

THE POWER
OF THE 1%
TO STOP
CORPORATE CAPTURE
& DEBT

You are about to embark on a journey that we hope will shed light on and inspire action to challenge two intertwined issues impacting the well-being and livelihoods of billions of people around the world while imperiling the planet. We invite you to learn about the global debt crisis and the phenomenon of corporate capture as a driving factor.

This story is the result of the shared analysis and collective action of ESCR-Net - International Network for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, a member-led network connecting over 300 social movements, Indigenous Peoples' groups, and human rights organizations and defenders from 76 countries. Since 2003, the Network has provided a space for members to connect their struggles across regions to address systemic challenges, including the harmful human rights impact of the global debt crisis and the increasing influence of corporations and economic elites in policy and other decision-making spaces.

Recognizing that to ignite change, we first must understand how the system works, what forces fuel it, and who is benefiting from it, 'The Power of the 99% to Stop Capture & Debt' serves as a political education tool to spur discussion and deepen understanding of the root causes of debt and its colonial legacies, the role of debt in imposing the dominant economic model globally, the actors involved, and its intersection with other issues such as the care and climate crises. Ultimately, this comic strives to inspire action to confront the models imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and private creditors, which prioritize creditors' profits and corporate interests at the expense of labor rights, environmental protection, democratic processes, and public spending to ensure human rights to healthcare, education, food and more.

We also aim to challenge the dominant narrative propagated by economic and financial elites, who use convoluted language to obscure the injustices within the

system. Therefore, above all, this is a story of possibilities and a reminder that united, we can stop corporate capture, cancel illegitimate and unsustainable debt, and advocate for transformative change.

Special thanks to our members from the Economic Policy Working Group and the Corporate Accountability Working Group for their important contributions to crafting this story. We also wish to acknowledge the immense efforts of our allies and the hundreds of organizations, Indigenous Peoples' and feminist groups, and social movements fighting to reclaim human rights and public interest in the face of the growing power of corporate and financial elites. They are building alliances and working together toward the change we aspire to see — a world where care for people and planet, solidarity, and substantive equality guide decisions and shape structures that ensure human rights for all.

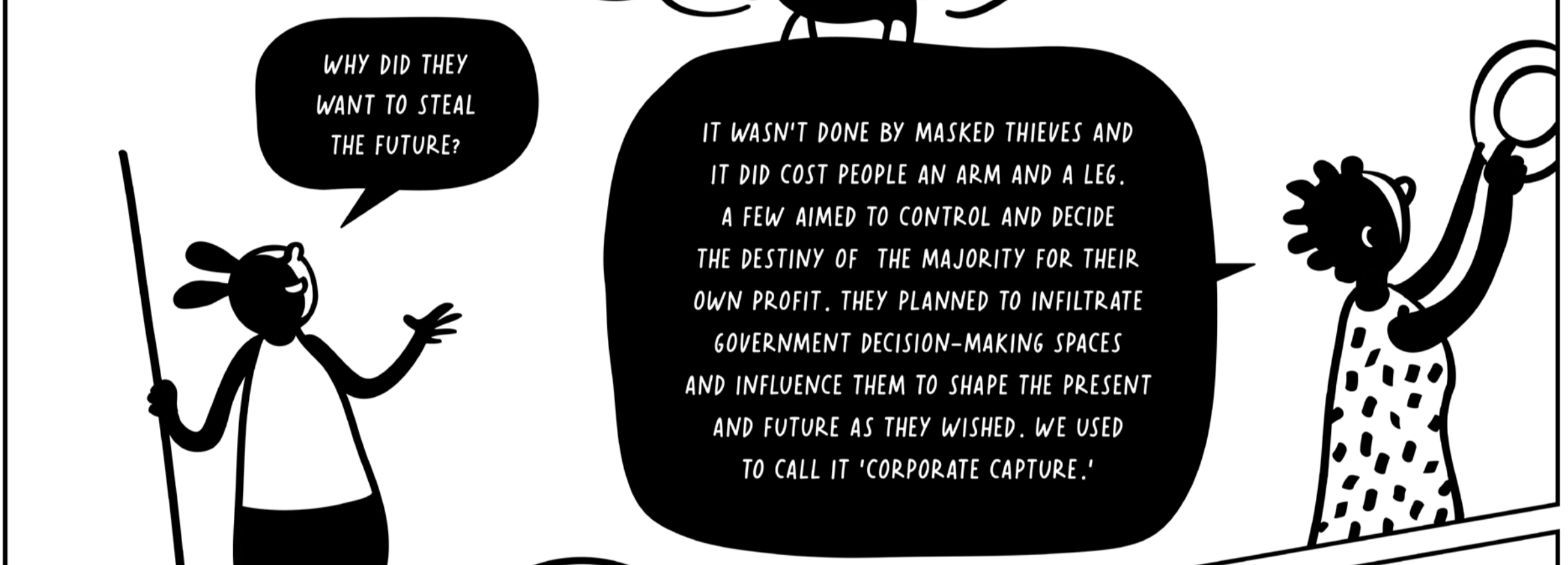
HARARE, ZIMBABWE 2035





THE ROBBERY STARTED BEFORE OUR TIME, THE TARGET WAS THE FUTURE OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WORLDWIDE.

GIVE ME YOUR FUTURE!



WHY DID THEY WANT TO STEAL THE FUTURE?

IT WASN'T DONE BY MASKED THIEVES AND IT DID COST PEOPLE AN ARM AND A LEG. A FEW AIMED TO CONTROL AND DECIDE THE DESTINY OF THE MAJORITY FOR THEIR OWN PROFIT. THEY PLANNED TO INFILTRATE GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING SPACES AND INFLUENCE THEM TO SHAPE THE PRESENT AND FUTURE AS THEY WISHED. WE USED TO CALL IT 'CORPORATE CAPTURE.'



CORPORATE CAPTURE

THE OTHER HALF IS DUE IN A MONTH.

BUT HOW COULD A FEW PEOPLE DO ALL THAT?



