

## Protests Alone Are Not a Movement



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It is hard to work for economic justice within the system when corporate-financed elections and a corporate-dominated legislative process make such reforms impossible. As a result, millions of Americans are recognizing that the system is the problem, and thousands are now taking to the streets. With inequality in the United States reaching Third World proportions, the biggest surprise may be that it has taken this long.

With protesters ranging from scruffy young anarchists to mainstream labor, the Wall Street protests harken back to May of 1968, when demonstrations across France nearly brought down the Fifth Republic. More recent decades have witnessed largely nonviolent civil insurrections bringing down autocratic regimes from the Philippines to Poland, from Chile to Serbia, from Mali to Nepal, and more recently in Tunisia and Egypt. Meanwhile, popular struggles for water rights in Bolivia, land rights in India, and labor rights in Wisconsin have met with varying degrees of success.

Nevertheless, whether targeted at dictators or corporate greed, protests alone — however impressive in their numbers or disruptive in effect — do not make a movement. The revolutionary pretensions of a youthful counter-culture aside, Occupy Wall Street must become genuinely representative of the vast majority of Americans now struggling as a result of inordinate corporate power and political influence, reflecting also the legitimate aspirations of small business owners, small farmers, and working families of the poor and middle-class majority whose voices in the established political process are too often drowned out by powerful corporate interests.

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Successful movements focus on developing a well-thought-out strategy, clearly articulated political demands, a logical sequencing of tactics, well-trained and disciplined activists, and a recognition that colorful protests are no substitute for door-to-door organizing among real people.

While this outbreak of popular protests is a positive and inspirational beginning, being right isn't enough, especially when you are up against the powers of Wall Street.

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**Dr. Stephen Zunes op-ed published in the New York Times, October 7, 2011**

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