

# Interfering Bodies

## Political Protesters in Philippine Streets

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*Dominant protest theories assume a homogenous rational actor pursuing political objectives and focus on the structural environment that surrounds protests, and neglect the protesting body. I consider the body as an articulated articulate agent and study the bodies of protesters as they struggle for emancipatory politics on the street. I look at how street protesters use their bodies as instruments of political propaganda by physically interfering in the street, and how this corporeal experience of marching shoulder to shoulder in turn strengthens their politics. I analyze how the organization and formations of street protests preserve and strengthen the recalcitrant collectivity of protesting bodies. I then focus on the line of bodily engagement, the composite team and study how its members use their bodies to assert their politics and minimize the physical risk as they defensively engage hostile bodies. By focusing on the protesting body, the process of collective formation and the development of political consciousness that emanate from the continuous reflection of the shared corporeal protest experience and marginality are recognized. This dialectical link between corporeal experience and political consciousness through the body allows for a political agency characterized by difference and dynamism unified by a shared experience.*

Studies on protests generally overlook the growing theoretical developments on the sociology of the body. Dominant protest theories assume a rational actor pursuing political objectives and focus on the enabling and constraining structural environment that surrounds protests. These presuppose a unitary and homogenous agent and neglect the development of protesting body in the struggling against marginalization and poverty.

This paper looks at the bodies of Filipino protesters as struggle for emancipatory politics on the street. I consider the body as an articulated articulate agent, and look at how the street protesters use their bodies as instruments of political propaganda by physically interfering in the street and how their corporeal experience of marching shoulder to shoulder in turn strengthens their politics. I analyze how the organization and formations of street protests preserve and strengthen the recalcitrant collectivity as protesting bodies conquer the street. I then look at the line of bodily engagement, the composite team, and study how its members use their bodies to assert their politics and minimize the physical risk as they defensively engage hostile bodies. I ask the following questions: What are these bodies doing on the street? Why do they move in unity with other bodies of different attributes and persuasions? How does this corporeal experience of marching shoulder to shoulder affect their individual politics? What does this collective motion signify and achieve? How is their movement as bodies en masse on the street coordinated? How does this shared movement affect their recalcitrant sociality? How do they engage other bodies – friendly and hostile?

The power of political interference of street protests inspires a central reading of the protesting body. Protester's bodies act as shields against political repression and instruments for political propaganda. Political interference in the streets requires a complex and democratic protest organization and administration designed to coordinate the movement of bodies en masse, and preserve and strengthen the

collective. This collective occupation of the street in turn affects protester's physicality and politics.

I argue that by focusing on the protesting body the process of collective formation and the development of political consciousness that emanate from the continuous reflection of the shared corporeal protest experience and marginality are recognized. The dialectical link between corporeal experience and political consciousness through the body allows for a political agency characterized by difference and dynamism unified by a shared experience.

This paper hopes to contribute to the growing literature on bodies as agents of social and political contestation in particular and to protest and social movements in general. It also aims to contribute to the dearth of literature on Philippine street protests.

Methodologically, it is a product of key informant interviews and conversations (*pakikipagkuwentuhan*) with seasoned Filipino protesters and their leaders, and years of participant observation in street protests. Most of the protesters interviewed had more than three decades of protesting on the street and are associated with the Kilusang Mayo Uno (May 1 Movement - KMU) and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (New Patriotic Alliance - BAYAN).<sup>1</sup> These methods are apt to unearth the long process of the development of political agency of protesters. Given the current severe human rights violations and the concern for personal security, only a researcher who is viewed as being at least sympathetic to their cause may employ these methods. In my personal experience, the protest marches I have joined sharpened my political unity with the basic masses, better understanding their plight and struggle, and the need for more protest marches. The pictures which are snapped from documentary (Lakbayan 2008) describe the long protest march towards Manila of workers from Southern Tagalog as they struggled for labor rights against three multinational companies Nestle Phils., Inc., Hanjin Garments, Inc., and Toyota Motor Phils. Corp. and the violent

dispersal they suffered in front of the Department of Labor and Employment in 2008.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: BODY AND POLITICS IN STREETS PROTESTS**

Classic theories view protests as spontaneous and irrational actions of a mass, similar to that of a mob (Le Bon, 1977; Blumer, 1939). Participants' bodies are carried by the passion of the crowd, and in the heat of the moment become instruments of the mob. Protests are the product of bodily emotions over which there is little control. Bodies are denied rationality and thought (Foster, 2003; Sasson-Levy & Rapoport, 2003). Such spontaneous events are considered inefficient and necessarily lead to the conclusion that the proper state response is to crush the irrational mob with police and military force to reinstitute rationality in the public arena (McPhail, Schweingruber, & McCarthy, 1998).

Subsequent scholarship recognized the rational political objectives of protests based on participant's position and interests (Olson, 1965; Mcveigh & Sikkink 2001). Relative deprivation in economic and political power of the protesters was initially regarded as the driving force for protest action (Gurr, 1971). The structural environment influenced by the state and social institutions was later recognized to affect protest movements. Opportunities afforded by the state (Tarrow 1994), and the level of resources and organization (McCarthy & Zald 1973; Olson 1965; Gamson 1975) influence the sustainability and efficiency of protests. These view protest actions from a predetermined interest, calculated on whether a particular action has gains or losses given the structural constraints and opportunities. This focus on structures that contextualize protests "privilege mechanistic explanations" (Sasson-Levy and Rapoport 2003) and reduce "protests as a calculated pursuit of narrowly defined interests" (Foster, 2003, p. 396). The protester simply acts out a script and the body is a mere political instrument. The intentionality of the actors is paramount

(Foster, 2003). If subscribing thus to the same political advocacy, protesting agents are attributed substantial unity and homogeneity (Melucci, 1995). In contrast to classic protest theories, these latter paradigms inverse the dichotomy. Rationality is denied its body.

While these two frameworks helped create an understanding of protest movements, at both the socio-psychological and structural levels, both dichotomize body and thought, corporeality and rationality. This dichotomy is reflective of the “Western body mind dualism that divided human experience into body and cognitive realms” (Sasson-Levy and Rapoport 2003, p. 381) and with its presumption of the primacy of rationality as the engine of modernity and development, which resulted to the neglect of the body.

A shift in thinking recognized the assertion of alternative cultural identity and symbolic forms as protest objectives (Melucci, 1985; Offe, 1985) embodied by the body<sup>2</sup>. Cultural theorists argue that by using symbols drawn from private everyday, protests movements articulate alternative identities and thus challenge dominant discourses on social behaviour and cultural configurations (Eder, 1993; Westwood & Radcliffe, 1993). The presence of ‘private’ bodies in public is protest in itself (Sasson-Levy & Rapoport 2003; Waylen, 1996). This projection of alternative cultural identities was later recognized as an effective means of political propaganda and mobilization (Gamson, 1992).

