



## WORKS

### **Why I Am An Anarchist** **Benjamin Zephaniah** *(2019)*

I got political after I suffered my first racist attack at the age of seven. I didn't understand any political theory, I just knew that I had been wronged, and I knew there was another way. A few years later, when I was fifteen a marked police car pulled up to me as I walked in Birmingham in the early hours of the morning, three cops got out of the car, they pushed me into a shop doorway, then they beat me up. They got back into their car, and drove off as if nothing had happened. I had read nothing about policing policy, or anything on so-called law and order, I just knew I had been wronged. When I got my first job as a painter, I had read nothing on the theory of working class struggles or how the rich exploited the poor, but when my boss turned up every other day in a different supercar, and we were risking our lives up ladders and breathing in toxic fumes, I just knew I had been wronged.

I grew up (like most people around me) believing Anarchism meant everyone just going crazy, and the end of everything. I am very dyslexic so I often have to use a spellchecker or a dictionary to make sure I've written words correctly. I was hearing words like Socialism and Communism all the time, but even the Socialists and Communists that I came across tended to dismiss Anarchists as either a fringe group, who they always blamed if there was trouble on demonstrations, or dreamers. Even now, I just checked a spellchecker and it describes Anarchism as chaos, lawlessness, mayhem, and disorder. I like the disorder thing, but for the 'average' person, disorder does mean chaos, lawlessness, and mayhem. The very things they're told to fear the most.

The greatest thing I've ever done for myself is to learn how to think for myself. I began to do that at an early age, but it's really difficult to do that when there are things around you all the time telling you how to think. Capitalism is seductive. It limits your imagination, and then tells you that you should feel free because you have choices, but your choices are limited to the products they put before you, or the limits of your now limited imagination. I remember visiting São Paulo many years ago when it introduced its Clean City Law. The mayor didn't suddenly become an Anarchist, but he did realise that the continuous and ubiquitous marketing people