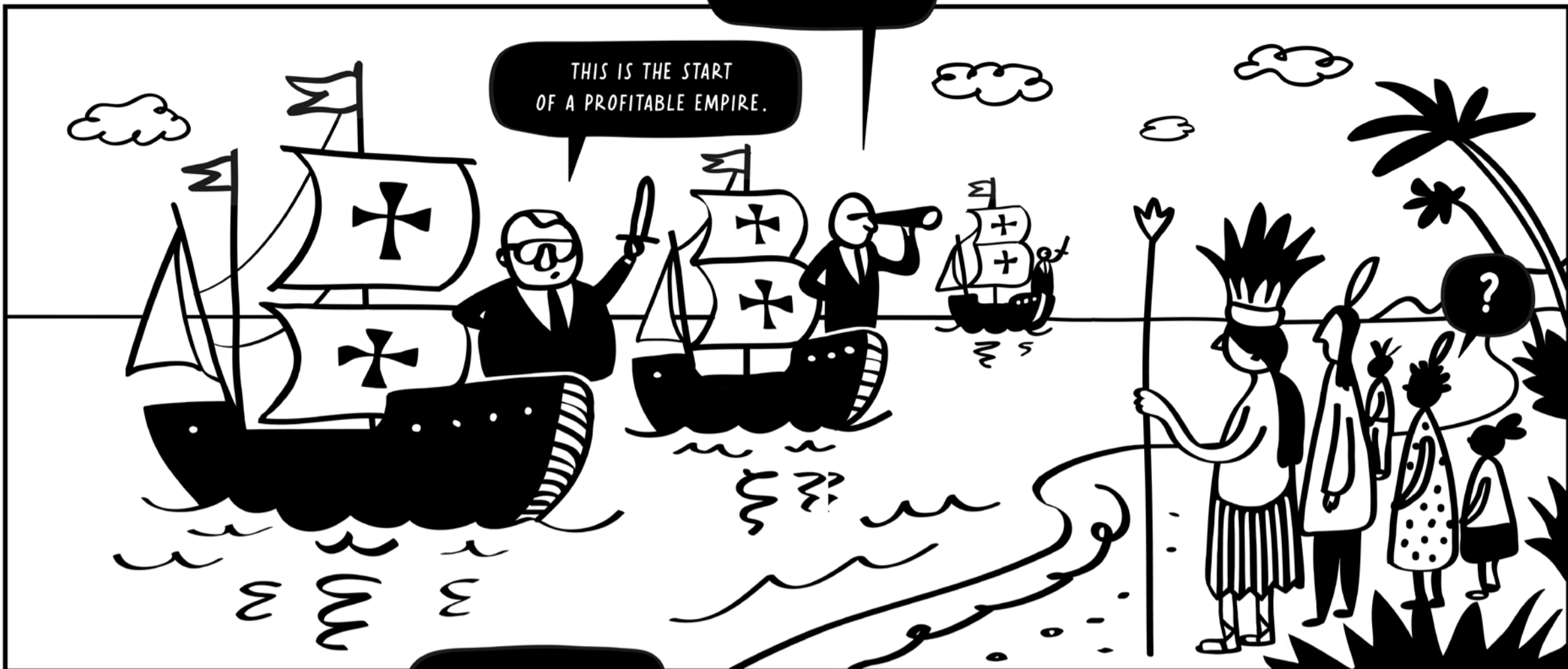
THEY HAD A POWERFUL WEAPON: DEBT, WHICH THEY COMBINED WITH CORPORATE CAPTURE. THIS DEADLY DUO HAD CATASTROPHIC, SOMETIMES EVEN FATAL EFFECTS ON THE LIVES OF MILLIONS AND THE PLANET AS A WHOLE.

LET'S GO WAY BACK IN TIME TO UNDERSTAND HOW THIS GLOBAL PLAN CAME TO BE.

LAND HO!

LAND HO!

THIS IS THE START OF A PROFITABLE EMPIRE.