More recent studies pushed the conceptual synthesis of the mind and the biological body by looking at the body as a “site of cultural contest, a flexible signifier of identities and meanings, and an anchor of political knowledge and action” (Sasson-Levy & Rapoport, 2003). Social constructionists constitute the body within the intersection of discourse, social structures and corporeality (Foster, 2003). Discourses are produced and reproduced only through the body. The body is no longer an object of social control and discipline, it is capable of agency and resistance despite the imposition of governmentality (Foucault, 1980; McNay, 1994). Bodily practices embody the social

values and dominant discourse, but also reflect social subversiveness and agential empowerment (Davis, 1997). The body is an articulated articulating agent.

By considering the embodied subject as an emergent, causally consequent phenomenon, corporeal realists recognized the temporal development of agency. The consciousness of the body is continuously transformed by the constant reflection of corporeal experiences which affect future actions.

Thus, the dialectical interaction of thought and action, rationality and corporeality, through the body is significant in understanding protests. Protesters do not simply act out a pre-conceived political script. Protest experiences are reflected upon and become bases for future political engagement, strengthening political positions and strategies. Within this frame, protesting agents are accorded difference and the shared corporeal experience figures in their political consciousness. Protesters are of different persuasions and histories, but the shared bodily movement and experience affect their collective political actions. Indeed, the observed unity in movement of protesting bodies "is actually the result of multiple processes, of different orientations, of the constructive dynamic which the actors bring about. . ." (Melucci, 1995, p. 110).

Sasson-Levy and Rapoport (2003) argue that this "'repositioning' of the body is critical for an understanding of social movements . . ." (p. 382). This recognition inspired studies that look at the corporeal experience of protesting bodies and their interaction with one another, and how this is constantly reflected upon and used as a basis of reformulation and rearticulation of alternative discourses (Foster, 2003; Sasson-Levy & Rapoport, 2003). In looking at three historical non-violent protests in the US, Foster (2003) observed that as bodies move in protest, they assume a "perceptive and responsive physicality that, everywhere along the way, deciphers the social and then choreographs an imagined alternative. As they fathom injustice, organize to protest,

craft a tactic, and engage in action, these bodies read what is happening and articulate their imaginative rebuttal” (p. 412).

Tactics and modes of engagement of protesters are thus not solely dictated by political objectives. Individuals protest with constructed meanings of these actions, and change their mode of engagement, and strengthen their politics by meaningful consideration of their corporeal experience during protests. Past bodily experiences are seriously taken into account. Even as tactics and strategies of engagement are carefully laid out in planning, these change during protests as protesters intelligently read other bodies – those of other protesters, spectators and state agents. Assessments reveal weaknesses and strengthen future political actions. As social movement theorist Jasper (1997) argued, “Tactics, are rarely, if ever, neutral means about which protestors do not care.” (237).

### **Without the street there is no city**

Protest movements take on new features within contemporary history – the occupation of a public space and the involvement of two or more social groups in the collective action against the state. The marginalized collectivity engages in a “temporary but highly visible blockage of public space” including but not limited to a “factory, school, post office or prefecture” (Tilly, 1988, p. 14).

In the modern capitalist city, streets are among the most important public spaces<sup>3</sup> and thus ideal for protests. The critical importance of streets lies in their function as course ways for transport and as spaces for public legitimation via community rituals and traditions. Streets serve as contemporary rivers in modern civilizations where goods and services, people, resources, waste, travel usually to and from a place of origin and the production and consumption site. As spaces for tradition and ritual performances, streets are spaces of power - power to represent and define public legitimacy. Occupation of the street legitimizes. People’s passage exposes them to the streets’ workings and spectacles. As goods and people travel, they in turn bring along with

them culture and discourses to and from their social origins and destinations, supplying information to the spectators. Spectators and travelers observe and influence one another on the street. As Kostof (2005) observed, "The only legitimacy of the street is as a public space. Without it there is no city. . ." (p. 194). Control of the street is critical to control the urban city.

For protesters thus, the street is a battlefield (Lees, 1997) where "subversive forces, forces of rupture, lucid forces act and meet". "Revolutions entail a taking to the streets" where the marginalized can become visible to assert their legitimate claims. And that "the revolutionary contingent attains its ideal form not in the place of production, but in the street..." (Virilio, 1977, p. 3).

### **Streets and protests**

By constituting the street as a critical public space and a site of action and engagement, and recognizing the protesting body as an articulated articulate agent, street protests acquire serious political significance both at the structural and individual levels. A street protest is, as Eula (2006) said, "*isang statement na gumagalaw* [a moving political statement]." As the mass of bodies move, a protester "... for a moment stops being a cog in the technical machine and itself becomes a motor... in other words a *producer of speed*" (Virilio, 1977, p. 3) for propaganda and political action. Protests are statements for political movement addressed to spectators in stasis. They encourage spectators who have grievance with the state to empathize, support, and participate in protests. By offering alternative information and discourses, street protests challenge the state representation and reveal the marginalization of the masses. As civil rights activist Rustin (1976) brilliantly observed, "For protests to succeed, it must produce a feeling of moving ahead; it must force people to take notice of injustice; and it must win new allies" (p. 42).

By showcasing the power of the collective, Reyes (2006) claims that protest actions act as "protective instruments for the creation of a

strong mass movement for social change.” In dealing with protest groups, state actors are forced to take cognizance of their capacity to interrupt the capitalist urban space. The mobility of street protests affords participants the capacity to directly engage and implicate institutions and personalities, and demand transparent, accountable and responsive policies promoting the welfare of the marginalized (Reyes, 2006). Without protests, people will simply rely on the state and state-recognized institutions (Zamosc, 2006) or through individual action permitted by the state, for social change. Through the power of political interference, the democratic space for the struggle of the marginalized is vigilantly maintained and persuasively expanded.

### **Interfering bodies**

The political efficiency of street protests lie in the ability of protesters to physically conquer the speed of the state and occupy the street. Conquer here is not used solely to mean faster, but also the ability to constrain the movement of the state, that is to be slower, to slow down the state, and claim even for a moment critical social space. Occupation of the street obstructs the transport function of the street



**Figure 1. Interfering bodies.** Protesting workers from Nestle Phils. Inc., Hanjin Garments Inc., and Toyota Motor Phils. Corp., multinational companies located in Southern Tagalog, create heavy traffic in their long march (lakbayan) towards Manila to struggle for their labor rights.

and interferes with the normal grinding of the urban capitalist machine compelling the state and spectators to listen to the protesters politics (Piven & Cloward, 1977). This power of political interference emanates from the protester's collective bodily movement. At a time when bodies gather en masse in capitalist production and consumption spaces, the presence of bodies in the street unsubscribing to state spatial regulation is protest in itself.

