

"Tank Man" – China, Egypt

"Tank Man, China". Length: 2:30 min. (June 5, 1989) www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrQgDgOx3KY

"Egyptian Tank Man." Length: 1:01 min. (Jan 25, 2011) www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWr6MypZ-JU

Key words: Power of One, Egypt, China, democracy, civil resistance, civil disobedience

SUMMARY

In 1989, a single man faced down a tank advancing on Tiananmen Square as pro-democracy protesters watched. In 2011, an unarmed man in Egypt stood his ground in front of advancing armoured police vehicle sent to disperse pro-democracy demonstrators. The identities of these men remain unknown.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think the actions of the man in China mattered? If so, how? If not, why not? What outcomes might these actions have in the short term and in the long term, if any?
2. Are these men heroes? Are they foolish? Does it matter?
3. Would you do something like this? If so, under what circumstances? Would you do it if you had to act alone? Would you join one other person to face down a tank? Would you join a group of people to stop oncoming military forces? Would you pull the individual out of harm's way? Can you think of a time when you think you should have stood up and acted or spoken out, but didn't? Why didn't you?
4. How does the bravery of these men who are acting for peace and democracy compare to the bravery of soldier in war fighting for peace and democracy? "War hero" is a common phrase. What is a "peace hero" or "democracy hero"?
5. What other kinds of civil disobedience are you aware of? Does civil disobedience always call for putting one's life on the line? Are there other symbolic ways of disobeying that would communicate the same message and produce the same results?

QUICK FACTS

Tiananmen Square Demonstrations

When: April 15 - June 4, 1989

Where: Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China (and in other Chinese cities as well)

Who: Students at first, but became a mass movement

Demands: Greater economic reform, political liberalization, freedom of the press

Civilians killed: Unknown (estimates from 186 – 6,000)

Egyptian Revolution 2011

Begins: Jan 25

President Mubarak resigns: Feb 12, 2011

Where: Tahrir Square, Cairo is the focal point

Egyptian Tank Man incident: On a side street leading into Tahrir Square

Who: Mass civilian movement; strikes by labour unions

Demands: Democratic elections, resignation of President Hosni Mubarak after 30 years of rule; end of police brutality, end of state of emergency

Civilian casualties: At least 800 deaths; others suffered police brutality or torture; some females were subjected to "virginity tests."

LEARN MORE

"The Tank Man – 20 Years Later." PBS. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tankman/>

"Civil Resistance Tactics Used in Egypt's Revolution #Jan25" <http://bit.ly/xwmljG>

"Rosa Parks Was Arrested for Civil Disobedience, December 1, 1955" <http://1.usa.gov/xH0sDW>

"Timeline: Egypt's revolution. Al Jazeera. <http://aje.me/A6W5wR>

"Egypt's 18-Day Revolution. BBC. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12315833>

"Remembering Tiananmen Square." CNN. <http://bit.ly/tpaHJq>

"Civil resistance." Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_resistance

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