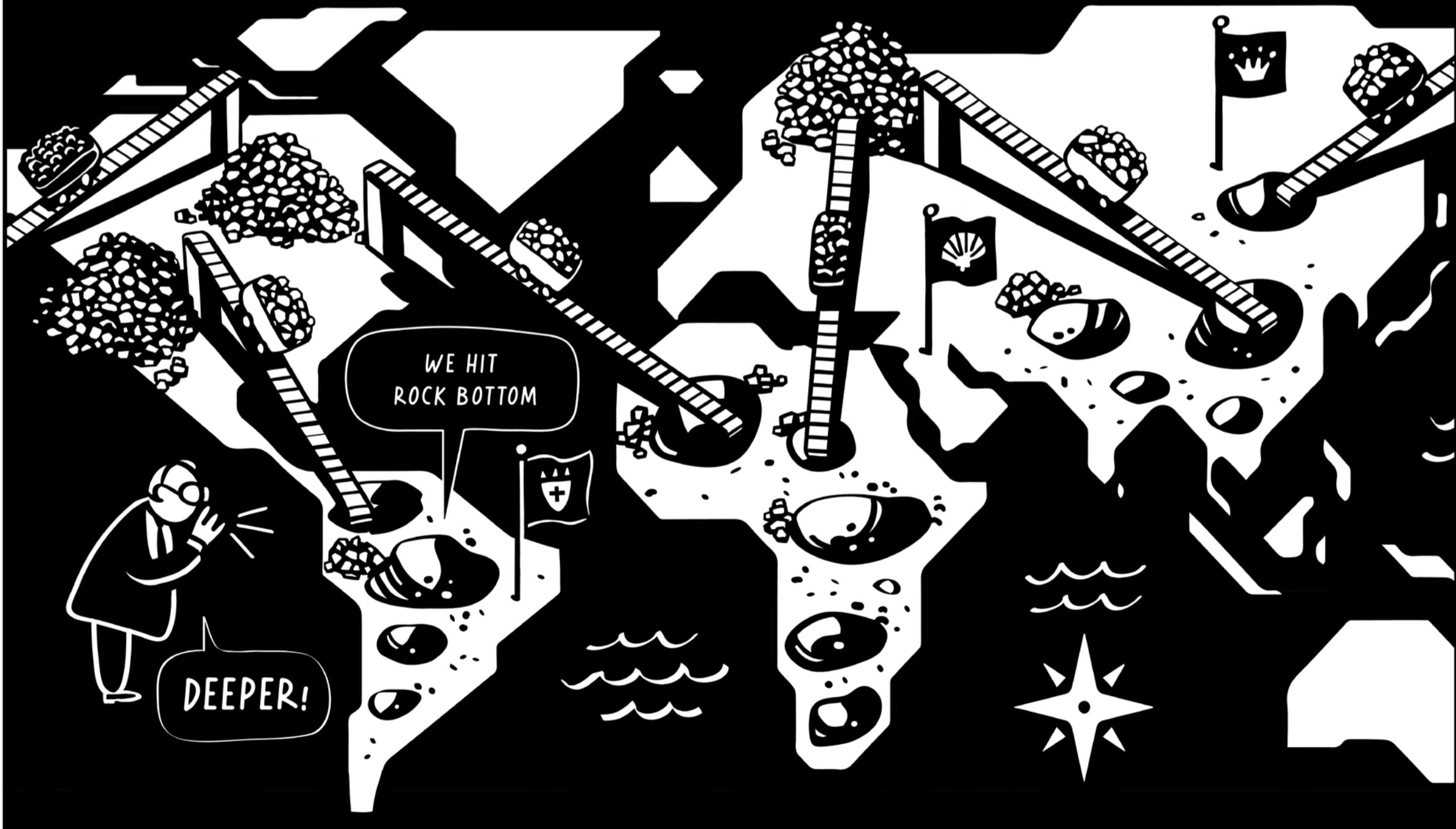


WELCOME

HEY, YOU OWE ME!

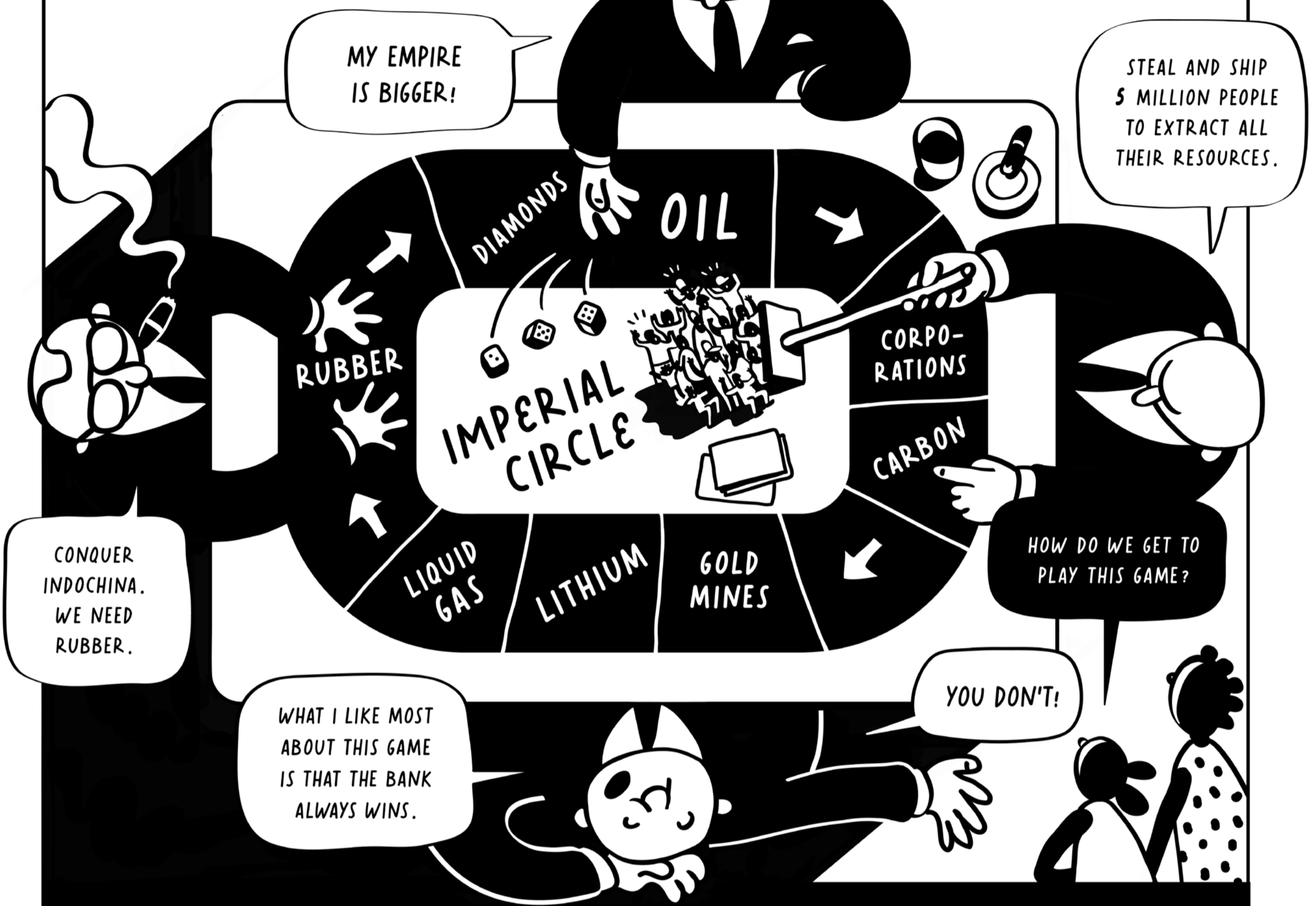


DURING THE COLONIAL ERA, EUROPEAN POWERS ESTABLISHED COLONIES TO EXTRACT RESOURCES SUCH AS MINERALS, SPICES, LAND AND CROPS. TO DO SO, THEY BROUGHT IN COMPANIES OR CREATED ONES THEMSELVES.



