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Public Narrative as a Leadership Art in Influencing Global Movements

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Executive Summary

Leadership involves the ability to influence others and motivate them in support of a common goal. The ability to lead social movements and stir people into action, especially in the face of uncertainty, goes far beyond appealing to logic alone. Rather, a leader must provide a strategic roadmap that offers others a meaningful role to play in creating change, as well as motivate others to take action by bridging universal values, appealing to their self interests, and tapping into their hopes, fears, and collective experiences.

Global leaders have used public narrative for centuries in order to create support for their political agendas and inspire followership. They have known instinctively what social constructionist and framing theorists, public narrative researchers, and cultural and cognitive scholars have found, that uniting collective experiences and problems under one central narrative can reduce isolation, fear, and apathy and inspire action and a sense of urgency. Through public narrative, leaders are able to create a sense of hope by telling a story of what could be, therefore, framing a picture of what the future can look like once action is taken.

Through understanding how emerging leaders are using public narrative to inspire civil unrest and shape global politics and public opinion, we can better understand what makes social movements and global leaders effective. This paper examines the use of public narrative by Esraa Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid and Ahmad Maher, the co-founders of Egypt's April 6 Youth Movement, and argues that through the strategic use of public narrative, they were able to counter feelings of isolation and create a sense of collective ownership that inspired large-scale civil disobedience that led to electoral, civil society, and cultural shifts in Egypt. Their public narrative created a sense of hope by telling a story of what could be, therefore, framing a picture of what the future of Egypt could realize.

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership involves the ability to influence others and motivate them in support of a common goal. The ability to lead social movements and stir people into action, especially in the face of uncertainty, turbulence, and adversity, goes far beyond having a strategy, providing data and information, or appealing to logic alone. Rather, leadership of this kind requires providing a strategic roadmap that offers others a meaningful role to play in creating change, as well as motivating others to take collective action by bridging universal values, appealing to their self interests, and tapping into their hopes, fears, and shared experiences. In other words, public leadership and the ability to inspire large-scale change, *“requires engaging the heart, the head, and the hands: motivation, strategy, and action.”*¹

Public narrative is a leadership art that harnesses the power of story to communicate a strategy that invites action and inspires hope; to be effective, public narrative must engage the head, heart, and hands. Steve Denning in the Secret Language of Leadership notes that, *“An appropriately told story has the power... to communicate a strange new idea easily and naturally and quickly gets people into enthusiastic positive action.”*² When it comes to creating large-scale change and inspiring social movements, public narrative serves as a strategic vehicle to communicate brave new ideas and possibilities not attainable under the current status quo.

The growing popularity of public narrative as a strategy for leadership and change provides an important opportunity to further explore current day social movements through the lens of public narrative. Through understanding how emerging leaders are using public narrative to give meaning to the past, present, and future in a way that unites universal values, inspires

¹ Marshall Ganz, “What is Public Narrative,” John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University (2008).

² Steve Denning. The Secret Language of Leadership: How Leaders Inspire Action Through Narrative. (Jossey-Bass 2007), Page 5.

civil unrest, and shapes global politics and public opinion, we can better understand what makes social movements and global leaders effective. Through exploring what inspires others to accept or align with a narrative, we can better understand how leaders influence behavior and large-scale change,³ a key characteristic of what Dean Deborah Nutter of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy describes as the ability of a leader to inspire others into “*followership*.”⁴

This thesis examines the recent attempts to bring about the universal values of freedom and human and civil rights in Egypt within the Arab Spring movement, and attempts to answer the question of where public narrative as a leadership art succeeded in bringing about change and where it failed. The paper examines how public narrative was used as a strategy to influence Egyptian youth participation during the early part of the Arab Spring movement and why, after generations of inertia and apathy towards the Egyptian government, youth were inspired to take collective action. Finally, the thesis attempts to demonstrate that while the use of public narrative within Egypt’s Arab Spring was not perfect, nor did it bring about swift and easy change, public narrative is indeed a powerful strategy that can influence global politics and public opinion on a massive scale. The paper argues that through the strategic use of public narrative, youth leaders within the April 6 Youth Movement were able to counter feelings of isolation and create a sense of collective ownership that inspired large-scale civil disobedience and led to electoral, civil society, and cultural shifts. Their use of public narrative created a sense of hope by telling a story of what could be, therefore, framing a picture of what the future of Egypt could look like if the values of democracy, freedom of expression, and human rights were realized.

³ Andres Antoniadis, Ben O’Loughlin and Alister Miskimmon, “Great Power Politics and Strategic Narratives,” *Centre for Global Political Economy at the University of Sussex, Working Paper No. 7 (2010)*; accessed April 16, 2014. <http://pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/sites/pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/files/greatpowerpolitics.pdf>

⁴ Deborah Nutter, “Foreign Policy Leadership”, Lecture, Global Masters of Arts Program, The Fletcher School of Law and Democracy at Tufts University, January 2014.

II. METHODOLOGY

This thesis first draws upon a literature review to explore the characteristics of public narrative as a leadership art and offers research to suggest why public narrative is a successful strategy in influencing large-scale change. The literature review also explores how global leaders have used public narrative to inspire social movements in the past, from Elizabeth I in the 1560s to Nelson Mandela in the 1990s. The paper then analyzes the public interviews and speeches of Esraa Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid and Ahmad Maher, the co-founders of the April 6 Youth Movement, a group that played a key role in the lead up to the revolution in Egyptian that came to be known as the Arab Spring. Finally, the thesis draws upon political analysis of the success of the Arab Spring in Egypt to examine where the use of public narrative succeeded in influencing electoral, civil society, and cultural shifts, and where it fell short.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Public Narrative as a Leadership Art

According to leading Public Narrative Researcher and Harvard Professor Marshall Ganz, “*Leadership, especially leadership on behalf of social change, often requires telling a new public story, or adapting an old one.*”⁵ Public narrative theory suggests that political leaders must incorporate three components into their narratives in order to be successful in moving their agendas forward:

- 1) A story of self that communicates the values that are calling them to act.
- 2) A story of us that communicates the universal values shared by those they hope to motivate to join them in action; and,

⁵ Marshall Ganz, “What is Public Narrative,” John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University (2008).

