

10 minutes intro to slogans

22 Feb 2022

## Slogan workshop – Student Union

### Introduction

In his 2016 essay 'What's in a slogan?', Jan Mieszkowski describes how Lukács, Lenin and Luxemburg recognise the way in which a slogan is not a substitute or a stand-in for a radical theory but **a way to galvanize and communicate a cause**. He says, *'slogans blur the very distinction between knowledge and action and are regarded as integral to the dynamic of necessity and freedom that is to drive radical praxis'*.

By declaring and embodying ideas for change we can create collective responses to urgent issues. In this one-hour session will work together to write a series of new slogans for the defend the arts campaign.

One of the ways that debate within a counter-public sphere leads to action is through political slogans. There is a history to be written of the slogan's descent from radical political agitation to advertising that would, no doubt, correspond to the trajectory of Jurgen Habermas' debasement of the public sphere. Still, the slogan has always been a potent element of the counter public sphere. Whether chanted during a march or printed onto handheld banners, slogans mobilize groups and ritualize their communal bonds by publicizing their common interests, motives and beliefs. From the banners carried by the French Revolutionary army (e.g. 'Live Free or Die'), to the slogans of the Suffragette movement (eg. 'Votes for Women'), the campaigning slogans used today (e.g. 'No Blood for Oil', 'Make Poverty History') and the urgent slogans used in the Black Lives Movement - Smash Racism, Black Lives Matter. Slogans call for individual action for collective goods. Slogans state collectively sanctioned actions, but in addition they are also performative acts that play a vital part in the formation and maintenance of protest and political action. a slogan needs collaborators to agree with it and then reuse it, say it, embody it and pass it on.

Slogans ask for things to change. It is a common misconception that slogans are authoritarian, illiberal and restrictive. Stokely Carmichael would have never used the

slogan 'Black is Beautiful' if he thought it simply stated a fact that we could understand without first changing ourselves and the world. The feminist slogan 'the Personal is Political', likewise, would only make sense once feminism had transformed our understanding of each of its keywords. If black is already (universally understood as) beautiful then we do not need the slogan 'Black is Beautiful', and if the personal is already (secured as) political then we do not need the slogan 'the Personal is Political'. Slogans do not describe the world they call up a new world to take its place.

Furthermore, The slogan is not an abbreviation of a complex idea for popular consumption but a speech act that galvanises the user (and the listener) of the motto into action with the intention for change. Simultaneously, it is an example of a complex use of language which utilizes collective memory, linguistic contradictions, time and context in order to create meaning. What's more it's an active tool for democracy helping us to publish our opinions and declare our hopes for change, ensuring our contribution toward shaping the material conditions in which we live.

### Examples of our work

We just thought we would share some examples of slogans or texts that we produced and embodied and published in the public realm, to demonstrate how we have written slogans

Statements are new facts about the context – revealing the hegemony / making an argument

Manifesto for political art

we appear in the work not as artist celebrity but artist publisher. This also mixes Text Art with Body Art, as well as scripto-visual photographic practices, the readymade or appropriation. Like in this work *Don't let the media have the monopoly on the freedom of speech*

Here the slogan is only readable when the three members of Freee are together and stood in the right order. So here we were also trying out the idea/ playing with the idea of collectivity – each individual playing a strong and vital part of the collective.

We are using our bodies to invade a space – so the response is an agonistic interruption – of course as white citizens we have a certain priviledges to invade space in this way