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This meme showcases the power and wealth disparity between the working class and the wealthy in the United States, using the COVID pandemic as a lens. Before the COVID pandemic, working-class people asked for an increase in the minimum wage and a “living wage” – the bare minimum necessary to keep people out of poverty. In 2022, job openings are at an all-time high, with companies begging people to apply for jobs. However, although the balance of power has shifted, many corporations have a tone-deaf reaction. Instead of raising wages, they say that people “do not want to work.”

Within the meme, the anchorage is within the titles given to each group, “corporations” and “labor force.” These words were chosen carefully, “corporations” signifies “Capitalism,” those who are wealthy and in power. “Labor force” signifies the working class, those with retail and customer-facing jobs most affected during the COVID pandemic. For the imagery, the symbolic choice of Caesar, an iconic leader from history, conveys to the audience the wealth and power disparity between the two groups shown in the image. In the first panel, the wealthy capitalists are in full power, whereas the common people are now in control in the second panel.

The audience for this meme is anyone who considers themselves part of the working class. This meme is especially impactful with younger workers in entry-level jobs, such as college-age students.

There are a few codes used within this meme. The phrase “living wage” is a commonly used term in politics to describe the reforms needed in the labor market to ensure businesses are providing at least a bare minimum wage required by their employees to survive. “2% raise” is

about the standard yearly wage increase given by many companies, which often does not keep pace with annual inflation.

However, the most important code is in the years given at the top – 2020 and 2022.

Although not explicitly stated, those who have lived (and worked) through these years understand the impact of the COVID pandemic and the recent fundamental shift in labor relations in the country.

2020



2022