- 3) A *story of now* that communicates the urgent challenge to those universal values that demand immediate action.⁶

A *story of self* allows leaders to share the values that define them and communicates to the listener why the leader has been called to serve or what is motivating them to act. Leaders can use the story of self to communicate their “choice points” or the moment when they themselves personally faced challenges, made a conscious choice to deal with that challenge, or what they learned about themselves from that choice or challenge.⁷ The story of self is deeply personal and through sharing personal information, leaders allow the listener to enter their experience and form a relationship with both the leader and the movement. Leaders who use the story of self effectively understand that sharing personal experiences is a responsibility of public work⁸ and they use their personal story to strategically develop a sense of authenticity and accountability with those they are attempting to lead and influence. Leaders also understand that if they don’t tell their story, others will. In this sense, authoring a story about one’s self allows leaders to strategically use their vulnerability as a strength and reframe the narrative in a way that inspires hope and action.

A *story of us* overlaps with the story of self.⁹ A story of us expresses the values and experiences shared by the community, culture, or country the leader is seeking to influence into action. When it comes to the story of us in social movements, it is important to note that the values are often bigger than any one single community, culture, or country alone and often represent universal values, such as human rights and freedom. Much like the story of self, the

⁶ Marshall Ganz, “Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power,” *Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*. Accessed April 16, 2014. <http://leadingchangenetwork.com/files/2012/05/Public-Narrative-Collective-Action-and-Power.pdf>.

⁷ Marshall Ganz, “What is Public Narrative,” John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University (2008).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

story of us can teach, inspire, and offer hope or caution.¹⁰ When telling a story of us, the leader must weave their personal experiences or choice points into the collective experiences of those they are seeking to influence. The story of us communicates not only the collective values and experiences that a community shares, but also the capacity and resources the community has to accomplish its goal.¹¹

Finally, the *story of now* articulates the urgent challenge, or threat, to the collective values of the community (defined broadly) and calls the community to action.¹² The story of now serves as a road map for action and includes a strategy to help the community overcome the challenges they face. It includes a specific ask to the audience and articulates in detail a vision for achieving the goal.¹³ The story of now is as much about timing as it is about priority. This is evident in Nelson Mandela's 1994 presidential acceptance speech when he says, "*Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all... the new Interim Government of National Unity will, as a matter of urgency, address the issue of amnesty for various categories of our people who are currently serving terms of imprisonment.*"¹⁴

The story of now is also represented in Winston Churchill's famous Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat speech where Churchill linked his story of self with Britain's story of us to articulate the urgent threat of Hitler's regime to personal freedom, and where Churchill effectively combined hope with strategy. "*We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of*

¹⁰ Marshall Ganz, "What is Public Narrative," John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University (2008).

¹¹ "Let's Organize! The next generation of climate activists." 350.org: Workshop series. Accessed May 8, 2014, <http://workshops.350.org/toolkit/story/http://workshops.350.org/toolkit/story/>.

¹² Marshall Ganz, "What is Public Narrative," John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University (2008).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Nelson Mandela, "Inaugural Speech," (speech, May 10, 1994). University of Pennsylvania, African Studies Center, http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Inaugural_Speech_17984.html.

*suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with the all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny... But I take up my task with buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fall among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, 'Come then, let us go forward together with our united strength.'"*¹⁵

As evident in Mandela and Churchill's story of now, global leaders have used public narrative for centuries in order to create support for their political agendas and inspire followership. As far back as the late 1500's, Elizabeth I used her story of self to convey her "choice points" or the moments where she made a conscious choice to overcome her personal challenges. She used the beheading of her mother and her own imprisonment in the tower to develop a sense of openness to ideas and independence. Her story of self became England's story of us as she sought a policy that valued security and placed tolerance and a balance of power over power for power's sake. Finally, Elizabeth I's story of now is still visible today in British foreign policy where, after over 400 years, England still serves as the great balancer of Europe. Her keen and determined leadership, shaped by her public narrative, established balance, security, and tolerance within Brittan and saved Europe from a religious war, allowing the country to flourish.¹⁶

It is important to consider the story of self, the story of us, and the story of now when analyzing public narrative and leadership, as each story overlaps and bring others into the movement or political agenda. Each component is necessary to convey authenticity and inspire followership. It is also important to note that when applied to social movements, the story of self,

¹⁵ Winston Churchill. "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat," (speech, May 13, 1940), The Churchill Centre, <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/92-blood-toil-tears-and-sweat>

¹⁶ Deborah Nutter. "Lecture I: Elizabeth I, Foreign Policy Leadership," Global Masters of Arts Program, Fletcher School of Law and Democracy at Tufts University.

story of us, and the story of now become bigger than the values of any one single community or country. Rather, when it comes to social movements, leaders must translate not just their own values, but universal values, such as human rights and freedom, into action. This is essentially what separates public narrative as an inclusionary leadership art from narrative used for tyranny by dictators, as those efforts are void of universal values.