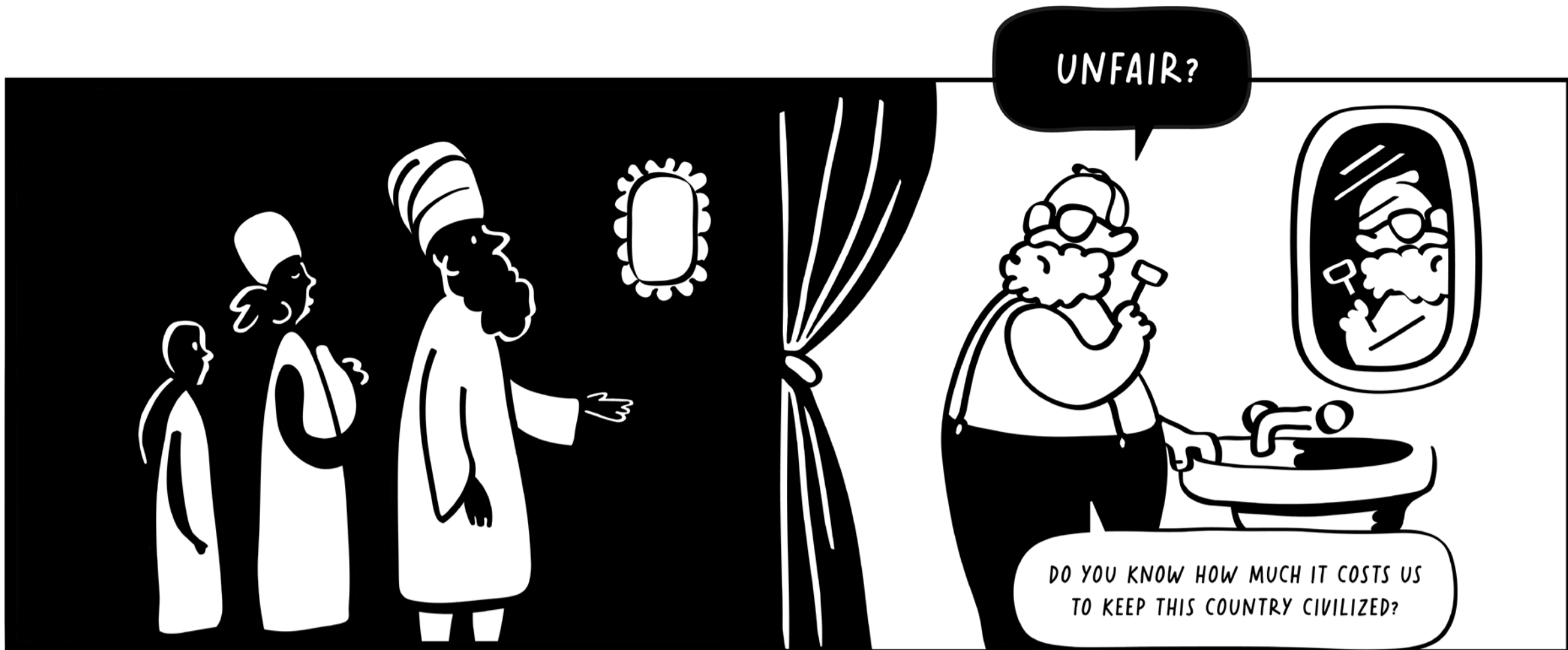
THE COLONIAL MODEL WAS BUILT ON THE DISPOSSESSION OF LAND AND RESOURCES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE FORCED LABOR OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN COLONIZED COUNTRIES.

THE MODEL LED TO ECONOMIC GROWTH IN EUROPE AND AN INCREASINGLY INFLUENTIAL FINANCIAL ELITE.



COLONIAL POWERS OFTEN FORCED COUNTRIES TO FINANCE THEIR OWN COLONIZATION BY BORROWING AT EXORBITANT INTEREST RATES. THEY USED FORCE AND SLAVERY TO GRADUALLY DISPOSSESS THE PEOPLE OF THEIR FUTURE.