The use of bodies reminds spectators and the state of protesters' powerlessness, and of their power. Deprived of property, the marginalized classes use their bodies that the capitalist machine requires to continue its grinding as tool of resistance. The very body upon which everyday domination is imposed serves as an instrument of liberation and empowerment. In contrast to protests in the first world where protesters use their vehicles and produce to block the streets<sup>4</sup>, the marginalized of the third world cannot afford to use their limited property, if any, to congest the street. Rather they have to rely on their bodies, risk physical assault and arrest, to protest. Where capitalism has pushed the poor peasants and workers to dispossession except for their bodies and their labor power, the unified movement of bodies in the articulation of an alternative discourse on social justice is a serious political achievement.

As protesting bodies move and occupy the street, protesters strengthen their politics. Protesting individuals are of different orientations, histories and capabilities. Exposure to protest actions and its leaders enhances individual participant's skill and practical knowledge in political organizing and mobilization. Protesters share challenges, experiences, and practical knowledge in political work. They tell stories of sacrifices and successes that inspire greater involvement in protests.

By moving shoulder to shoulder, protesters see and feel that their suffering encompasses the broad masses and recognize the national and class character of their shared oppression. Through their collective



**Figures 2 & 3. Exhausted bodies.** Workers rest below an overpass after a long day's march. During these times they share personal stories of struggle.

movement, street protesters realize and demonstrate their capacity to challenge the state's legitimacy and power. Moving with other protesting bodies is empowering. During protests a "collective connectivity . . . is achieved among protesting bodies" (Foster, 2003, p. 397). If as Tarrows (1994) underscored social movements are "collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (p. 4), protest actions strengthens this solidarity.

The successful physical occupation of the street involves the unified action of hundreds to thousands of bodies. This necessitates strategies of bodily coordination – requiring individual discipline and commitment to protest advocacies, and a complex organization and democratic administration of protesting bodies. Gusfield (1970) emphasized that the difference between protests and an angry crowd or a sporadic demonstration is the level of organization and knowledge. It is the organization that turns individual dissent into collective action. To ensure the long-term sustainability of protests, an organizational structure and a division of labor must be institutionalized. The considerations of street protesters in their action are vast, and an administrative structure is necessary to guide the moving mass. Amidst the presence of hostile state agents, coordination of a huge number of protesting bodies demands an efficient almost militaristic structure of decision-making. The physical movements of protests must be drawn



**Figure 4. Signs of Interference.** As worker protesters march, they leave marks of their political struggle. The graffiti when finished reads 'AFP-PNP Berdugo' to condemn forced disappearances of worker and peasant leaders in Southern Tagalog.

and calculated. There is however one major difference relative to the military. Decision making in protest movements, and social movements in general have a democratic character. The process of organizing and actual conduct of a street protest is ideally consensual, and is founded on political participation and empowerment. While the extent of democratic processes is balanced with the immediate imperatives of the preservation of bodies, it is nonetheless democratic<sup>5</sup>.

An organization implies that the presence of a regularized method for carrying out protest action toward some political objective – a practical knowledge system based on accumulated experiences of protesters. The hierarchy of authority and the division of labor are based on the recognition of individual leadership capacities learned and honed in protests. The formations and conduct of rallies reflect the extensive political knowledge generated from the continuous reflection of the protest movement.

Indeed, for protesters “stasis is death,” as Virilio (1977, p. 13) exalts, but it is stasis in both physical movement and political consciousness.

## CONTEMPORARY STREET PROTESTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Street protests in the Philippines have a long history of initiating social change. As early as the Spanish colonialism, Filipino peasants took to the streets to protest religious persecution, forced labor, and exploitative relations of production in agriculture (Ileto, 1979; Constantino, 1975). During the American colonial period, students, peasants and workers marched on the streets demanding independence, nationalist self-sufficient economy, and a genuine agrarian reform program (Constantino, 1975; Damo-Santiago, 1972).

In contemporary Philippine history, the importance of street protests is evidenced by collective bargaining agreements granting workers wage benefits better than the legally-mandated minimum wage (Ambrosio, 1994), the successful ejection of the US military bases, removal of the Marcos dictatorship and restoration of civil and democratic rights, and the expulsion of the corrupt Estrada administration (Reyes, 2006). Reyes (2006) says that in general the only objective that protest actions have yet to realize is the transformation of the entire political structure<sup>6</sup>.

There are different kinds of street protest formations depending on the size of participants and political objective. Small rallies are street protests performed by fifty to a hundred actors whose objective is to obtain a high media projection and register a position on a political development. A special form of a small rally is a lightning rally (LR). Used during times of severe political repression, LRs are small protests conducted with great speed and precision, unannounced, and well planned. A 'marcha' involves several thousands to tens of thousands protesting bodies whose objective is to present the dismal situation of a broad sector or the entire marginalized class and demand the implementation of responsive and democratic national programs and policies. One form of a big rally is the "Lakbayan." These are long productions presenting the hardships and struggles of marginalized

groups, and end ideally with a dramatic yet victorious engagement with the state. Carried out in several days to weeks, *lakbayan* are long-distance marches that usually set off from the provinces and culminate in the country's seat of power<sup>7</sup>. There are also medium-sized protest actions involving a large number of participants (larger relative to pickets but smaller than big rallies). Walkout from classes and workplaces into the streets, and the barricades of urban poor dwellers to prevent demolition are its usual forms. The formation and organization I discussed in the subsequent sections usually apply to a big march, although parts and components may be adopted by smaller street protests depending on the need and political objectives.

### The Formation of Bodies

The arrangement of protesting bodies in street protests projects the political campaign line and is designed to preserve the collective body. Bodies are choreographed to achieve the greatest political propaganda. At the same time, street protests are strategically framed towards the defensive preservation of the collective. The most powerful bodies are the first to engage in case of hostility.



**Figure 5. A frontline.** Leaders of workers and slogans of their major demands are located at the frontlines in this *lakbayan*.

Protesters whose political consciousness equips their physicality for engagement and assertion are posted in higher risk areas. Novice protesters and invited observers are shielded from risk by locating them in the middle. As protesters march, the vulnerable participants are physically protected by the bodies of leaders, personalities, marshals, team leaders, and support systems. The system of security ensures that the level of political consciousness of individual bodies is correspondingly embodied by the physical risk. Like an organism acting as one, the shell, a bodily protection for preservation, derives its power from the entire body. The leaders are conscious of continuously developing the protest body as a collective, where all parts of the body gain political vitality and strength.