This thesis will examine and analyze each component, or story, of public narrative used by April 6 Youth Leaders within the early stages of the Egyptian revolution.

B. The Role of Public Narrative in Social Movements

Organized collective action that challenges the status quo and requires supporters to endure uncertainty and anxiety, and even put themselves in harm's way, rarely happens spontaneously. Instead, "*organized collective action challenging the status quo, or a social movement, demands a type of leadership that extends beyond the stereotypical charismatic public persona with whom it is often identified.*"¹⁷ Global social movements take place often under perilous conditions and hostile and restrictive environments. As such, the success—or even partial success—of a global social movement requires the ability to instill hope. The ability to organize others into collective action under conditions of threat and uncertainty demands leadership that can inspire the hands, heart, and head; incorporate action, motivation, and strategy; and create a bridge between the plight of one country or culture and the universal values of freedom and human rights.

Social movements take place outside of established organizations or formal power structures. As a result, the cost of participation is higher. Participants have more to gain, but also,

¹⁷ Marshall Ganz, "Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power," *Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*. Accessed April 16, 2014. <http://leadingchangenetwork.com/files/2012/05/Public-Narrative-Collective-Action-and-Power.pdf>.

more to lose. It is important to ask then, what motivates people to take action in the face of adversity and uncertainty? Social constructionist research on movements identifies a “framing perspective” that helps answer these questions. Successful movements have been found to frame grievances and mobilize support through stressing the importance of interaction, interpretation, discourse, and in building collective identities.¹⁸ Collective action framing emerges through a process where a group consciously builds its grievances, strategies, and reasons for action by drawing on and modifying beliefs and experiences—or telling stories—that inspire and legitimate their movement.¹⁹ Constructionist scholars believe that narrative framing gives credence to a social movement by defining the problem the movement seeks to address, identifying possible remedies, creating a sense of agency and urgency to affect change, and recruiting others by aligning collective frames with personal experiences, interests, and beliefs.²⁰

Cultural and cognitive research supports the framing perspective and public narrative research, offering that movements are most successful when they craft their identities and frame their goals in ways that not only encourage participation, but also promote transitions in prevailing societal norms.²¹ Frames connect individuals to movements, guide collective action, shape understanding of political opportunities, and communicate a public identity.²² Leaders have been able to harness the power of framing to create narratives that bridge members, amplify their experiences and beliefs, and connect their beliefs to others.²³ When successful, narrative framing has been shown to build a link between an individual’s personal identity and the

¹⁸ Joseph E. Davis, “Narrative and Social Movements: The Power of Stories,” in *Stories of Change, Narrative and Social Movements*, ed. Joseph E. Davis et al, (State University of New York Press, 2002), Page 7.

¹⁹ Joseph E. Davis, “Narrative and Social Movements: The Power of Stories,” in *Stories of Change, Narrative and Social Movements*, ed. Joseph E. Davis et al, (State University of New York Press, 2002), Page 7.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Beth Schaefer Caniglia and JoAnn Carmin, “Scholarship on Social Movement Organizations: Classic Views and Emerging Trends of SMO Research,” *Mobilization: An International Journal* 10 (2): Page 205, accessed May 25 2014: <http://web.mit.edu/jcarmin/www/carmin/CarminArticles/Mob-Cangilia-Carmin-SMO.pdf>

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

collective identity of the group; this is essentially the story of self, story of us, and the story of now. The connecting force behind framing theory, public narrative, and cultural and cognitive research appears to lie in reducing isolation and fear by bringing people experiencing problems together under one central story.

The role of public narrative and framing becomes increasingly important in social movements because it helps bring meaning by connecting different experiences and events under a central story or vision. “*Stories reconfigure the past, endowing it with meaning and continuity, and also project a sense of what will or should happen in the future.*”²⁴ Public narrative, then, brings a *felt* understanding, not simply a *conceptual* understanding.²⁵ According to Ganz, “*We do not retell the story of David and Goliath because it teaches us how to vanquish giants. What the story teaches is that a ‘little guy’ – with courage, resourcefulness, and imagination—can beat a ‘big guy.’*”²⁶ Through the strategic use of public narrative, leaders are able to counter feelings of apathy and inertia by creating a sense of urgency. Finally, through narrative, leaders are able to counter fear by creating a sense of hope by telling a story of what could be, therefore, framing a picture of what the future can look like once action is taken. In this sense, social movements become the vessels in which leaders “learn to tell new stories of self” as they interact with other participants.²⁷ Global leaders from Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Vaclav Havel have all harnessed the power of public narrative to inspire hope and connect people without power, but with a common experience, together to inspire large-scale social change. The next section of this thesis examines how public narrative was used by relatively unknown youth leaders to

²⁴ Joseph E. Davis, “Narrative and Social Movements: The Power of Stories,” in *Stories of Change, Narrative and Social Movements*, ed. Joseph E. Davis et al, (State University of New York Press, 2002), Page 12.

²⁵ Marshall Ganz, “Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power,” *Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*. Accessed April 16, 2014. <http://leadingchangenetwork.com/files/2012/05/Public-Narrative-Collective-Action-and-Power.pdf>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Marshall Ganz, “What is Public Narrative,” John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University (2008).

inspire hope, reduce isolation and apathy, and connect experiences together to inspire large-scale action that led to the beginning of a revolution in Egypt.

IV. CASE STUDIES

A. The Lead Up to the Arab Spring

What came to be known as the Arab Spring officially began in Tunisia in December of 2010 when a fruit vendor named Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire in response to the corruption and repressive policies that plagued Tunisia for generations. Following Bouazizi's death and the media coverage that followed it, thousands of Tunisians took to the streets in civil disobedience and protest to take up Bouazizi's cause. On January 14, 2011, in response to the growing protests and international pressure, Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali resigned from rule and fled the country.

