

# CRITICAL TIMES

## Interventions in Global Critical Theory

### CALL FOR PAPERS ON STRIKES AND CRITICAL THEORY

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Abstracts (400 words) are due on **October 15, 2020**, and those invited to submit full papers for peer review will have a **May 1, 2021** deadline for paper submission.

Articles should be approximately 10,000 words, including notes; shorter contributions should be 2,000–5,000 words, including notes. Inquiries and submissions should be sent to Susana Draper or Samera Esmeir at [CFPcriticaltimes@berkeley.edu](mailto:CFPcriticaltimes@berkeley.edu).

Modern labor strikes became a strategy of the working class with the onset of the industrial revolution, and they have been deployed since to both revolutionary and reformist ends. But much has changed in the practice of strikes since the period of their modern intertwinement with wage labor. Worldwide, there are many strikes today that betray novel logics and stage new political practices. In recent years, a transformation of the political and conceptual landscape of the word ‘strike’ has taken place; new strikes draw on and depart from the more traditional senses of the word, which has been historically linked to wage labor. In Latin America, recent feminist strikes have focused on questions of social reproduction, debt, unwaged labor, and gender violence. In the U.S. and France, immigrants and other racialized communities have organized strikes under the title “A Day Without Us.” In the Middle East and South Asia, there have been revolutionary strikes, but also hunger and prison strikes, as well as strikes for bread. Worldwide, youth and indigenous communities have organized around the idea of a global climate strike, and students have been striking against tuition hikes or for free education. Meanwhile, from East Asia to Africa, many forms of traditional labor strikes continue to take place. These various strikes have not necessarily belonged only to organizing on the left; some strikes are detached from any form of traditional progressive politics, and others are declared by state authorities in order to prevent public gatherings and protests. *The strike, in other words, has become an organizing concept for a range of distinct political actions in a changed world.*

This special issue of *Critical Times* aims to explore contemporary strike actions as they draw on and depart from the longer inheritance of political strikes or of proletarian or revolutionary general strikes (to deploy Georges Sorel’s and Walter Benjamin’s distinction). We invite submissions that aim to contribute to the

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critical theory of strikes by considering strike actions from different corners of the world that are not necessarily tied to wage labor. We particularly welcome philosophical/theoretical contributions that are also grounded in concrete strike practices and actions.

How is the proliferation of contemporary strikes to be apprehended? What kind of political practice do these strikes initiate? What work does the word “strike” continue to do today in different languages? And how do we explain the word’s use to describe an ever greater number of actions that were previously conceptualized otherwise? How does calling an action a strike inflect the action itself? If the industrial world that originally gave political meaning to strikes has been restructured by other capitalist logics, including neoliberalism, what are the experiences and horizons that give meaning to strikes, including traditional strikes, today? What political possibilities do new kinds of strikes offer in a world in which the political spaces of collective organization have been shrinking? What forms of life, injustice, and oppression do these strikes make legible? Are we witnessing a new formation of the strike, one that is the product of our times even as it continues to operate under a centuries-old organizing concept? Is the language of success or failure adequate to assess these contemporary actions, or do these strikes call for political vocabularies that move beyond the grammars of instrumental politics? Might contemporary strikes uncover both the limitations and the possibilities of previous strikes? Finally, how would a critical theory of our times reflect on this moment of strike-action? And what do contemporary strikes reveal about our particular historical-political juncture?

These are some of the questions that we would like to address in this special issue of *Critical Times*. We invite full-length scholarly essays as well as shorter contributions that report and reflect on particular strikes. We also invite shorter theoretical reflections on the status of strikes today.