The frontline draws upon the bodies of well-known personalities including leaders of concerned sectors in accordance to the political campaign line. A huge banner presenting the demands is held by the front liners. In the celebration of Labor Day, for instance, leaders of workers are positioned in front, with the banners and the slogans of their major demands. When it is important to demonstrate broad



**Figure 6. An effigy.** Protesters condemn US imperialism and call for the boycotting of NESTLE products in support for the workers on strike.

political support for a policy, a frontline of eminent personalities coming from different sectors is assembled representing peasants and workers, and middle forces such as priests, businessmen, lawmakers, lawyers, doctors, opposition leaders, teachers, artists, journalists, etc. This frontline is designed to project a strong statement of political legitimacy (Reyes, 2006; Fortaleza, 2006) and demands maximum restraint from the police. It is also intended to inspire spectators towards political action. If a rally is meant to challenge the curtailment of civil liberties manifested in the streets by a threat of dispersal, an “offensive-defensive rally” (Reyes, 2006) is organized. A strong and fortified composite team is positioned at the frontline to defensively engage state agents (Reyes, 2006; Fortaleza, 2006). When the police phalanx is in sight, the frontliners assume a human chain formation by interlinking their elbows<sup>8</sup> to show their unity and collective resolve.

The effigy symbolizing the central political statement of the protests is placed before the frontline. The flags of participating organizations follow the frontline to display the broad participation. The bulk of protesting bodies, those of workers, peasants, students, urban poor and other sectors, follow arranged in accordance to the campaign line and tactical considerations.

Huge rallies have a paralegal and first aid group to assist injured and arrested protesters. Each has a command post, the location of which is announced to the rallyists for emergency cases. Set up by allied doctors and nurses’ organizations, first aid group members administer medical treatment to minor injuries and accompany to nearby hospitals seriously hurt protesters. Paralegals help ensure that human rights are respected in cases of arrests. They are usually located on the side outside of the ranks of the protest to allow swift assistance to individuals being apprehended.

The most important tool in the maintenance of bodily coordination and cohesion is the central sound system<sup>9</sup>. Through the sound system, instructions can be communicated instantaneously and uniformly to

all the participants. Without it, the command has to rely on person-to-person transfer of information and instructions, from the central command to the sectoral representatives, to the marshals, then to the team leaders and finally to the participants. In cases of emergency and violent dispersals, leaders issue "open commands" to the entire rally using the central sound system. Further, speeches and programs, chants and songs aimed at preserving the energy level of participants, are conducted using the central sound system. The political consciousness of participants is raised through leaders' speeches and presentations that discuss not only sectoral situations and interest, but also the shared exploitation with other marginalized groups.

### **The street protest organization**

The street protest hierarchy balances democratic participation and the imperatives of maneuverability and movement of the collective bodies. The highest decision making body during the conduct of a rally is the central 'command.' Each major sector, e.g. workers, peasants, middle forces, urban poor, has a command. Representatives from sectoral command and major alliance/organizations compose the central command. The central command ideally consults with different sectors and organizations through their representatives before any decision is made. When incidents demand a swift reaction, the head assumes a lead command role based on the organizational or alliance mandate. In these cases, the security and safety of protesters are put in the hands of one person. Lead commands are common in lightning rallies as these demand immediate reactions to brutal police actions.

Instructions from the central command are ideally channeled through the sectoral representatives to the team leaders and marshals. Sometimes cellphones or two-way radios are used to communicate the decisions of the command. In emergency cases, the person (presumably the lead command or one carrying instructions from the lead command) who can reach the microphone on the stage issues an "open command" to the rallyists.

During protests, certain individuals are tasked to be members of the negotiating panel ('nego'). Composed of well-known protest personalities and leaders recognized by the police, such as church people, politicians, professionals, lawyers, and leaders of civil and people's organizations, the negotiating panel is tasked precisely to negotiate the passage or the continued occupation of a public space to conduct a political program beyond a specified time (Reyes, 2006; Fortaleza, 2006). Members of the negotiating team must have extensive experience in organizing and conducting rallies to ensure that whatever proposals and resolutions made during negotiations safeguard the interests and security of the rallyists. Most important is that the members believe in the objectives of the rally and are able to diplomatically stand their ground in the face of intimidation and coercion. Bodies in the negotiating panel must look and act the part. They must be decently dressed and command a certain level of respect and authority. The police do not want to talk to individuals who do not have control or influence on the protesters (Reyes, 2006).

The command is separate from the negotiating panel (Fortaleza, 2006; Reyes, 2006). Members of the negotiating panel may be protest personalities yet may not carry official alliance/organizational mandates to make decisions for the protesters. Strategically, this separation is crucial to the protection of the collective protest body. When the police senses that the negotiating panel and the command are composed of the same individuals, they may call for negotiations to physically separate the command from the bulk of the rally. The negotiations are sometimes deliberately extended, and in some cases, those invited for negotiations are arrested. The rally is then left leaderless. The police take advantage of the lack of leadership and the consequent confusion in the protest ranks to disperse and arrest protesters. The command must never leave the ranks.

For every sector there are assigned marshals. For every line there is a team leader. The primary task of the system of marshals and team leaders is to preserve the physical unity and discipline, and ensure the

maneuverability of the street protest. Specifically, the marshal is responsible for ensuring that the sectoral formation and ranks are kept in order. The marshals are typically positioned at the flank of the protest formation allowing easy movement to receive orders from the general command and communicate instructions to the team leaders. When the sector's physical movement slackens, the marshal guarantees it keeps up with the general flow of the entire rally. They stop vehicular traffic to ensure that no portion of the rally is separated. The team leader is responsible for the participants in a particular line usually composed of members of a particular organization. At any given time, the team leader must be able to account for the whereabouts of the line participants. Marshals and team leaders usually have experience in rallies (Reyes, 2006) and are recognized leaders in their particular sectors and organizations.