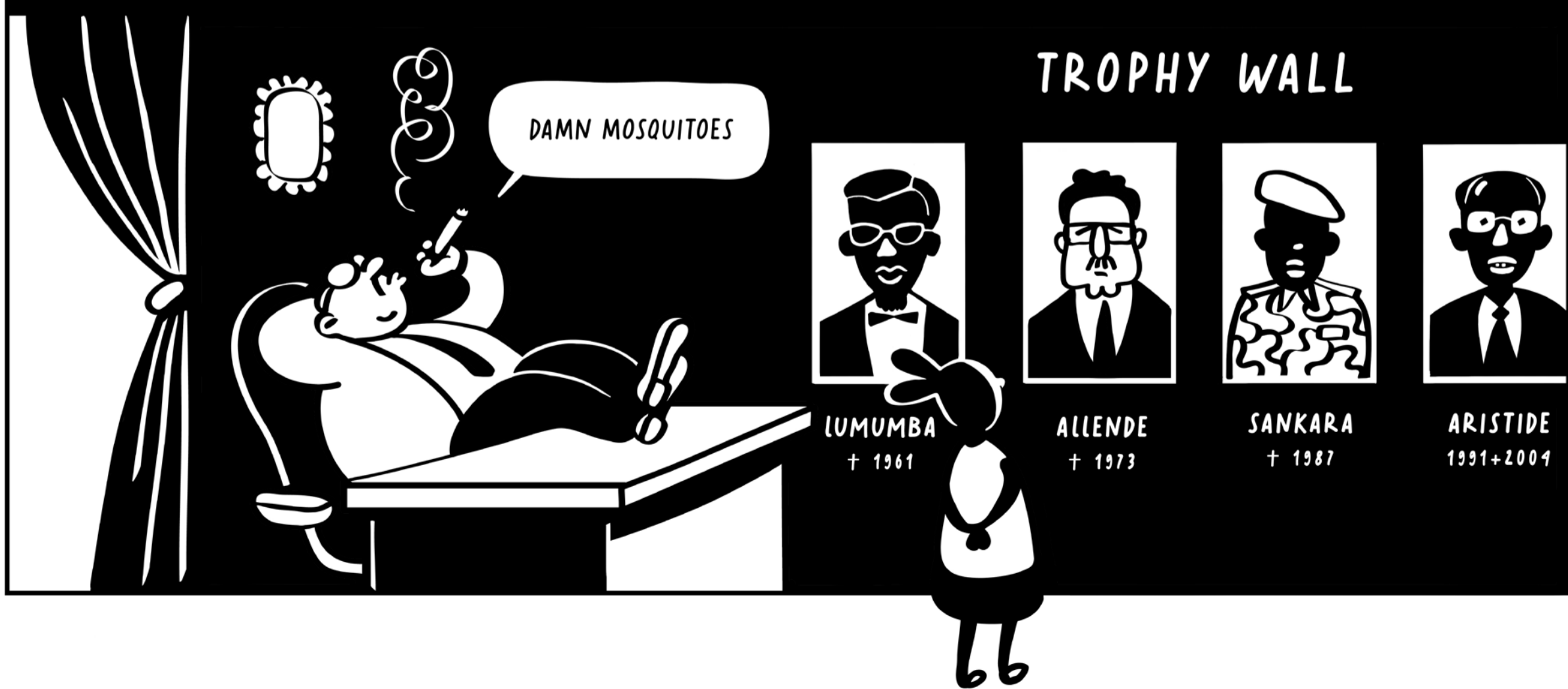




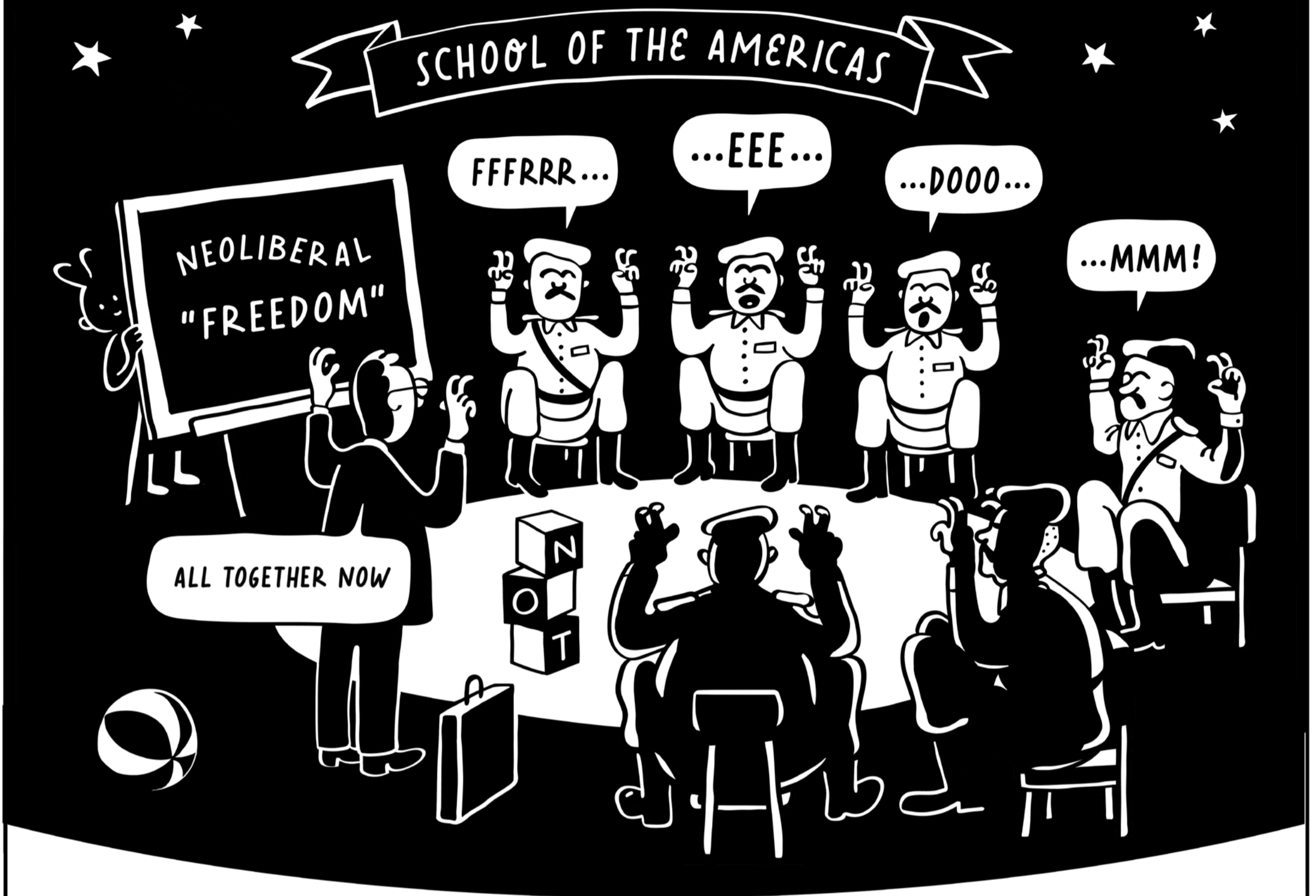
THIS DEBT CONTINUED EVEN AFTER MANY COUNTRIES FOUGHT FOR AND GAINED THEIR INDEPENDENCE. DEBT WAS ONE OF THE LEGACIES OF COLONIALISM THAT KEPT OUR COUNTRIES SUBJUGATED AND SINKING...



