).*

Iceland’s Women’s Strike (1975): On October 24th, 90% of Icelandic women went on strike, refusing wage--labour, housework, and child care on what would be known as “Women’s Day Off.” As a result of the strike, telephone services halted, no newspapers were printed, schools and daycares mostly closed, and flights were cancelled.

The material disruption of society and the economy shed light on the injustice of unpaid care work as well as unfair gendered employment practices (e.g. gender pay gap). The strike generated a law guaranteeing equal rights the following year and paved the way for the election of Iceland’s first woman president in 1980.

Iceland Women’s Strike, 1975. BBC.

Source: *Rennebohm, Global Nonviolent Action Database (2009).*





Global Women's Strike, 2000. Capire.



Global Women's Strike (2000): On March 8th, the International Wages for Housework Campaign (IWHC) called for a Global Women's Strike in which people from over 60 countries protested against poverty, the gender pay gap, and other issues borne out of patriarchal capitalism.

The IWHC included organisations like Queer Strike, Black Women for Wages for Housework, and English Collective of Prostitutes, i.e. an intersectional front for queer, racial, gender, and labour rights. Although concrete outcomes are hard to pinpoint, the mass-international turnout for the strike is considered a historical turning point in the struggle against white supremacist, cis-heteropatriarchy.

Source: *Global Women's Strike (2021).*

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General Strike in India, 2016. Aljazeera.



General Strike in India (2016): An estimated 180 million public sector workers in India shut down factories, state-run banks, government offices, and public transport networks for 24 hours in protest of the government's economic policies.

Striking workers demanded a higher minimum wage, better social security, improved working rights for women, and affordable health care. Although the government refused to meet the people's demands, the strike was one of the biggest in history and cost the Indian economy an estimated $2.7 billion.

General Strike in Matamaros, Mexico (2019): In 2019, around 30,000 factory workers from different sectors went on strike, halting operations in 41 maquiladoras (factories) in the city for multiple weeks. Eventually, unions reached agreements for a pay raise on behalf of most striking workers.

Sources: *Safi, The Guardian (2016); Chattopadhyay & Marik, Jacobin (2016); Bengali, Los Angeles Times (2016); Mexico News Daily (2019).*

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Capitalism is driving genocide, war, and ecological breakdown. To slow its death drive, we must put our “heads together” and “as a class” revoke our labour-power from its machinery of destruction.

By hitting capital in the “hidden abode of production,” a general strike is one of the most effective ways that people can “compel” the ruling classes to make material concessions.

Sources: *Marx, Capital, Vol 1 (1867).*