The system of marshals and team leader is also the security against infiltrators and instigators. Since the formations and lines are arranged by sectors and organizations, each participant in a line is personally known to his fellow rallyists. Before a rally starts, instructions are given to report to the team leader and marshal the presence of strangers and suspicious-looking characters. Infiltrators are not easy to identify as they are usually trained intelligence agents from the police and military. Familiarity with protesting bodies is the efficient defense tactic.<sup>10</sup>

There are instances when the system of marshals and team leaders is insufficient to guarantee discipline and order. Sometimes protesters retaliate against the police on their own. Hotheaded and emotional protesters curse and throw mineral water bottles, stones, and sticks and engage the police with sticks provoking police brutality. In such cases, undisciplined protesters are bodily forced towards the middle of the rally to prevent police retaliation. During the post-rally evaluation, these individuals or groups are criticized and made to realize that their actions may lead to the injury or arrests of other participants (Reyes, 2006; Alfonso, 2006).

There is however, autonomy for individual and organizational initiatives, as long as the conduct and objectives of the rally are not affected. For example, a group of young activists decide to creep through and assemble behind police ranks. This may catch the police off guard providing a chance for the entire protest body to push through. Lessons from such creative actions are drawn during the assessment (Reyes, 2006).

The organization and formation of street protests reflect a struggle towards the attainment of political objectives and the physical preservation of the collective bodies. One cannot be achieved without the other. Only by acting as one in the occupation of the street are protesters able to interfere with the street's capitalist transport function. Only then can the protests achieve the political power to question state representation and legitimacy and offer alternative information. Only by physically conquering the street can protesters compel the state to listen and recognize their politics.

### **'Kiskisan': the defensive engagement with hostile bodies**

The decision to defensively engage the police, termed "*kiskisan* (*makipagkiskisan*)"<sup>11</sup> is ideally planned and calibrated. Physically, the point is to challenge the speed of the state agents to continue occupying or to occupy a street. When the objective is to break through, the protesters become physically faster than the police, that is, have momentum stronger than that of the stationary police phalanx. When the aim is to stay put in the present space, the protesters ensure that their resistance given their mass is greater than the momentum of the offensive police force. Politically, to engage the police is to assert the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of speech and movement against a repressive state.

Police engagement must be made with minimum bodily risk and injury. Rallyists every so often succeeded in breaking through the police barrier and arrived at its specified destination. In some cases, however, the "*kiskisan*" is pushed through despite the assessment that the police

phalanx is impenetrable. The point of such action is to demonstrate defiance to the state's repression of basic civil rights. *Kiskisan* has a psychological effect on rallyists. It builds up the courage and a political consciousness of defiance and militancy among protesters. If every time rallyists yield when barricaded by the police, it fosters an attitude of submission to the ruling order (Reyes, 2006).

Moreover, the protest is training for the development of the efficiency of the protest organization. By succeeding in the occupation of a specified territory, protesters gain experience in maneuvers and tactics necessary to aptly challenge the capitalist state. Streets are battle grounds. When the struggle for emancipation presents an offensive opportunity, the streets are critical terrains for occupation toward the successful installation of a truly democratic and nationalist state. The two EDSA revolutions, while these have not led to better governments from the perception of protesters<sup>12</sup>, demonstrate the importance of conquering major thoroughfares in the struggle for liberation and democracy.

The corporeality of protests demands sensitivity to other bodies acting in the streets. By taking notice of the behavior of bodies in the street – those of other protesters, spectators, media, and hostile bodies, protesters are able to calculate the responses of other bodies and frame an appropriate course of action. Based on their reading of bodies, protesters alter their strategies of engagement to achieve their propaganda objective and to preserve the collective. This allows protesters to exert subtle control over the actions of all individuals in the street.

Before any decision of engagement is made, the conditions on the ground are assessed including the behavior of friendly and hostile state bodies - mood, body language, fortification, and resolve of both the rallyists and the riot police. The behavior and attitude of protesters reveal their readiness for engagement. When the morale is high and the fortification of the hostile bodies is weak, protesters push for



Marso 6, 2008  
DOLE, Manila

**Figures 7 & 8. Engagement with hostile bodies.** Police readies for a violent offensive as protesters with their composite team prepare to defend their ranks.

defensive engagement. The decision to engage is ideally a consensual decision made in the central command after rigorous discussion.

Reyes (2006) noted that there are signs when the police will be brutal or will not practice maximum tolerance. The rigidity of stance ('tindig') and the nature of phalanx fortification may signal the firm resolve of the riot police. Further, the history on protest engagement of a specific team of riot police, and the attitude and demeanor of its commanding officer are also important considerations. Violent dispersal without sufficient provocation from rallyists on previous days signals the lack of restraint of a particular riot police contingent. The voice tone of the commanding officer, if harsh, shouting, angry and annoyed, is a sign of brutality. Particular ground commanders have histories of not practicing maximum tolerance. Also the commanding officer may have received order to strictly enforce the 'no permit, no rally' policy. Engagement with such policemen may result to unnecessary and unwanted casualties (Reyes, 2006).

The stern stance and mammoth strength of hostile bodies demand a defensive retreat. This retreat is not defeat. It preserves the collective bodies in the face of a colossal enemy, in order to regroup and gather strength. The untimely and unnecessary engagement not only physically harms the collective bodies, but divides it, and defeats the very political power of the protest. Engagements are carried out only when the collectivity's political and physical strength can be adequately mustered.<sup>13</sup>

Public opinion also plays an important role. If the pulse of the public favors assertion of civil and democratic rights, a defensive engagement with riot police as an act of defiance against state repression is a strong political statement (Reyes, 2006). It inspires those with grievances and resentment with the possibility and success of moving against the state in protest.

The composite team is the line of "*kiskisan*". Here political conflict assumes physicality. The composite team (*compo*) is an amalgam of

different individuals from different sectors, hence the term composite, usually of sheer bodily strength and courage, and with extensive experience in rallies (Reyes, 2006; Fortaleza, 2006). Tasked to defend the bulk, leaders and well known personalities of the rally, members of the composite team bodily engage the riot police. The composite team is always located in front. In cases of broad formations, the composite team follows the line of personalities. When circumstances dictate, a composite team may also be assembled at the flank and rear of a rally. (Reyes, 2006)

During violent dispersals, members of the front composite team (compo) stand their ground using their bodies as shields, and create space between the riot police and the retreating bodies of protesters. They prevent the riot police from reaching the tail of the retreating mass to thwart unnecessary injuries and arrests. The back composite team (back compo) dictates the pace and direction towards a safe retreat, and ensures the retreating protesters from unwarranted arrest from intelligence agents and plainclothes police (Reyes, 2006). As a rule of thumb, the ratio of protesters to the riot police must be at least 4 to 1 to consider police engagement (Alfonso, 2006).



**Figure 9. Resisting bodies.** Police bombard the middle part of the protest with water and violently attack the flanks, breaking up the composite team.

