

POLITICS

These Remixed WWII-Style Election Posters: What Are They Saying?

By David A. Graham

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Jeff Gates uses powerful images from the past to convey a political message about present-day political gridlock.



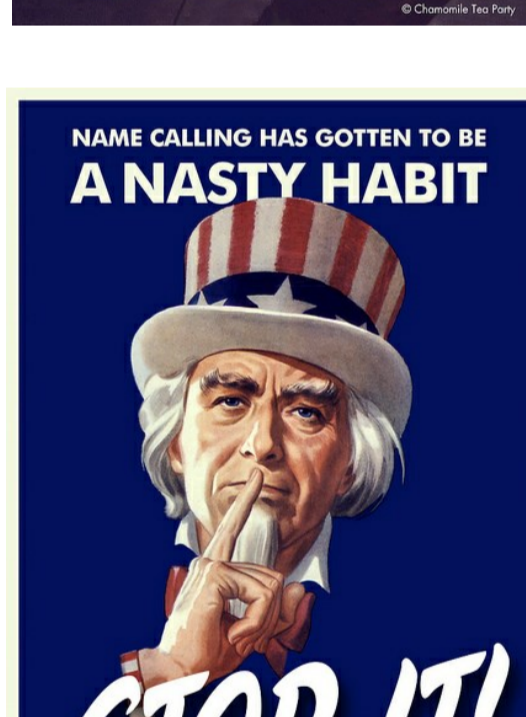
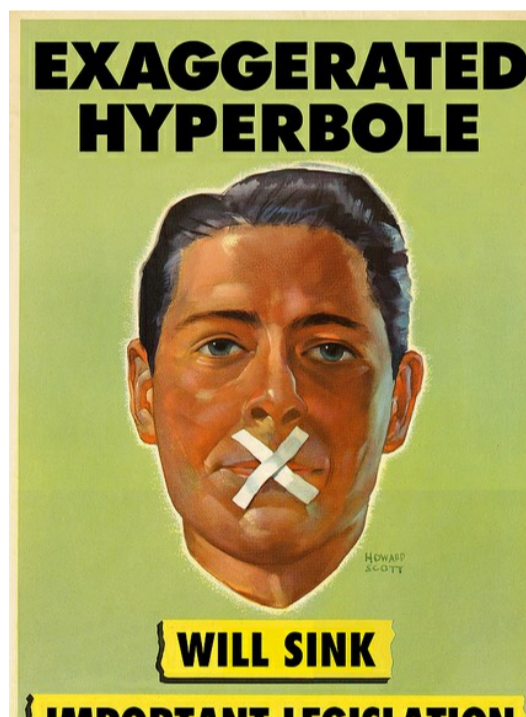
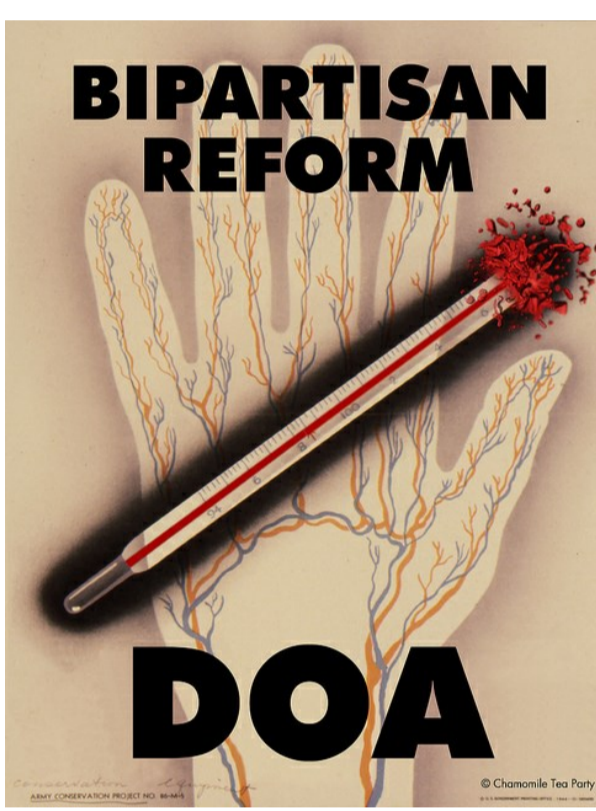
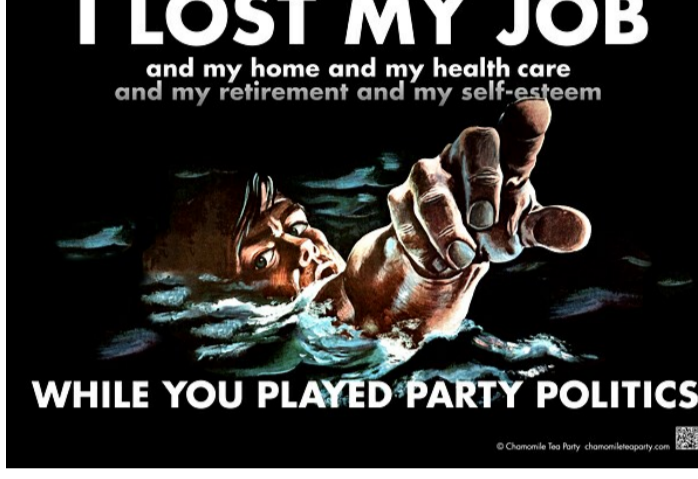
Jeff Gates

If you live in Washington, D.C., you may have noticed a few somewhat menacing, intriguing posters in Metro stations over the last few weeks -- images with a retro vibe and a scolding message for politicians of both parties.

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The cryptic posters are by Jeff Gates, a graphic designer who founded the "Chamomile Tea Party" two years ago to push back on polarization in the age of the Tea Party and paid \$3,400 through his non-profit, Art FBI (Artists for a Better Image), for the Metro advertising space. Gates based the posters on World War II-era propaganda posters, some of them quite familiar. (His day job is at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.) In some cases, the original watermarks and labels are visible on the new versions. You can see the full set here, but here are a few of our favorites.

As messaging, these posters are undeniably powerful. But what do they say about the state of our politics? Since Gates conceived them as a response to the Tea Party, he has focused on moderation in the "pox on both your houses" genre, and mostly avoided partisanship. There are a few exceptions. One takes on the Republican Party's frequent deployment of the filibuster during the Obama presidency; another criticizes conservative pundits (Beck, Hannity, *et al*). But as James Fallows has asked out repeatedly, is false equivalence really a legitimate critique of what's wrong with present-day American politics?



David A. Graham is a staff writer at *The Atlantic*.