Ahmad Maher, a co-founder of Egypt's April 6 Youth Movement and whose public narrative this thesis will examine, attributes Egypt's Arab Spring to the revolution in Tunisia. *"We were waiting for the event that would ignite a spark, that would trigger a large movement of the people. We were waiting for it and it turned out to be Tunisia. There has always been a rivalry between Egypt and Tunisia in football. So we asked ourselves, if we had started all this before Tunisia, why was Tunisia having its revolution before us? Everyone was posting on the Internet, the answer is Tunisia."*²⁸

The timing of the Egyptian revolution with the actions in Tunisia is significant when analyzing leadership as it relates to public narrative and social movements, particularly when it

²⁸ Arrow, Ruaridh. *How to Start a Revolution*. Documentary film. Directed by Ruaridh Arrow, USA: Bid Indy, 2011.

comes to the story of now, as it reflects the capacity to turn opportunity into purpose.²⁹ The revolution in Tunisia brought together the isolated protests or “stop and go” activism that the April 6 Youth Movement was responsible for organizing since 2008 and described later in this thesis by Esraa Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid, another co-founder of the April 6 Youth Movement. The events in Tunisia served to galvanize a united and diverse large-scale protest in Egypt on January 25, 2011. The protest continued until the Egyptian military refused to intercede and President Hosni Mubarak resigned from power on February 11, 2011. Mubarak’s resignation, however, did not give way to an easy and peaceful democratic transition.

B. The April 6 Youth Movement and Public Narrative

The April 6 Youth Movement began as a Facebook page that encouraged solidarity between youth and textile workers in the city of al-Mahalla al-Kubra, Egypt. The group called for a national strike and on April 6, 2008, almost a full three years before the events that led to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, 70,000 Egyptian youth took to the streets in support of the strike³⁰. The strike ended in four deaths and over 400 arrests. Over the next two years, members of the April 6 Youth Movement studied the nonviolent tactics of the Serbian and Ukrainian youth movements and learned how to evade government surveillance and harassment.³¹ The April 6 Youth Movement attempted to replicate their 2008 efforts again in 2009 and 2010, but without success³². However, in early 2011, galvanized by the success of the revolution in

²⁹ Marshall Ganz, “Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power,” *Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*. Accessed April 16, 2014. <http://leadingchangenetwork.com/files/2012/05/Public-Narrative-Collective-Action-and-Power.pdf>.

³⁰ David M. Farris. “The End of the Beginning: The Failure of the April 6 and the Future of Electronic Activism in Egypt,” *Arab Media & Society*. Issue 9, Fall 2009, accessed April 16, 2014, <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=723>.

³¹ “April 6 Youth Movement,” The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. September 22, 2010, accessed May 11, 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/09/22/april-6-youth-movement/h3h7>.

³² David M. Farris. “The End of the Beginning: The Failure of the April 6 and the Future of Electronic Activism in Egypt,” *Arab Media & Society*. Issue 9, Fall 2009, accessed April 16, 2014, <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=723>.

Tunisia, the April 6 Youth Movement organized a day of action on January 25, 2011. The subsequent protests that followed are credited with ending President Hosni Mubarak's 29-year rule and led to a transfer of power from Mubarak to the Egyptian military.

The next two sections of this paper will explore how Esraa Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid and Ahmad Maher, the co-founders of the April 6 Youth Movement in Egypt, used public narrative to help inspire the large-scale actions that led to Egypt's Arab Spring. The sections will identify and analyze the youth leaders' use of the story of self, the story of us, and the story of now to inform strategy, counter apathy, invite action, and inspire hope.

C. Esraa Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid's Public Narrative

Esraa Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid became known as the "Facebook Girl" due to her role in organizing the April 6, 2008 protest. Rashid founded the April 6 Youth Movement with Ahmed Maher. She originally joined Facebook to keep in touch with her friends and follow Egyptian singer Mohammed Mounir and the national soccer team, but her relationship with Facebook and evolution as an Egyptian Youth Opposition Leader evolved in ways she could not have predicted.³³ Rashid volunteered during the 2005 election campaign for the El Ghad party, but was disillusioned by the bureaucracy and strict hierarchy of the party. She turned to Facebook as a quicker and easier way to plan events and protests.³⁴ Rashid received a text message from Maher, who she met through El Ghad, suggesting they organize young people in support of the textile workers in al-Mahalla al-Kubra, and the April 6 Youth Movement was born. Rashid was arrested and detained for two weeks following the al-Mahalla al-Kubra

³³ Samantha M. Shapiro. "Revolution, Facebook-Style," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 22, 2009, accessed May 10, 2014: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/25/magazine/25bloggers-t.html?pagewanted=2>.

³⁴ Ibid.

protests. Her public arrest and release, as well as the size of the April 6 mobilization, made her a well-known figure in Egypt and among human rights activists.

Rashid's leadership in the Arab Spring is unique in that prior to the April 6 protest, she worked as a human resources administrator was relatively unknown. Not an opposition leader by training or experience, her arrest and the publicity that followed propelled her to a public leadership role with little preparation. After her detention following the al-Mahalla al-Kubra textile strike, Rashid made a brief public statement renouncing her political activism, which drew much criticism from youth opposition groups, and was subsequently removed from the April 6 Movement.³⁵ However, Rashid became active again during the 2011 nationwide protests and was instrumental in spearheading online and "on the ground" organizing efforts, which earned her a nomination for the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize.