To stop police advance, the first liners of the composite team position their bodies shoulder to shoulder and adjacently facing the shields, called 'body to shield' (Geredias, 2008; Baldonaza, 2008). They use their bodies to set up a barricade. They hold down the police shields using their hands to prevent the pummeling of feet, at the same time use the shield as a barrier between the police's baton and the composite team<sup>14</sup>. Facing the first liners' backs and assembled shoulder to shoulder, the second line members hold the belts (pants lining) using the right hand and supports the upper back torso with the left hand of the first liners to prevent the police from pushing the composite team, and so on. This bodily formation provides a great resistance against an offensive charge.

When the police use their truncheons to beat down the first liners, the first liners never let go of their defensive formation as long as they physically can. They use their hands to shield their heads from the truncheon swing. More courageous first liners reach out for the helmets of first line policemen to obstruct vision as police swings the baton. When the first liners are physically overpowered, the second liners use one hand to shield the first liners from being hit further and replace them as first liners. The succeeding line members help the injured behind the composite team and assume the function of second liners, and so on. Usually an empty space of around 5 to 10 meters between the composite team and the retreating mass must be created before the composite team retreats. Even then, the retreat is slow and coordinated. Never does the composite team with its own command, turn its back on the riot police (Alfonso, 2006).

These tactics of bodily engagements allow the compo members to minimize individual physical harm by sharing the aggression of hostile bodies among themselves. The risk and the physical injuries are endured collectively. An individual compo member is never intentionally forsaken to suffer excessive injuries. While the police aggression occurs, protesters shout their defiance of police brutality and their democratic rights towards peaceful assembly and freedom

of speech. These strategies are products of continuous reflection of the corporeal protest experience.

In cases where the police use a water canon for dispersal, the first liners form a human chain and bend their bodies as if lunging forward to best resist the first surge of the high pressured water. While in a bent position, the second liners support the backs of the first liners to keep them from tumbling down. Only the first surge of the water cannon is powerful. The Philippine police now seldom use the teargas because it is expensive and its efficacy depends on the wind direction (Baldonaza, 2008). Protesters protect themselves by covering their faces with water-drenched handkerchiefs. Sometimes, bolder composite team members pick up the teargas and throw it back to the police phalanx.

Where the political statement is the defiance of state repression, the front composite team takes charge of the defensive offense to break through the police barricade. The point is to advance towards a specified space with minimum bodily engagement with hostile bodies. That is, to push the police aside with minimum harm and create a passageway for the entire rally (Alfonso, 2006; Fortaleza, 2006). Once a police is physically hit, the backlash is almost always severe police violence and numerous arrests. More experienced protesters even assist policemen who stumble. In planning for the defensive offense, different scenarios are built, the weakest link in the police phalanx identified, and the option with the most potential for breaking through with minimum physical risk is chosen. In cases where the collective protest body is so huge relative to the police ranks, a direct assault is carried out given the great momentum of the protesting masses. This motion must be well coordinated. After the composite team breaks through the bulk of the rally must be ready to follow. Open spaces provide the police opportunity to regroup and launch a counter offensive. Sometimes, when the police phalanx is not fortified and well-organized, protesters are able to capture shields and helmets.

Membership in the composite team is voluntary and gender neutral. Women may volunteer to be members of the compo. The old method of exclusively assigning the composite team to male workers and students was abandoned. It involves a high risk of physical abuse from the riot police. In most cases, notwithstanding the risks, volunteers come from these two sectors and the urban poor. Volunteers must necessarily be physically fit, wearing closed shoes to mitigate pummeling of the feet, and not wearing eyeglasses and carrying backpacks as these may be lost or destroyed in the engagement. Backpacks make it easier for the police to grab and subdue protesters. Hotheaded and undisciplined individuals are not allowed into the composite team. Sharp or pointed objects, including knives, or any potential weapons are prohibited, as detection of these become rationale for the police to physically assault (even fire at) or arrest individuals. Sometimes, composite team members put crumpled rags/shirts on their heads under caps, and pieces of hard cartons on the forearms, to cushion the impact of the truncheon swing. Sectoral leaders, marshals, and team leaders are generally not allowed into the composite team as it could leave their ranks leaderless. All of these are clearly explained to the composite team members during orientation<sup>15</sup>.

The most important prerequisite of composite team membership is a high level of political consciousness founded on class collectivity<sup>16</sup>. Having extensive protest experience, compo members recognize that the safety of the entire collective protest body and those of the composite team depends on the strength of their individual political and physical resolve to be faster or slower than hostile bodies. Once the mass of composite bodies is broken, the collective protest body is exposed to physical injury and arrests, resulting to the political defeat of the protest. The composite team's physical strength derives from the conviction that their collective agency will lead to their emancipation.<sup>17</sup>

The composite team is a physical space only for those bodies with serious political commitment. Police bodies can become severely hostile. In highly tense situations, police beat their batons on their shields,



**Figures 10 to 19. A broken composite.** When the composite team is broken, protesters may suffer injuries and arrests. In this protest against alleged labor rights violations of Nestle Phils. Inc., Hanjin Garments Inc., and Toyota Motors Phils. Corp. police breaks the composite team and chases the protesters. A fallen protester is hit with a police truncheon. He was trying to pacify the police. Comrades who attempted to rescue him were hit with the baton as they came close. A police steps on him to reclaim the victim. Police hits him again with a truncheon and baton after. Then they pull him up by the shirt and arrest him. The worker protester suffers from serious head injuries, blood flows and drips from his head. Ironically, this all happens in the compound of the Department of Labor and Employment.

shout and agitate protesters, pointing to and threatening potential victims, push the composite team, and assume an offensive formation to intimidate protesters. In the actual engagement, police brutality causes severe physical injuries even fatalities of protesters (Saligan Publishers, 1971; Pimentel, 1989). There are cases where police ranks fire upon protesters (Dalisyay, 1998; Lacaba, 1982). Under these threats, even the burliest of bodies crumble<sup>18</sup>. Only those with the highest political collective consciousness can face these risks.

The collective experience of violence and resistance experienced by members of the composite team strengthens their politics. In the midst of engagement, composite team members rely on each other's political and physical strength to resist state violence. With arms linked, composite team members feel the resolve and fears of each others' bodies. By tightening their interlinked arms, they inspire and support each other. They calm each other's fear. They shout chants to boost their morale and strengthen their physical and political commitment.<sup>19</sup> Through their extensive protest experience and serious political consciousness, composite team members learn to control the impulse of responding to physical violence towards maintaining the defensive formation.

