

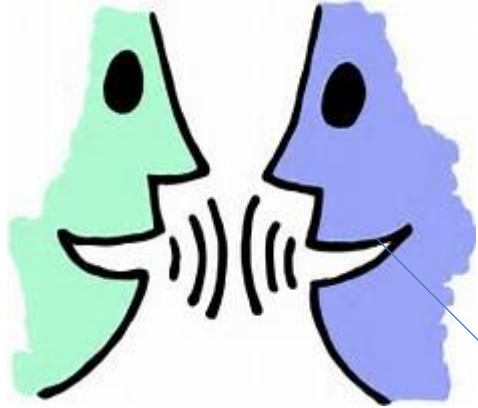


New Internationalist
The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

Whose streets are they?

**New Internationalist Ready Lesson
Upper Intermediate**

This lesson:





Definition

What is this a definition of?

**“Government of the people,
by the people, and for the
people.”**

Is the UK a democracy?

Consider these facts about the UK parliament:

- 1) In the UK parliament after the 2015 election there were 650 MPs**
- 2) There were 208 female MPs**
- 3) The average age of MPs was 50**
- 4) There were 52 MPs from ethnic minorities**
- 5) MPs do not have to live in their constituency**
- 6) 37% voted for the Conservatives – they had 331 MPs**
- 7) 31% voted for the Labour party - they had 232 MPs**
- 8) 4% voted for the Green Party - they had 1 MP**

Match the meanings and the words:

a) to feel happy about something

b) the place where people go to vote

c) the right to talk about opinions in public

d) to repeat words aloud like a song

e) belonging to the people

f) cruelty, violent action

g) army of citizens

h) not fair, having no good reason

1) chant

2) celebrate

3) brutality

4) unjustified

5) militia

6) polling station

7) freedom of speech

8) populist



Here are words from the text. Try to tell the story of what happened:

September 2017 St Louis police

clear streets protest police brutality

chant “Whose streets? Our streets!”

Now read and check – did anything surprise you?

It was difficult to believe – a line of St. Louis police was chanting ‘Whose streets? Our streets!’ But that’s exactly how they showed their power in September 2017 when they cleared the streets of people protesting against police brutality.

What do you think – true or false?

1. The protesters were celebrating.
2. The police were celebrating.
3. A black motorist was killed for a clear reason.
4. The chant – “*Whose streets? Our streets!*” comes from the Occupy movement.

Now read and check:



The police were celebrating because one of their policemen was free after charges of the unjustified killing of a black motorist. Of course, no one is surprised that heavily armed police control US streets. They are often like armed militias in poor communities. But they used a chant, made famous by the Occupy movement. And that was different.

What do you think?



- 1. Where can people hold political meetings?**
- 2. Can you think of places where people around the world have held protests?**
- 3. What per cent of the world's people have the freedom to hold meetings in public places?**
2%/5%/10%/30%/50%+

Now read and check:

The control of public space – streets, squares, parks, and even Barcelona’s polling stations – is more and more about the state stopping political ideas they do not like.

These public spaces – for example, Tahrir Square in Cairo and Gezi Park in Istanbul – have been places for protest for a long time. The freedom to use public space is part of democracy. Stopping their use for protest is part of a policy that critics, such as the citizens’ rights advocacy group Civicus, call ‘the closing of political space’.

Civicus say that only two per cent of the world’s population now have ‘open’ political space. We can find this space in countries including Ireland, Portugal, Germany, and much of Scandinavia.

Put these sentences in the best order:

a) With Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Vladimir Putin in Russia, Donald Trump in the US, and Mariano Rajoy in Spain, there is no real support for democratic rights.

b) Neither has much use for open political space.

c) They speak a different language and may use different methods, but they both want to control.

d) The two main political movements are rightwing populist nationalism, and neoliberalism of both centre-Right and centre-Left.

Put these words in the correct gaps:

at risk *speak freely* *protest* *terrorism* *largest*

This is also true in many places in the Global South. India was once ‘the world’s (1) _____ democracy’, but the space to organize is (2) _____ from the Hindu fundamentalist government of Narendra Modi. In France, with the shock of (3) _____, the right to (4) _____ and to have public meetings is at risk. In democratic Peru, the government is using ‘preventive charges’ against activists if it hears of any future plans of (5) _____.

Read the last part of the article and decide if according to the article these statements are true or false:

- 1) The article is critical of governments and politicians.**
- 2) Our freedoms are at risk.**
- 3) International banks and businesses have too much power.**
- 4) People are giving up on the political system.**
- 5) Politicians have made progress on the important issues.**

By freedoms I'm thinking about all the small ones: freedom of speech, freedom to have meetings, privacy, communication, opinions, movement – freedom to say 'yes' or 'no' to the government. I'm not thinking here of the big F 'Freedom' that some of those taking away our freedoms say that they are trying to protect.

This big F seems to have more to do with the freedom to control by those who run the state and the businesses that control the economy. They have little interest in the freedoms of everyday life. They often see them as annoying problems which stop growth and profit. Their right to control and our right to resist are against each other.

The big F Freedom is in the end a national sovereignty organised by centralized states to follow the national interests of the rich and powerful and make sure its 'own' citizens obey. A state that has all of the power is at risk of control by powerful elites. They are usually large transnational businesses and international banks.

Any protest movement – strong labour and social movements, a strong society, a democratic economy – needs political space.

Now our system of centralized representative government is in serious trouble. Large numbers of people no longer vote. Political parties have trouble finding members. Politicians see themselves as intelligent and selfless servants of the public. The public sees them as controlling liars, who only want to help themselves.

Party politics make a lot of noise but there are very few real differences in policy between the parties and they do not achieve very much. Politicians have not solved, or even taken action on problems of inequality and the death of the environment. Repression is often all they have to offer.

Put this final sentence in order:

by a few rich **We need**
to participation **and**
and away from **powerful leaders**
to move **representation**
by people

Chanting slogans

Where are the sentences stresses in this Occupy chant?

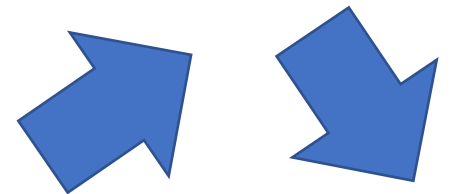
Whose streets? Our streets!

Does the intonation go up or down in each sentence?

***Whose streets?
Our streets!***



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■ *Whose streets?*

■ *Our streets!*



Chanting slogans

Where are the stresses in these chants and does the intonation go up or down?

Give peace a chance!

Power to the people!

A fair day's wages for a fair day's work!



Give peace a chance!

Power to the people!



A fair day's wages for a fair day's work!

Writing slogans

Write some slogans of your own about things you think are really important. Decide on the sentence stresses and the intonation.

Practise chanting them!



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Homework

Read the original text:

<https://newint.org/features/2017/12/01/shrinking-political-space>