The following are excerpts of her presentation to the Egyptian Democratic Academy and an analysis of Ms. Rashid's use of public narrative as a leader in the movement.³⁶

Esraa Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid's Story of Self: *"Freedom has a price and we paid the price that day. More than 100 political activist were arrested, most of them detained under the Emergency Law... I myself was one of those arrested in April 2008. I spent 18 days in jail, the first time I have been in prison in my life. Perhaps what made it worse was knowing that I had been detained under the Emergency Law, which allows authorities to keep individuals in prison until they decide to release them... Under all these circumstances, internal pressure and international solidarity have been very important and cannot be ignored. I remember a phone call I received from an Egyptian colleague to express his support for me during the investigation*

³⁵ PBS Frontline. "April 6 Youth Movement," February 22, 2011, accessed May 17, 2014.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/revolution-in-cairo/inside-april6-movement/>.

³⁶ Esraa Rashid, "Presentation," World Movement for Democracy: Confronting the Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century. Egyptian Democratic Academy, accessed May 11, 2014: <http://www.wmd.org/assemblies/sixth-assembly/remarks/presentation-esraa-rashid>.

process into my case. I also remember solidarity activities undertaken by activists who were not detained and the tremendous pressure they put on the regime for the release of the April 6 detainees... Among the most important examples of such solidarity is what happened to me...The activists abroad launched a wave of international solidarity to put pressure on democratic governments to release official statements in support of the detainees. This had a significant impact and quickly led to [my] release.”³⁷

Here, Rashid tells her story of self, going back and forth between her personal experience of arrest and detainment and the personal support she received from activists both within Egypt and the larger international community. In this excerpt, Rashid carefully weaves her story of self into a larger narrative of the story of us. This is evident as Rashid uses her choice point, or the moment when she personally faced a challenge and made a conscious choice to deal with that challenge,³⁸ by sharing her personal arrest and detainment to express the fears and frustrations many Egyptians faced under Emergency Law. By pointing out that it was her first time ever arrested, Rashid paints a picture that anyone can participate in social action and conveys an image that the protests were about regular people, not professional activists or protesters, standing up for what they believe in. She links the outside solidarity, support, and activism that contributed to her emotional release from prison to the values of activism that she embraces and that which defines her involvement in the Arab Spring. It is her personal experience with solidarity that earned her release and she is now called to serve the larger movement through building solidarity with others, both inside and outside of Egypt. Rashid’s uses the vulnerability that came with her arrest and detainment to show strength against the Egyptian government.

³⁷ Esraa Rashid, “Presentation,” World Movement for Democracy: Confronting the Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century. Egyptian Democratic Academy, accessed May 11, 2014: <http://www.wmd.org/assemblies/sixth-assembly/remarks/presentation-esraa-rashid>.

³⁸ Marshall Ganz, “What is Public Narrative,” John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University (2008).

Esraa Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid's Story of Us: *"I do not know where to start, but I will speak within the limits of my personal experience as one of hundreds of young activists working for democracy in Egypt. We have faced various challenges, starting from the grip of security dominating all forms of public life in Egypt: the Emergency Law, sustained now for 30 years, that restricts all basic freedom – freedom of belief and expressions, and the right of peaceful assembly and association—and ending with the collapse of the simplest principles of the rule of law. Dominating corruption consumes the resources of our country and redistributes them in a way that doesn't secure basic needs for the majority of our people. In this context and as an extension of a long struggle, a current of young people working for democracy in Egypt has formed and spread. We have used technologies...to organize ourselves... Our use of technologies continues in a series of stop-and-go events since 2003... This cycle will end only by attaining democracy in the country."*³⁹

Rashid's story of us bridges the universal values of freedom and human rights shared and validated by many people in the world, and so desperately yearned for by the young people in Egypt, to translate values into action. Rashid paints a picture of the lack of rights and freedoms shared by young people, many of them never knowing a life without Emergency Law. She uses her own choice points of Internet activism to talk about the online and offline activism taking place in Egypt today and by doing so, highlights the capacity and resources the community has to accomplish its goal. Rashid wisely talks about the series of "stop-and-go" events in a likely effort to communicate that change is a long and arduous process. Through relating the movement back to 2003, she is able to put a human face on the smaller successes that have taken place and

³⁹ Esraa Rashid, "Presentation," World Movement for Democracy: Confronting the Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century. Egyptian Democratic Academy, accessed May 11, 2014: <http://www.wmd.org/assemblies/sixth-assembly/remarks/presentation-esraa-rashid>.

that have led up to this point in time. She uses her story of us to teach and offer hope that someday a democratic Egypt can be achieved. Through painting a picture of the process, she uses her story of us to counter the Egyptian government claims that youth activism is a flash in the pan, and embraces the collective and long-standing efforts as a “cycle that will end only by attaining democracy in the country.”⁴⁰ Finally, her strategic shift to the word “we” instead of “me” conveys that this is a movement of the people and is larger than her personal story or story of self.

