

We live in an age of protest. On campuses and public squares, on streets and social media, protesters around the world are challenging the status quo. Protest can thrust issues onto the national or global agenda, it can force out tyrants, it can activate people who have long been on the sidelines of civic life. While protest is often necessary, is it sufficient?

Consider the Arab Spring. All across the Middle East, citizen protesters were able to topple dictators. Afterwards, though, the vacuum was too often filled by the most militant and violent. Protest can generate lasting positive change when it's followed by an equally passionate effort to mobilize voters, to cast ballots, to understand government, and to make it more inclusive. So here are three core strategies for peacefully turning awareness into action and protest into durable political power: first, expand the frame of the possible; second, choose a defining fight; and third, find an early win.

Let's start with expanding the frame of the possible. How often have you heard in response to a policy idea, "That's just never going to happen"? When you hear someone say that, they're trying to define the boundaries of your civic imagination. The powerful citizen works to push those boundaries outward, to ask what if - what if it were possible? What if enough forms of power - people power, ideas, money, social norms - were aligned to make it happen? Simply asking that question and not taking as given all the givens of conventional politics is the first step in converting protest to power. But this requires concreteness about what it would look like to have, say, a radically smaller national government, or, by contrast, a big single-payer healthcare system, a way to hold corporations accountable for their misdeeds, or, instead, a way to free them from onerous regulations. This brings us to the second strategy, choosing a defining fight. All politics is about contrasts. Few of us think about civic life in the abstract. We think about things in relief compared to something else. Powerful citizens set the terms of that contrast. This doesn't mean being uncivil. It simply means thinking about a debate you want to have on your terms over an issue that captures the essence of the change you want. This is what the activists pushing for a \$15 minimum wage in the U.S. have done. They don't pretend that \$15 by itself can fix inequality, but with this ambitious and contentious goal, which they achieved first in Seattle and then beyond, they have forced a bigger debate about economic justice and prosperity. They've expanded the frame of the possible, strategy one, and created a sharp emblematic contrast, strategy two. The third key strategy, then, is to seek and achieve an early win. An early win, even if it's not as ambitious as the ultimate goal, creates momentum, which changes what people think is possible. The solidarity movement, which organized workers in Cold War Poland emerged just this way, first, with local shipyard strikes in 1980 that forced concessions, then, over the next decade, a nationwide effort that ultimately helped topple Poland's communist government. Getting early wins sets in motion a positive feedback loop, a

contagion, a belief, a motivation. It requires pressuring policymakers, using the media to change narrative, making arguments in public, persuading skeptical neighbors one by one by one.

None of this is as sexy as a protest, but this is the history of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, of Indian Independence, of Czech self-determination. Not the single sudden triumph, but the long, slow slog. You don't have to be anyone special to be part of this grind, to expand the frame of the possible, to pick a defining fight, or to secure an early win. You just have to be a participant and to live like a citizen. The spirit of protest is powerful. So is showing up after the protest. You can be the co-creator of what comes next.