



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## Filipinos campaign to overthrow dictator (People Power), 1983-1986

- Asian Democracy Campaigns (1980s)

August

1983

to: February

1986

**Country:** Philippines

**Location City/State/Province:** Quezon City

**Goals:**

Overthrow president Marcos and, after the 1986 elections, the installation of Corazon Aquino as president

### Methods

#### Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 011. Records, radio, and television
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors › yellow became the symbolic color of the cause
- 038. Marches
- 045. Demonstrative funerals
- 046. Homage at burial places
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

#### Methods in 2nd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

#### Methods in 3rd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 034. Vigils

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 173. Nonviolent occupation › 20,000 protesters occupied half of Mendiola Bridge

**Methods in 4th segment:**

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors

**Methods in 5th segment:**

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors

**Methods in 6th segment:**

- 001. Public speeches
- 004. Signed public statements
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 011. Records, radio, and television
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 020. Prayer and worship
- 033. Fraternalization
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 051. Walk-outs
- 060. Suspension of social and sports activities › Closure of schools
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 086. Withdrawal of bank deposits
- 089. Severance of funds and credit › US cut military support for Marcos
- 097. Protest strike
- 117. General strike
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents
- 148. Mutiny
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

**Notes on Methods:**

It was not clear from sources what methods were used in segments 4 and 6, but it is likely that there were more assemblies and public speeches and probably others used

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Change

**Cluster:**

Democracy

**Group characterization:**

- Aquino supporters
- business leaders

- opposition leaders and supporters
- religious officials

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

### Leaders:

Corazon Aquino

### Partners:

Salvador Laurel

Former Senator Jose Diokno

Justice for Aquino, Justice for All (JAJA)

United Democratic Action Organization (UNIDO)-coalition of several moderate parties

NAMFREL

Radio Veritas

### External allies:

Catholic Bishop's Conference (CBC), United States government

### Involvement of social elites:

Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile

General Fidel Ramos

Cardinal Sin

US congress refused military support to Marco

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

### Groups in 1st Segment:

- Corazon Aquino
- Corazon Aquino
- JAJA
- Jose Diokno
- Radio Veritas
- Salvador Laurel

### Groups in 2nd Segment:

- NAMFREL
- UNIDO

### Groups in 3rd Segment:

### Groups in 4th Segment:

### Groups in 5th Segment:

## Groups in 6th Segment:

- CBC
- Cardinal Sin
- Fidel Ramos
- Juan Ponce Enrile
- Several COMELEC workers
- Soldiers and Military leaders
- United States government

**Segment Length:** *Approximately 5 months*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

### Opponents:

President Ferdinand Marcos and his regime

### Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

### Campaigner violence:

Not known

### Repressive Violence:

Police officers used tear gas and water cannons on demonstrators at the Mendiola Bridge. Military personnel assassinated Benigno Aquino when he returned to the Philippines.

## Success Outcome

### Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

### Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

### Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

### Notes on outcomes:

Corazon Aquino and others motivated the masses to act out and eventually overthrow Marcos. The opposition groups survived through the campaign. And the campaign grew to encompass much of the population and the military.

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Ferdinand Marcos was elected president of the Philippines in 1965. Marcos was reelected in 1969 and when barred to run for a third term, he declared martial law and gave himself near absolute power. Marcos assumed full control of the military, dissolved congress, and had many of his political opponents and critics arrested. One of his more prominent critics had been Senator Benigno Aquino who was prepared to challenge Marcos in the 1973 election, had it occurred.

Aquino would spend seven years in jail in the Philippines before he developed a heart condition. The Marcos regime had falsely convicted Aquino of murder and sentenced him to death, but the United States stepped in to provide him with proper treatment for his condition. Marcos allowed Aquino to leave the Philippines and receive treatment. Aquino would spend three years in the United States before deciding to return to the Philippines in 1983.

Aquino decided to return in order to remove Marcos from power. He made this decision despite having heard that many people

would be looking to kill him when he returned. After having read the writings of Gandhi while incarcerated, he was inspired to employ nonviolence to overthrow Marcos. On August 21st 1983, Benigno Aquino arrived in the Philippines and almost immediately after landing, police vans surrounded his jet and three police officers shot and killed him.

The news of Aquino's death received intense international coverage, but Marcos prevented any media outlets in the Philippines from covering his death. Radio Veritas, however, did broadcast news of Aquino's death and the somber news inspired myriad grief and demonstrations. Aquino's mother, Aurora, made sure to leave her son's body as it was, unaltered for all the world to see. For days, Filipinos visited Aquino's body and paid homage to him and his struggle against Marcos.

Hundreds of thousands of supporters gathered at a symbolic park that honored a Filipino that had fought for independence from Spain. As the rain poured down on them, they put their fingers in the shape of an "L" to represent Aquino's political party, Laban. Others took to the streets holding banners that read "Justice for All Victims of Political Repression and Military Terrorism!"

Beginning in the fall of 1983, Filipinos chose yellow as the color to represent the campaign and office building employees would release tons of yellow confetti onto the streets on a weekly basis. As the Philippines sunk deeper and deeper into debt, business leaders became frustrated with Marcos and demanded reforms. Consequently, Marcos reinstated the vice presidency and reduced restrictions on age qualifications to run for president and vice president.

A key organizer in the campaign was former Senator Jose Diokno, who Marcos had also arrested in the 1970s. He started Justice for Aquino, Just for All (JAJA), which was an activist organization partially funded by Aquino's brother Agapito. Aquino's wife, Corazon would also play an important role in the campaign. Corazon organized a rally at Malacanang Palace, the former house of the government, that fell on the eleventh-year anniversary of the declaration of martial law and the one-month anniversary of Aquino's assassination. 15,000 demonstrators marched from the palace to the Mendiola Bridge, where marines fired at them and killed eleven demonstrators and injured hundreds more. The violence only spawned more resistance from the people.