Esraa Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid’s Story of Now: *“A new NGO law...would not allow civil society organizations to be registered as civic companies, which is how the majority of human rights organization in Egypt are registered...The law would also prevent NGOs from working in more than two predetermined narrow fields, in which case, for example, groups would not be allowed to operate under a broad or comprehensive field such as human rights. We work within this restrictive environment to amend the Constitution, to reform the electoral system, and to challenge the Emergency Law, and we face security and censorship restrictions while trying to mobilize Egyptians and encourage them to participate... That is what people were calling for through the general protest on April 6, 2010 when security forces severely beat many protesters, especially girls, and arrested nearly 100 activists... There is now another Facebook group with more than 220,000 members calling for the independent presidential nomination of Dr. Mohammed El Baradei, the former director of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), as a symbol of those demands. Ladies and Gentlemen, we need your solidarity; we are*

⁴⁰ Esraa Rashid, “Presentation,” World Movement for Democracy: Confronting the Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century. Egyptian Democratic Academy, accessed May 11, 2014: <http://www.wmd.org/assemblies/sixth-assembly/remarks/presentation-esraa-rashid>.

proud of what you do to carry the burden of spreading democracy around the world; and yes, we believe that people who want freedom will win.”⁴¹

In Rashid’s *story of now*, she articulates the urgent threat to the universal values of human rights, democracy, and justice shared by many people, including Egyptian youth. Rashid reframes the narrative told by the Egyptian government in order to paint youth, and their supporters, as the heroes and that it is their choice, not that of the Egyptian government, to shape the outcome. She specifically mentions both the April 6 protests and the El Baradei Facebook group of over 220,000 members, and in doing so provides a sense of solidarity and hope to the listener, conveying that they are not alone.

In Rashid’s *story of now*, the convergence of story and strategy overlap because a key strategy of Rashid’s leadership is hope. Through hope, Rashid outlines a credible path of “how to get from here to there.”⁴² In the above speech, Rashid offers a meaningful choice by calling for action against the new NGO law being drafted by the Egyptian government. This action in and of itself will not transform Egyptian democracy or bring about a full revolution, but it will protect NGOs and civil society and allow them to challenge censorship and expand human rights and transparency within the government. Rashid does not make promises she can’t keep, instead, she offers hope around one particular law and this is where, in social movements, the vision of hope can evolve one chapter at a time. When it comes to public narrative, the key is for leaders to link one victory or action to the larger vision or story of change. In this example, fighting against laws that severely restrict NGOs and civil society is linked to larger visions of democracy and human rights.

⁴¹ Esraa Rashid, “Presentation,” World Movement for Democracy: Confronting the Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century. Egyptian Democratic Academy, accessed May 11, 2014: <http://www.wmd.org/assemblies/sixth-assembly/remarks/presentation-esraa-rashid>.

⁴² Marshall Ganz, “What is Public Narrative,” John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University (2008).

The role of hope in the story of now cannot be underestimated. Without hope, few people would risk the threats and dangers associated with speaking out against an oppressive government. It is only through offering hope that social movements can be born. Through public narrative generally, and the story of now specifically, leaders are able to offer the hope necessary and, as Rashid does in the speech above, call on a specific action that participants can and must take immediately. The story of now is “*a credible strategy, with an account of how, starting with who and where we are, and how we can, step-by-step, get to where we want to go.*”⁴³ In the above example, Rashid’s action calls the action of others.

D. Ahmad Maher’s Public Narrative

Along with Esrra Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid, Ahmad Maher is the co-founder of the April 6 Youth Movement. It was Maher that initially sent Rashid a text message, encouraging her to organize the al-Mahalla al-Kubra protest. A civil engineer by training and education, Maher became the face of the Arab Spring in many ways and took over as the central leader of the April 6 movement after Rashid was removed due to her public statement following her arrest. Following the Arab Spring revolution, Maher traveled extensively, conducting public speaking and educational events centered on internet activism and the youth movement throughout Europe and the United States and starring in several documentaries about civil disobedience and the Arab Spring. As his global presence and reputation grew, so to did the Egyptian government’s efforts to target and discredit Maher.

Maher is currently in an Egyptian prison, sentenced to three years as punishment for holding a demonstration against a new Egyptian protest law. Maher is currently appealing his

⁴³ Marshall Ganz, “What is Public Narrative,” John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University (2008).

sentence and countless Egyptian activists and international organizations, from Amnesty International to the United States State Department, are calling for his release. The following are experts from different interviews given by Ahmed Mayer in relation to his use of public narrative and his story of self, story of us, and story of now.

Ahmad Maher's Story of Self: *"After April 6, I received text messages on my mobile, messages on Facebook and email saying I was lucky not to be arrested on April 6, but that they're close by and I could be arrested another time. And when it happens, I'll be detained and beaten up. They even went on to say that I could be raped at State Security or in prison. I won't deny, I was scared. [I'm continuing to carry out April 6] for many reasons. During all the years of Mubarak's rule he's been keen on terrifying the people and killing their political awareness by making them fear politics. I believe it should be the opposite. Everyone should be interested in politics. I think it's worth the trouble and being in prison for a month or two."*⁴⁴

Both Rashid and Maher share their experience receiving threats by the Egyptian government, but both express it differently. While Rashid draws on solidarity, Maher's story of self expresses a sense of anger and indignation, both of which act as a counter to apathy. It is important to distinguish between anger and rage in a leader's story of self. "Anger often grows out of experience of a contrast between the world as it is and the world as it ought to be."⁴⁵ This use of indignation and anger was described by Sociologist Bill Gamson as using an "injustice frame" to counter a "legitimacy frame."⁴⁶ In other words, Maher used his feelings of indignation regarding the threats he was receiving to counter the Egyptian government's narrative about Emergency Law and the need to prosecute those who exercise freedom of speech. His

⁴⁴ PBS Frontline. "April 6 Youth Movement," February 22, 2011, accessed May 17, 2014.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/revolution-in-cairo/inside-april6-movement/>.