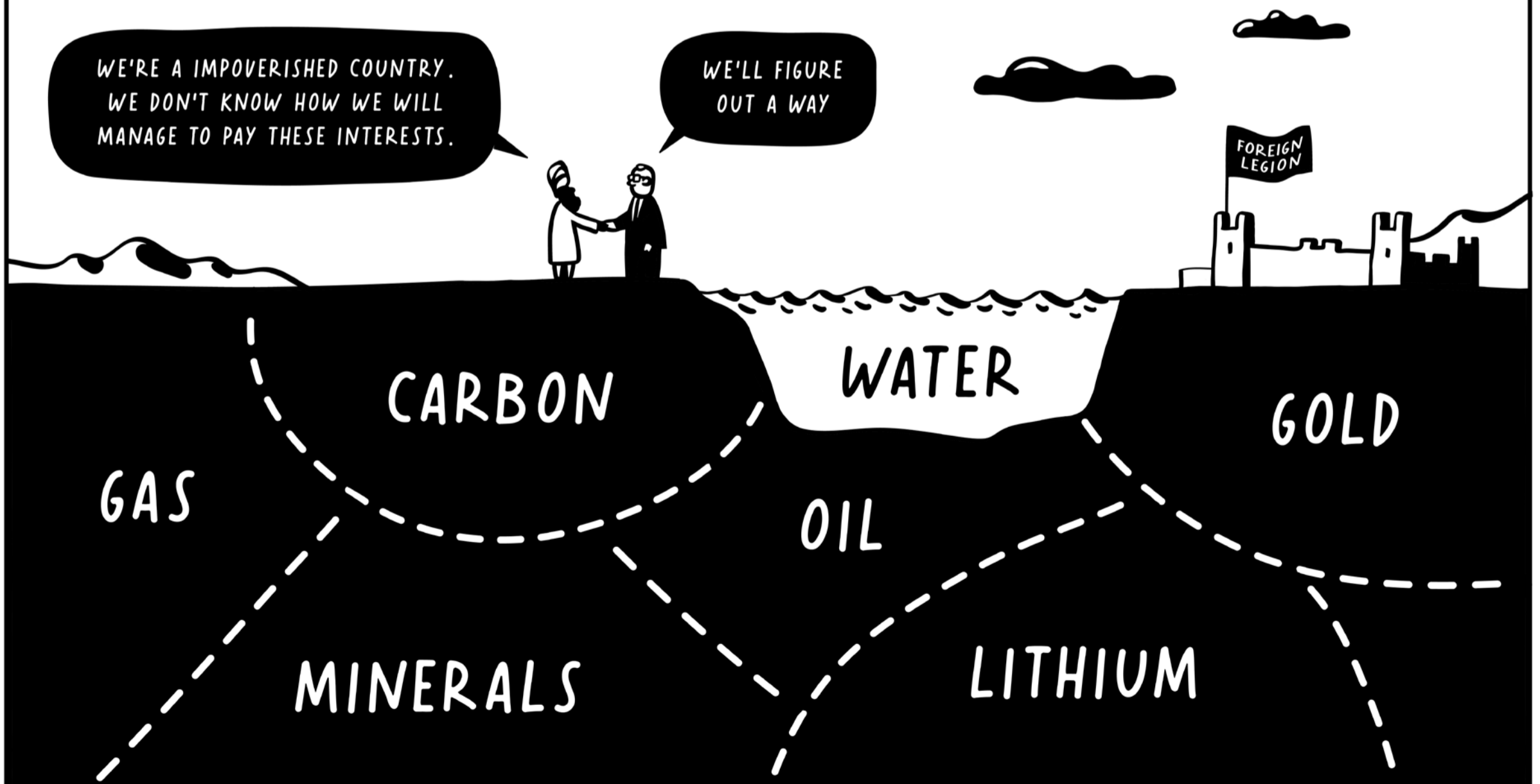
THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE DID NOT ALLOW THE END OF COLONIALISM TO MEAN THE END OF THE SYSTEM OF USURPATION. EVERY ATTEMPT TO PROMOTE UNITY AND SOLIDARITY AMONG COUNTRIES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH OR TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR OWN FUTURE WAS SEEN AS A THREAT TO CAPITALISM.



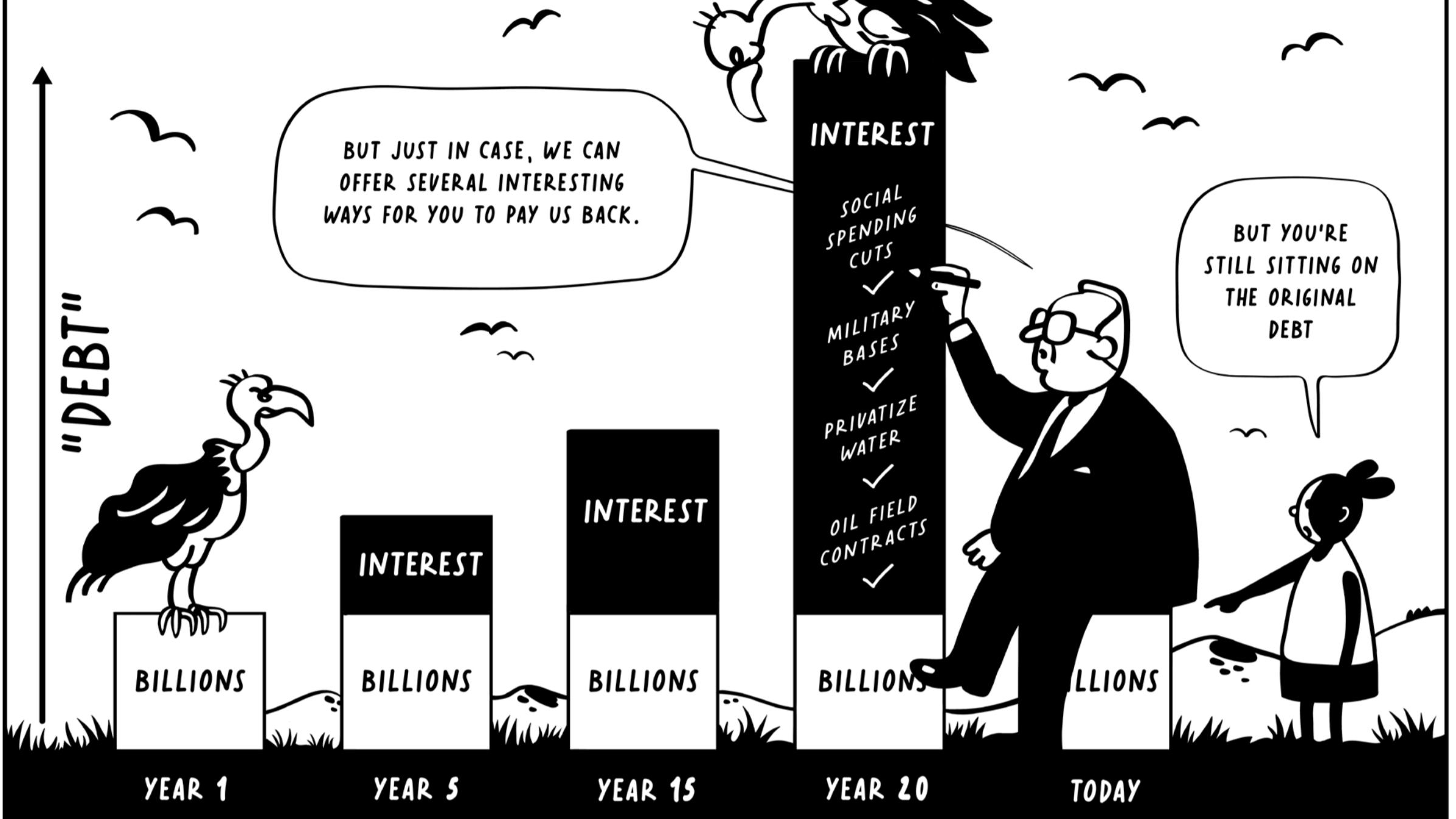
DURING THE GLOBAL RECESSION AND INFLATION OF THE 1970s, NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM BECAME THE VEHICLE TO BOOST CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL PROFITS.