In May 1984, new elections for parliament took place and opposition parties claimed 58 of the 183 available seats even though there were large allegations of election fraud. Corazon had publicly endorsed all of the candidates running for the opposition parties. The candidates were united as part of the United Democratic Action Organization (UNIDO), which was a coalition lead by Salvador Laurel. NAMFREL a volunteer organization with many nuns and other religious officials, oversaw the tallying of votes in the election in areas where they were allowed. NAMFREL rallied 200,000 volunteers to work during election day.

In July of the same year, Agapito Aquino led 20,000 protesters to occupy the Mendiola Bridge where much violence had occurred the year before. On the one-year anniversary of Aquino's assassination, renamed "National Day of Sorrow," 3,000 protesters organized a candlelight vigil at the same bridge. Police eventually used tear gas and water cannons to forcibly remove the protesters from the area.

In 1985, an investigation took place regarding the assassination of Aquino and enough evidence was found to put Chief of Staff Ver and 24 of his soldiers on trial, beginning in February. During the trial, General Ver did not serve as Chief of Staff. In August, oppositional party leaders filed a motion to impeach Marcos, but their request was denied by his regime. Three months later, Marcos announced that there would be an election for president and vice president a year earlier than planned, in 1986. The following month, in December, all on trial for the assassination were acquitted and Marcos reinstated Ver as Chief of Staff.

Corazon seized the opportunity in December to declare her candidacy for president in the upcoming elections. After having discussions with Laurel, who also wanted to run, she decided she would run for president and he would run for vice president. Several rallies were held leading up to the election. Less than two weeks before the elections, opposition groups held rallies in over twenty-four cities, totaling 355,000 demonstrators. The largest demonstration was held three days before the election; one million Filipinos participated in a rally to support Corazon and Laurel.

On February 7, the rushed election was held and the voter turnout easily surpassed the numbers that anyone could have expected. As results began to be tallied, the government-sponsored organization COMELEC had determined that Marco was going to win

the election. The volunteer organization NAMFREL, however, determined that Corazon had a decisive lead over Marcos. Allegations of election fraud were rampant and two days after the election, thirty COMELEC workers walked out, disgusted by the election fraud. On February 13, the Catholic Bishops' Conference dismissed the election as being tampered with by Marcos and his regime.

On February 15, the Filipino parliament officially declared Marcos to be the winner. According to the assembly, Marcos had won by a count of 10,807,197 votes to Corazon's 9,292,761 votes. In response, opposition leaders left the assembly in protest. NAMFREL's data, however, suggested that Corazon had won by nearly 800,000 votes. The following day, Corazon held a national rally at the Luneta Park in Manila where she called for nationwide civil disobedience to overthrow Marcos. 1.5 million supporters attended the "Triumph of the People Rally." Three days later, the United States Congress condemned the election and voted to cut military support until Marcos stepped down.

Corazon, in her call for action, asked Filipinos to boycott businesses and establishments that were supportive of Marcos. As a result, Filipinos boycotted pro-Marcos media and withdrew money from banks known to have a relationship with Marcos' regime. Schools shut down as well and Filipinos stopped paying their bills. Filipinos also held a one-day general strike. As more and more Filipinos began utilizing civil disobedience, the campaign picked up a lot of momentum and unlikely support.

On the evening February 22, Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos rescinded their support for Marcos. Afterwards, the two men took hundreds of soldiers and barricaded the Ministry of Defense near Camp Crame. The two military leaders were planning a coup against Marcos, but Marcos found out and sent troops to attack the rebel soldiers. Before this, however, Cardinal Sin asked people to come and support the revolution via Radio Veritas. Religious officials came out in masses to form a human barrier around the soldiers and their camp in order to stop any violent conflict from arising. They were successful (see "Nonviolent intervention in Philippines during military clash, 1986").

Meanwhile, Luneta Park once again became a site of protest and demonstrations; 50,000 Filipinos rallied at Luneta Park, cheering for Corazon and calling for Marcos to step down. Pro-Marcos soldiers later arrived at the park and demonstrators greeted them with hugs and prayers. Some civilians tied yellow ribbons around the soldiers' weapons. A separate helicopter unit was called in, but they defected and flew to support their fellow soldiers who had gathered at Camp Crame.

On February 24, Corazon visited her supporters at the park and inspired opposition members of parliament to write a new resolution that revoked the results of the corrupt election and declared her president. 150 citizens signed their names onto the new proclamation. The following day, Aquino's mother swore Corazon in as president of the Philippines and Marcos fled the country with the help of the United States. The remarkably successful campaign came to an end, having demonstrated the power of the people in the face of a repressive leader.

## Research Notes

### Influences:

Inspired many of the other democracy campaigns of the time period (2) Benigno was inspired by the work and writings of Gandhi. (1)

### Sources:

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Mercado, Monina A, and Francisco S Tatad. *People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986 : an Eyewitness History*. Manila, Philippines: James B. Reuter, S.J., Foundation, 1986.

"Timeline of Rebellion." *The Beginning of the Revolution*. thinkquest, n.d. Web. 12 May 2011.

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See also: Sharp, Gene. *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential*. Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 2005.

**Additional Notes:**

For more information on the campaigners' intervention to prevent violence between rebel troops and Marcos' loyalist troops, see the case "Nonviolent intervention in Philippines during military clash, 1986".

Edited by Max Rennebohm (02/06/2011)

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