⁴⁵ Marshall Ganz, "Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power," *Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*. Accessed April 16, 2014. <http://leadingchangenetwork.com/files/2012/05/Public-Narrative-Collective-Action-and-Power.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

indignation also serves as his choice point and where his values meet his actions. In the face of threats, he was compelled to still act and states that acting according to his values is “*worth the trouble and being in prison for a month or two.*”⁴⁷

Maher also shares, quite graphically, the specific threats he received regarding arrest, rape, and torture. Through sharing these threats, Maher demonstrates not only a unique mix of bravery and vulnerability, but also strategically begins to shape a new story and further chips away at the narrative of the Egyptian government. Preparing others for fear by sharing what the opposition will do to threaten social movements is a leadership strategy.⁴⁸ It exposes the fact that these behaviors—arrest, detainment, torture, rape, and abuse—are expected, demonstrated, and relied on tactics used by the opposition. Revealing these behaviors as predictable can make the behaviors less feared and give social movement participants further courage to participate in actions and activities. Exposing these tactics as routine also helps shape the legitimacy of Maher’s indignation and anger and makes his story of self that much more powerful.

Ahmad Maher’s Story of Us: “*We are a group of Egyptian Youth from different backgrounds, age and trends gathered for a whole year since the renewal of hope in 6 April 2008 in the probability of mass action in Egypt which allowed all kind of youth from different backgrounds, society [and] classes all over Egypt to emerge from the crisis and reach for the democratic future that overcomes the case of occlusion of political and economic prospects that the society is suffering from these days. Most of us did not come from a political background, nor*

⁴⁷ PBS Frontline. “April 6 Youth Movement,” February 22, 2011, accessed May 17, 2014. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/revolution-in-cairo/inside-april6-movement/>.

⁴⁸ Marshall Ganz, “Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power,” *Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*. Accessed April 16, 2014. <http://leadingchangenetwork.com/files/2012/05/Public-Narrative-Collective-Action-and-Power.pdf>.

participated in political or public events before 6 April 2008 but we were able to control and determine our direction through a whole year of practice.”⁴⁹

In Maher’s story of us, he connects his story of self, starting the April 6 protests, with the collective story of all of those who participated in both the initial April 6 protest, as well as any and all activity over the course of the last year. In doing so, he conveys the shared experiences of all those who took action to advance the universal values of freedom and human rights. His story of us offers hope. Maher specifically states that many of those involved did not come from a political background or participate in political action prior to April 6. Through stating this, Maher uses his story of us to further build and enforce the narrative, articulating that the movement is made up of “regular” or “normal” youth. This builds the confidence level of the listener, confirming that one doesn’t need a political background or know how to be involved, just the shared values of democracy. By painting the picture of regular people’s involvement, Maher’s story of us also strategically adds to the narrative of the April 6 Youth Movement and frames the movement almost like the David and Goliath story, where just regular youth, through their passion, conviction, and actions, are beginning to topple a government. Maher’s story of us communicates not only the universal values and collective experiences that youth in the April 6 movement share, but also their capacity and resources to challenge and chip away at the legitimacy of the highly militarized Egyptian government that controls the police and the media. This inspires what Cornel West coined “a leap of hope” that is required for politics and social movements alike.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Bob Dreyfuss, “Who’s Behind Egypt’s Revolt,” *The Nation*, January 31, 2011, accessed May 17, 2014: <http://www.thenation.com/blog/158159/whos-behind-egypts-revolt>.

⁵⁰ Marshall Ganz, “Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power,” *Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*. Accessed April 16, 2014. <http://leadingchangenetwork.com/files/2012/05/Public-Narrative-Collective-Action-and-Power.pdf>.

Ahmad Maher's Story of Now: *"The most important tactics we used to break the fear was through active participation. Coming to demonstrations and taking part in activities, people came from all over the place and they'd be arrested which would make them even stronger."*⁵¹ *"I still have hope, even with these complications, the violence, these fears. I still have confidence that one day we will see a new Egypt. My generation might not see these changes. We might be paving the way for the new generation to see these changes."*⁵²

In Ahmad Maher's story of now, he acknowledges the threats, complications, and setbacks experienced by the April 6 Youth Movement, but he also expresses the strategy of hope. This is a delicate balance that leaders must articulate, balancing hope against obstacles and placing small victories in the context of larger change. A leader must both simultaneously inspire hope, yet convey that the road to change is often a long and complicated one. Should a leader overpromise victory, create the illusion that change comes easy or fast, or undersell the commitment and dedication necessary to realize that change, they risk losing credibility by setting their followers up for failure and disappointment, or worse, destroying their sense of hope.

In the above example, Maher talks about the active role participation played in breaking through the fear and isolation and demonstrates that each action and arrest helped make the movement stronger. The specific ask of participating in a demonstration is linked to the vision of a new Egypt. Maher acknowledges that it may take time, but also conveys that every action is paving the way, if not for his generation, for the next.

⁵¹ Arrow, Ruaridh. *How to Start a Revolution*. Documentary film. Directed by Ruaridh Arrow, USA: Bid Indy, 2011.

⁵² Tom Perry, "Leading Activist says Egypt revolution back at square one," *Reuters*, Friday, August 23, 2013, accessed May 15, 2014: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/08/23/egypt-protests-activist-idINDEE97M0B320130823>.

V. ANALYSIS

A. Criteria for Success

The last three+ years in Egypt have been marked by violent protests, military force, human rights violations, deep political divisions, and turbulent elections, including the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi, who ruled for only a little over a year following the resignation of President Mubarak.⁵³ Some could argue, based on these findings, that Egypt's movement towards democracy and greater human and civil rights was a failure. However, this thesis identifies and analyzes three distinct criteria that demonstrate that the use of public narrative brought progress to the movement. The criteria include the electoral, civil society, and cultural shifts that have taken place in Egypt since the revolution.