The wounds and broken bones enrage the protesters' politics. They experience first hand the fascism of the state even as it professes respect for equality and human rights. And they, thus, come back fiercer in their politics and firmer in bodily resolve<sup>20</sup>. Even as these physical injuries heal, the scars become symbols of protesters' tenacity and political commitment, like medals of valor. Protesters remember the reasons and place of the injuries as if the engagement was yesterday. While there are individual protesters who because of the physical pain become unwilling to protest and return to political stasis, their corresponding organizations and leaders personally encourage them to once again move with the collective. By acting together with other friendly bodies to collectively resist the violence of hostile state agents, composite team protesters share a physicality that simultaneously

strengthens their conviction of the power of collective bodies. They not only protect their bodies from physical harm and strengthen their own politics, they protect the collectivity and the political power of protests that emanate from it.

The rest of the protesting bodies, seeing, hearing, and feeling the suffering of their comrades as they defend the collective are outraged with the repression of the state. This strengthens their belief in the imperative for collective action in the struggle for liberation.

## EPILOGUE

When individuals participate in street protests they commit to a physicality to interfere in the capitalist economy and polity, imbuing them with a deep sense of personal agency within an empowered collective. Moving together, shoulder to shoulder, with other bodies of different attributes and persuasions, enables their bodies to share an experience of recalcitrance and empowerment. By feeling and listening to the pains and sufferings of other marginalized groups, protesters realize that many others beyond their sectors are in misery, that the broad masses are experiencing the same social oppression.

This unified bodily movement is the physicality of the long and difficult process of consciousness-raising (Boudreau, 2001)<sup>21</sup>. The theory is practiced and reflected on the street. Burning under the sun or soaked in the rain as they march, protesters experience the theoretical struggle between the exploited and the powerful. Their exposed fragile bodies shiver while the propertied comfortably sheltered in their air-conditioned cars and edifices are irritated by the heavy traffic created by the street protesters. And when the capitalist state which professes equality and democracy can no longer tolerate their interference, they are forcibly driven off the street, washed with high-pressured water, pushed with shields, and beaten with truncheons. As protesting bodies share an experience of repression and violence, they recognize their common adversary. From their parochial interests and demands, they thus comprehend their actions

in a larger context of a national and class-based political struggle that require their broad collective movement.

By successfully interfering on the street, participants actualize their collective capacity and power for social change (Reyes, 2006). As they move together, engage hostile bodies and encourage spectators, protesters collectively imagine an alternative against their social oppression and empower a recalcitrant sociality struggling for a just and humane society envisioned by all exploited sectors of society.

Protesters know that the struggle towards freedom is long and extremely painful. Yet the longer they march, the greater the pain and violence they share, the harder their clenched fists and the thicker the calluses that cushion their feet become as they continue the long march to freedom.



**Figures 20 to 23. Empowered bodies.** Workers and their supporters return to the DOLE in great number. They break the metal chains of the gate. They march together and reclaim the site to condemn their violent dispersal. This time the police watched in silence.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> KMU was formed in May 1, 1980 and is one of the largest coalitions of worker's organization promoting a genuine, militant and patriotic trade unionism. BAYAN was formed in 1985 for struggle against Marcos and is today one of largest alliance at the "forefront of a growing mass movement for democracy and freedom" (2009) whose members are composed mainly of peasant and workers organizations. See Scipes (1996) for KMU's history. The protest organization and formations presented here may reflect those of other protests groups with historic links with the national democratic movement. The view on preserving and strengthening of protesting bodies, especially in the practice of restraint used vis-à-vis engagement with hostile bodies, however, may not be similar. Also, by interviewing progressive leaders associated with the left, I make the implicit differentiation of street protests here as those done by social movements whose general objective is to further the interests of the marginalized Filipino masses from those street activities of religious movements and 'rented crowds.'

<sup>2</sup> Melucci (1995) introduced the term "new social movements" to address the inadequacies of collective action theories and resource mobilization theory in the recognition of protests' capacity to offer alternative symbols in the production of meaning and information.

<sup>3</sup> Carr et al (1992) in Rosenthal (2000, p. 65) defined public space as "any place that features great accessibility, leaving aside the question of public or private ownership, and in which 'people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routines of daily or in periodic festivities'" (Carr et al: xi). For theories on spaces "both as geographical sites of action and social possibility of engaging in action," see Lefebvre (1991). Offe (1985) argues that new social movements operate in a political yet non-institutionalized space. For a very good review of the theories of urban spaces including the street and its political, economic and cultural importance, state regulation and contestation in the urban areas in Northern Europe, see Arnade, Howell and Simons (2002). For a guide to the history of urban public space in Latin America, focusing on the contested nature vis-à-vis state regulation of the public spaces including the street and plazas, see Rosenthal (2000). Kostof (1992) devotes a chapter of streets in his monumental study of the cities.

<sup>4</sup> For example, in the successful protest against the high cost of fuel in the September 2000, European fisher folks dumped sardines and anchovies, taxi drivers parked their cabs, farmers their cars, and fuel drivers their trucks, on the streets, closing passage to fishing vessels and oil depots and creating heavy traffic in main thoroughfares, fuel shortage in petrol stations, paralysis of school bus system which stranded thousands of school children, cancellation of soccer games, and panic-buying for gasoline and grocery (Imig, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> In my more than a decade of protest experience, the team leader discusses the imperatives, probable consequences, and tactic of engagement during the course of the street protest. The group/organization/sector's decision, given the constraints of time, is then channelled back to the central command for consideration along with the positions of the other sectors and individual participants. Even before the actual march, in the preparation and planning process called "line-setting," that is setting the political line given the constraints of actual participating bodies, the

potential participants are consulted by a series of meetings from the national alliance to individual organizations.

<sup>6</sup> There is no definitive historical research on Philippine street protests. Literature on street protests is mostly composed of political propaganda statements from different progressive organizations (First Quarter Storm of 1970) and case studies of the street protest experiences of particular organizations and sectors (Boudreau, 2001; Karaos, 2006; Ambrosio, 1994), particular events (Lacaba, 1982), and social activist's biographies (Pimentel, 1989) and memoirs (Segovia, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> One of the longer Lakbayans was conducted by peasants in 2007 to demand the implementation of agrarian reform. Starting from Mindanao, the southern most Philippine island, peasant participants walked entire island provinces and rode ferries to cross seas for almost two months. A Lakbayan was also held to protest the planned extension of the US Military Bases in 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Filipino protesters call this interlinking of elbows "kapit-bisig."

<sup>9</sup> The central sound system may be large speakers on ten-wheeler truck for big rallies, or hand-held megaphones for small pickets and rallies.