DEBT AND DEBT CRISES WERE A STRATEGIC WEAPON TO IMPOSE THE NEW ECONOMIC MODEL ON COUNTRIES WITH LOWER INCOME WHO WERE ALREADY IMPOVERISHED BY THE COLONIAL PERIOD.



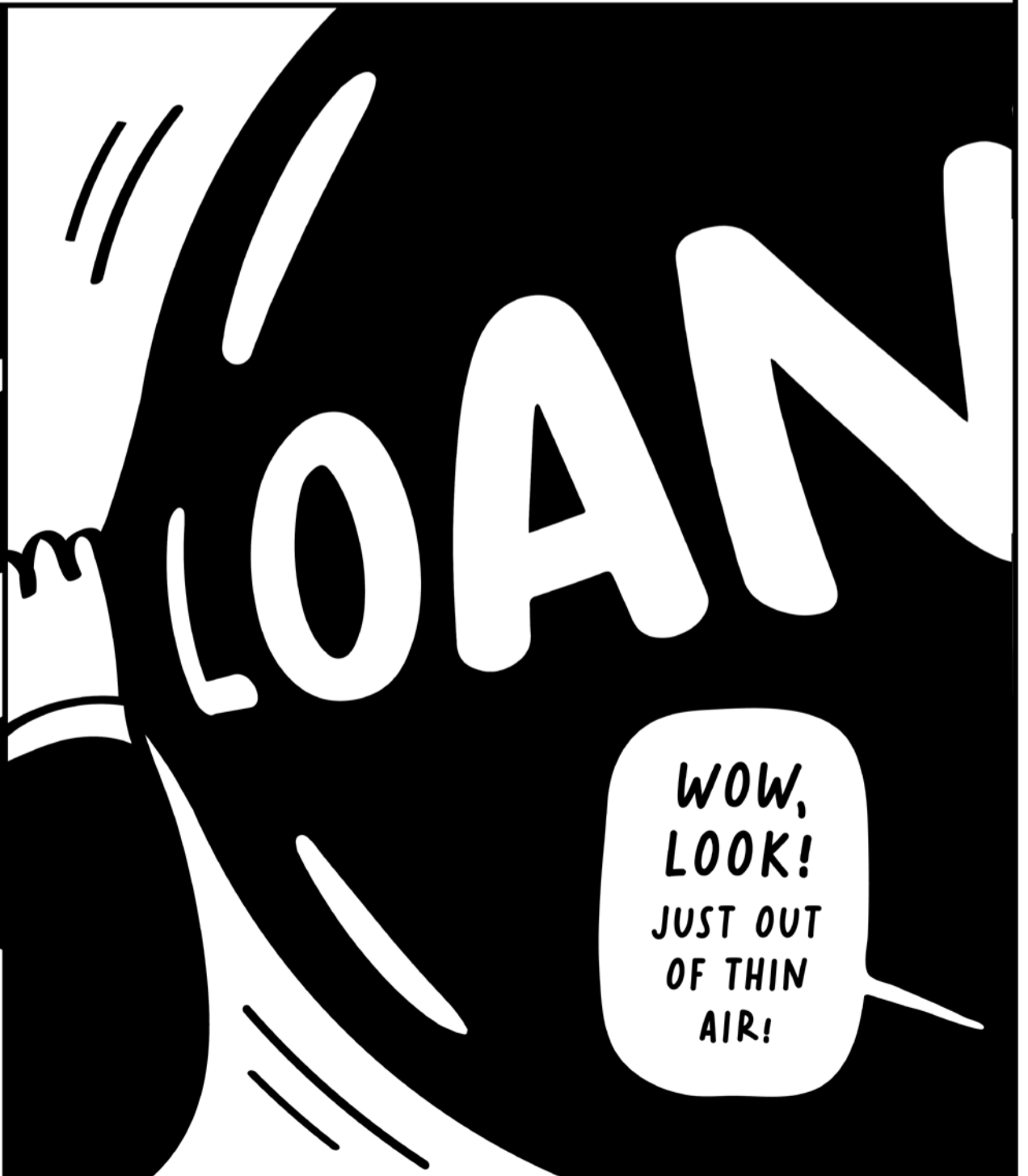
MANY COUNTRIES FELL INTO A CYCLE OF DEPENDENCY AND DEBT, WITH NEW LOANS TO SERVICE OLD LOANS AND WITH CONDITIONS THAT PRIORITIZED DEBT REPAYMENT. THIS MADE THEM ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO ECONOMIC, HEALTH, AND CLIMATE CRISES.



IN THE MEANTIME, THE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC ELITES GOT RICHER. THE SYSTEM OF USURPATION THROUGH DEBT ALLOWED THEM TO FUEL THEIR UNSUSTAINABLE MODEL OF GROWTH AND CONSUMPTION WHILE IMPERILING THE ENTIRE PLANET.

THE DEBT CRISIS WAS UNJUST AND ILLEGITIMATE. LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES WERE FORCED TO REPAY LOANS...

...INSTEAD OF INVESTING IN PUBLIC SERVICES FOR CITIZENS OR MEASURES TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE.



WOW, LOOK! JUST OUT OF THIN AIR!



TWO FOR ONE,
ONLY THIS WEEK!

