



Strategy #10 – Change through Street Demonstrations Listening Guide

Street demonstrations are public displays meant to consolidate popular support around common grievances and convey demands to existing power structures. Such protests are an important form of mass expression because they often draw media coverage, demonstrate strength and give energy to movements for change. These are the voices of people who sought to promote change through street demonstrations. Please review the quotations and answer the questions below.

	Sopo Chakeureli, Georgia	Renato Reyes, Philippines	Mehdi Barhoumi, Tunisia
What issues motivated the people to hold a public demonstration?			
Who was involved in the demonstrations?			
What consequences resulted from the actions?			

For further discussion:

In what ways were these experiences similar?

In what ways were these experiences different?

Why is it important for demonstrators to have a shared sense of purpose and an organized plan?

Identify three countries in which street demonstrations have taken place in the past year.

Change through Street Demonstrations Quotations

Sopo Chakeureli, Georgia

A: It was the first and last time when I saw Georgians that united. After that, I have not seen that Georgians' opinions coinciding that way. The rallies were attended by various kinds of people. We treated each other differently. It was raining; people were standing under umbrellas and cellophane; they cared for us girls; they said to come under their umbrellas. There was no tension felt, and people were warm to each other.

Q: As far as I remember, there were police cordons.

A: Almost all the time, and there was no aggression toward them because we believed that they would join us; they were Georgians. And it happened so.

Q: There were so many irritated people with their problems. You too were there because your generation lacked much. I always wonder why there was no tension.

A: We were not irritated by each other. Our irritation and protest were directed against the government. We were in one and the same pot because we all were affected by that difficult period. We did not feel irritation toward the police because it affected them as well; they too went through it.

Q: Yes, but that was the corrupt police who used to stop you in the street and would take money from you.

A: Why would they? Because they did not receive normal salaries to sustain their families, like other employed people. Everything was up to the government, and any irritation was associated with them.

Q: Were there any obstacles in the relationships? There were different people, differing levels of education. Was it difficult to relate with them?

A: No, it was not difficult as far as we had one and the same demands and one and the same ideas, and thus, it was not difficult.

Background: Widespread protests in Georgia in November 2003, known as the Rose Revolution, led to a change in government.

Renato Reyes, Philippines

If protests were a waste of time and have no use, then we wouldn't be here in the first place. Most likely we would still be under a dictatorial regime, under martial law. Staging protest actions are important and that has been proven in schools, in factories. When people organize they are able to fight for a wage increase, stop tuition fee increases, push for the rollback of oil prices, stop the increase in electricity rates, impeach Merceditas Gutierrez [a discredited public official], overthrow a president who doesn't serve the interests of the nation. All those are the result of mass actions. If people do not act, then the oppression and the wrongs of the system will just go on.

Mehdi Barhoumi, Tunisia

I think to have the chance to be part of this revolution, this great and amazing revolution, as an activist – it is one of my life dreams, to see this authoritarian regime, this Ben-Ali regime collapse in front of your eyes. I was in on the 14th of January, the day when Ben-Ali escaped the country. I was in front of the Internal Ministry with 200,000 people saying that Ben-Ali – it's over, and we'll not return to our homes if Ben-Ali stays in power. And I thought when I come back home this day, and when I see in the media that Ben-Ali escaped the country, I think that was very amazing and very – I can't find the word that explain really what I feeling at this moment. It was one of my life's dreams because, you know, you see lots of people suffer from an authoritarian regime. You are seeking your freedom, and you are threatened and you are tortured as a people, and you succeed – to win, and to make what you dream a reality. It's a very important thing and very – it's a huge feeling that I think of to this day.