<sup>10</sup> Instigators and infiltrators look and act like protesters. Infiltrators insert themselves in the protest to gather intelligence on protesters. Generally, they move about from one sector/line to another, intently looking at personalities, listening to conversations, initiating conversations with protesters, carrying cameras and video recorders to take pictures and videos of personalities and mass leaders without permission. Instigators mingle with protesters and find ways to incite confusion among protesters, and confrontation with the police to demonstrate the irrationality of the protest. In some cases, intelligence infiltrators pick up leaders and personalities without warrant.

Upon information on the presence of a possible infiltrator/instigator, at least three marshals approach the individual, and verify his personal information and organizational background. If the individual is indeed an outsider and no known protester vouches for him, he is escorted away from the rally. If armed, the infiltrator is disarmed and taken into custody. Films or camera memory cards are confiscated. There are however unfortunate instances where infiltrators and instigators become victims of lynching especially in times when there are numerous number of protesters harmed or killed. Sometimes even sympathizers, mistaken for instigators or infiltrators, become victims of lynching. Military infiltrators are of course accused of being responsible or being party to the killings, thus are subjected to physical abuse (Reyes 2006). Team leaders and marshals must not allow this to happen. When caught, infiltrators and instigators, and their arms are turned over to the police with media coverage (Reyes 2006; Fortaleza 2006; Alberto and Kwok, 2008). Through this gesture, the rallyists demonstrate that indeed their activities are reasonable, organized and disciplined, and that they protect themselves from the outsiders who aim to discredit their political action or gather information on protest participants. Sometimes, formal legal charges are filed them.

<sup>11</sup> Rubbing against a rough surface.

<sup>12</sup> The first EDSA revolt in 1986 toppled the dictator President Marcos to restore civil liberties and democracy. The second in 1998 deposed the corrupt Estrada administration. In both historical moments, tens of thousands of protesters marched

and occupied the major highway Epifanio delos Santos Avenue in Metro Manila for several days.

<sup>13</sup> For BAYAN and KMU the focal point of rallies is no longer on the imminent dispersal. Police engagement is subsumed under the political objectives of the rally. The communication of the political message is more important than police engagement, except when the political objective itself is to expose the fascist character of the state through an act of defiance. After a comprehensive assessment of the urban mass movement in the 1980s and early 1990s, the KMU in its 1997 Congress adopted a “legal and defensive” policy on street protests. Since the strength of the mass movement relative to the state’s is not yet sufficient for physical and political confrontation, street protests must be primarily aimed at politicizing the broad masses in the urban areas to inspire massive participation in protests. It must therefore adopt defensive and a legal character. Aptly called ‘street parliament,’ it is designed to operate within the legal frame, and must not use violence to incite chaos and destroy property. It can only counter violence in the act of self preservation. It is thus not always necessarily to reach a particular physical destination via physical engagement. Frequent violent dispersals not only discourages novice and potential protesters but decreases the legitimacy of political demands from the spectator’s eyes. Given the peaceful and tolerant culture of Filipinos, the recurrent violent physical engagement damages the long-term political objectives of the protests. By showing that the protests is organized, rational and engages only to protect itself, the fascist character of the powerful capitalist state is revealed. In the midst of political assertion of marginalized of their rights and interests, the powerful state fails to restrain itself (Reyes, 2006; Baldonaza, 2008; Gerodias, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> The police baton used by the Philippine anti-riot policemen is usually long, about a meter, making it difficult to swing unto a very close target. The shield is about a meter long in height.

<sup>15</sup> When President Macapagal issued the calibrated pre-emptive response (CPR) policy under Batas Pambansa Blg. 880 in 2005, composite team members were required to undergo training.

<sup>16</sup> “Ang iniisip mo lang talaga ay makarating sa dapat mo marating. Mawawala ang takot mo lalo na kung sama-sama. Nagkakaisa kayo na isulong . . . [The only thing you think of is to reach your target destination. Fears disappear when you act collectively. We are united to movement . . .]” (Custodio, 2008). “Ang nagpapalakas sa kanyang [nagpoprotesta] loob at sa kanyang katawan ay ang kanyang prinsipyong dala-dala sa pakikibaka [What strengthens the mind and body is individual’s commitment to struggle. ” (Gerodias, 2008)

<sup>17</sup> “Kung salat ka sa kaalaman, matatakot kang magcompo. . . Lalo na’t alam niya [miyembro ng compo] na karapatan namin ito, huwag niyong apakan ang aming karapatan. . . diyan lalong lumalakas. . . [If one lacks political education, s/he fears being a member of the compo. . . Particularly if one [composite team members] knows that this is our right, do not trample on our rights. . . we become stronger. . .] (Custodio, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> “Kaya ang binibigyan nila ng priority sa compo ay yung may experience na sa kiskisan. . . Kasi kapag nagkaroon ng konting gitgitan, magkaroon ng nerbiyos at bumitaw. Dun nag-uumpisa ang . . . Pero kapag matatag ang compo mo, psywar din yan. . . Yung mga pulis, pagka alam nilang lalaban ka nagdadalawang isip yan. . .

Ung mga bagong pulis, namumula yan. [Thus, those with extensive experience in protests are given priority. For when there is even a little pressure, new volunteers get nervous and let go. This is where it starts. . . But when your composite team is strong, this is also psywar. . . The police, if they sense that you're going to fight back, they have second thoughts. . . Neophyte policemen are scared" (Baldonaza 2008).

<sup>19</sup> "Makibaka, huwag matakot. Kapag nagsisigawan ng ganyan parang walang kinatatakutan. . . nakapagtataas ng moral, parang nawawala ang takot. Kahit nakaumang na ang truncheon o titirahin ka ng water tank. [Fight, have no fear! When we shout this it is as if we do not fear anything . . . we boost our morale, our fears disappear. Even if the [police] truncheons are ready, or we will be hit by a water cannon. " (Custodio 2008)

<sup>20</sup> "Lalo kang nagagalit! Biro mo demokratiko mong karapatan, uupakan ka riyani!... Dahil nga sa prinsipyo mo, lalong walang mangyayari kung 'di ako kikilos, kung matatakot kami dito lalong walang nangyayari. Kaya andito pa rin kami. [You get furious. You assert your democratic rights, they beat you! . . . But because of your principles, the more that nothing is going to happen if you do not move, if we are frightened here the more nothing is going to happen. That is why we are still here.] " (Soluta 2008)

<sup>21</sup> A very important component of organizing at the grassroots level for KMU and BAYAN affiliated organizations is a regular educational discussions that help explain a particular sector's marginalization and on recent political developments. Organizers encourage individuals from these sectors to protest on the street to advance their personal and sectoral interests within a larger framework of national democratic struggle in the belief that only the collective action of the broad marginalized masses can usher in genuine social change.