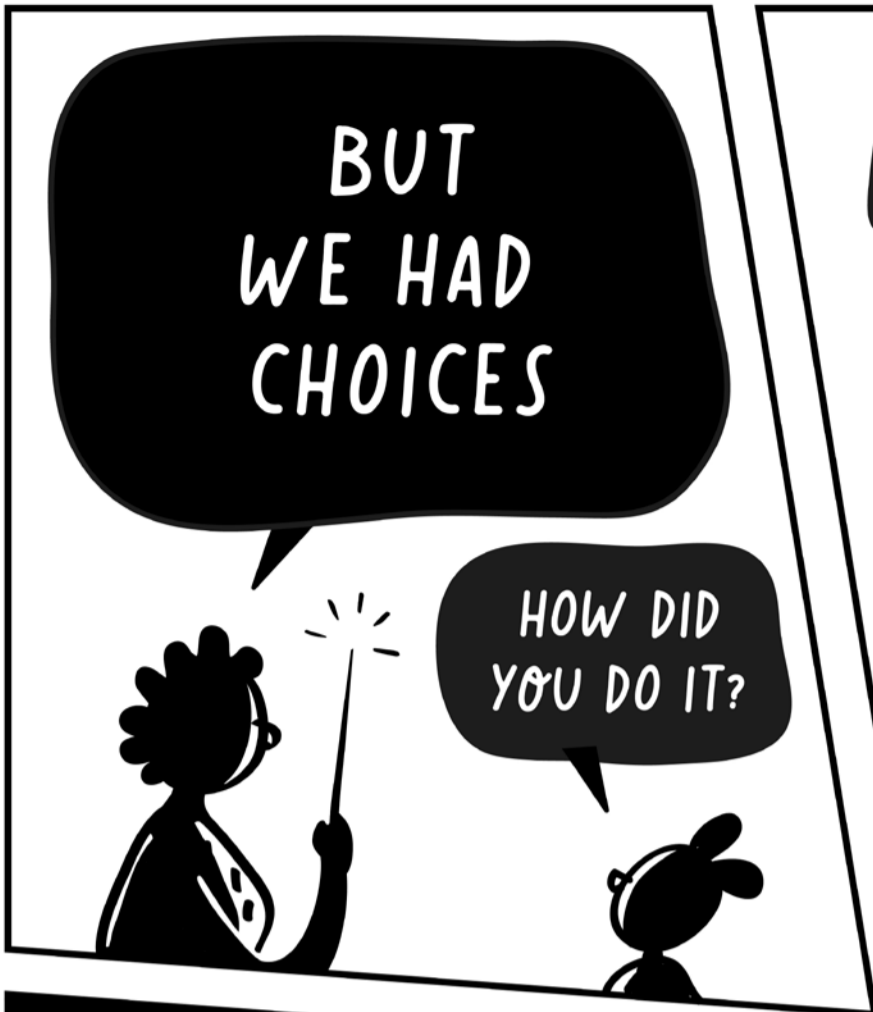


LIKE IN MANY
OTHER COUNTRIES, OUR
COMMUNITIES, ESPECIALLY
WOMEN, ENDURED
THE MOST CHALLENGING HARDSHIPS...

THE COST OF LIVING KEPT SOARING, AND
GOVERNMENTS HAD CUT PUBLIC PROVISIONS
FOR EDUCATION AND FOR CARE. AS WOMEN,
WE STRUGGLED TO TAKE CARE OF
OUR FAMILIES, AND WE HAD
NO CHOICE BUT TO TURN TO PRIVATE LENDERS
FOR CREDIT...

NOT ONLY WERE OUR COUNTRIES
BURDENED WITH DEBT,
BUT WE ALSO FOUND OURSELVES
TRAPPED IN THE
CYCLE OF INDEBTEDNESS.





BUT WE HAD CHOICES

HOW DID YOU DO IT?



WE SAID NO!

POFF

LOAN

?



WE REVEALED THAT THEY WERE THE ONES WHO ACTUALLY OWED US

WE EXPOSED THE CORRUPT SYSTEM AND THE IMPUNITY

UNITED WE COULD MAKE DEMANDS

WE PRIDED OURSELVES ON OUR IDENTITIES

WE SAID ENOUGH OF THROWING ONE AGAINST THE OTHER

COLLECTIVELY, WE STARTED TO FIGHT BACK

WE HAVE CHOICES!

CANCEL THE DEBT!

POFF

POFF

POFF

WHAT THE ELITES SHOULD HAVE COUNTED ON WAS THE PEOPLE AND THEIR POWER TO ORGANIZE TO SHAPE THEIR OWN FUTURE.



PEOPLE
AND THE
PLANET
OVER
PROFIT

PAY
FOR
CLIMATE
CHANGE

NO TO
HARMFUL
CONDITIONALITIES

NO TO
AUSTERITY
MEASURES

NO
TO ILLEGITIMATE
DEBTS

ENSURE DEBT
TRANSPARENCY &
ACCOUNTABILITY

FUEL
HUMAN
RIGHTS,
NOT
FOSSIL
FUELS

CANCEL
THE
DEBT

STOP
CORPORATE
CAPTURE

CENTER CARE
IN ECONOMIES
& SOCIETIES

LOCALLY, NATIONALLY, AND INTERNATIONALLY, THE CALLS FOR DEBT CANCELLATION AND AN END TO CORPORATE CAPTURE GREW INTO A GLOBAL MOVEMENT THAT DEMANDED GOVERNMENTS GIVE US OUR FUTURE BACK.



IT WAS A LONG AND DIFFICULT STRUGGLE, BUT WITH MUCH EFFORT, WE GOT THE DEBT CANCELED, AND GOVERNMENTS BEGAN PRIORITIZING HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE PLANET OVER PROFIT.



AND PEOPLE WERE HOPEFUL AGAIN...

...BUT WE NEED
TO STAY VIGILANT
BECAUSE CORPORATE
CAPTURE ALWAYS
HAS ITS WAYS.





“The Power of the 99% to Stop Corporate Capture and Debt” is the third issue of the comic series launched by ESCR-Net to popularize the phenomenon of corporate capture of government institutions and decision-making. Visit our website for more episodes about the corporate capture of the United Nations and the corporate capture of healthcare systems.

CLAIM OUR FUTURE

If you believe the future belongs to the people and not to economic and financial elites, scan this code to send a message to the International Monetary Fund to #CancelDebt.

<https://escr-net.ink/canceldebt>





ESCR-Net

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