B. Elections

Since the resignation of President Mubarak in February of 2011, elections in Egypt have been tumultuous. In June of 2012, Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood was elected president in the first competitive election in over 30 years. The election was declared "competitive and fair" by international observers.⁵⁴ Morsi was Egypt's first civilian and Islamic president, but ruled for little over a year before being removed by the Egyptian military in July of 2013. His removal followed four days of civil protests, and after two months in detention, state prosecutors announced Morsi would face trial for inciting murder and violence.⁵⁵ In June of 2014, former Egyptian Military Chief Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was elected president with more than

⁵³ F. Gregory Gause, III, "The Year the Arab Spring Went Bad," *Foreign Policy Magazine*, December 31, 2012, accessed May 25, 2014: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/12/31/the_year_the_arab_spring_went_bad.

⁵⁴ Seth G. Jones, "The Mirage of the Arab Spring: Deal with the Region You Have, Not the Region You Want," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2013, accessed May 25, 2014: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138478/seth-g-jones/the-mirage-of-the-arab-spring>.

⁵⁵ BBC News, "Middle East. Profile: Egypt's Morsi", December 18, 2013, accessed June 6, 2014: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18371427>.

96% of the vote.⁵⁶ However, pro-democracy groups, including the April 6 Youth Movement, criticized el-Sisi for his brutal crack down of protesters, the jailing of journalists and civil society leaders, and for defending the use of “virginity tests” on women detainees; they fear el-Sisi’s election is a return to military rule in Egypt.⁵⁷

Despite the turbulent electoral roller coaster, public narrative alone is not to blame. Political scientists contribute these setbacks more to the evolution of democracy and a lack of political infrastructure than to the failures of public narrative. Political scholar Sheri Berman writes in *Foreign Affairs*, “*Every surge of democratization over the last century -- after World War I, after World War II, during the so called third wave in recent decades -- has been followed by an undertow, accompanied by widespread questioning of the viability and even desirability of democratic governance in the areas in question. As soon as political progress stalls, a conservative reaction sets in as critics lament the turbulence of the new era and look back wistfully to the supposed stability and security of its authoritarian predecessor.*”⁵⁸ Egypt’s turbulence and violent struggle towards democracy, as evident in recent elections, can be attributed not to the failure of public narrative in inspiring a social movement, but rather, the long and arduous process of political development in which Egypt must purge the generations of apathy, inertia, fear, and isolation that was born and nurtured by Mubarak’s rule. The Mubarak regime, and the regime of Anwar al-Sadat before him, prohibited the development of legitimate political parties and many independent civil society organizations; as a result, religious organizations were one of the few venues that average citizens could use to express themselves

⁵⁶ CNN, “Egypt declares el-Sisi winner of presidential election,” June 4, 2014, accessed June 6, 2014: <http://www.cnn.com/2014/06/03/world/africa/egypt-presidential-election/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Sheri Berman, “The Promise of the Arab Spring,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2013, accessed May 25, 2014: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138479/sheri-berman/the-promise-of-the-arab-spring>.

and participate in their community⁵⁹. When Mubarak resigned and the first election occurred, only Islamists had the infrastructure in place to mobilize supporters effectively and the continued crack down on civil society groups, including the April 6 Youth Movement, made it extremely hard for political party organizing to take place.⁶⁰

Public narrative can indeed inspire social movements that bring about the end of a dictatorship, as it did in Egypt, but the process of building a democracy is just the beginning. Rashid and Maher's public narrative called for the end of the Mubarak rule, united narratives, and framed the movement in a way that brought forth a collective story of us and a story of now. However, following Mubarak's resignation, April 6 leaders, as well as other pro-democracy and human rights activists, were left to figure out what they stood for, and essentially, what would be the next chapter of the story they would tell together. In this sense, their use of public narrative after Mubarak's resignation failed. Before the revolution, the movement's narrative united frustrations over corruption, unemployment, poverty, the desire for change, and the longing for participation in the decision-making process.⁶¹ Following the revolution, the collective public narrative of the movement became splintered between political parties and candidates.⁶² In the time since the emotional and historic Tahrir Square protests that brought about the end of Mubarak's rule, the government has been able to take back control of the narrative, framing themselves and the military as the "*protectors of the revolution.*"⁶³ It has successfully used state media to paint the April 6 Youth Movement and their leaders as "*poor thugs and street kids in*

⁵⁹ Sheri Berman, "The Promise of the Arab Spring," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2013, accessed May 25, 2014: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138479/sheri-berman/the-promise-of-the-arab-spring>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED), "Writing a New Political Narrative in the Middle East," <http://pomed.org/blog-post/democracy-promotion/writing-a-new-political-narrative-in-the-middle-east/>, accessed May 25, 2014.

⁶² Lauren E. Bohn, "Egypt's Revolutionary Narrative Breaks Down," *Foreign Policy Magazine*, January 26, 2012, accessed May 25, 2014: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/01/26/egypt_s_revolutionary_narrative_breaks_down?wp_login_redirect=0.

⁶³ Haesham Sallam, "The Egyptian Revolution and the Politics of Histories," *Georgetown University*. April 2013, accessed April 14, 2014: doi:10.1017/S1049096513000231

an attempt to use class prejudice to dissociate activists from Egypt's upper- and middle classes."⁶⁴ April 6 leaders are now in prison and lack access to the tools to tell a cohesive public narrative that can unite people together and influence electoral change.

In this case, it is important to note that the Egyptian government's use of narrative fails to bridge the universal values of freedom and human rights and does not connect their story of self with the story of us shared by the Egyptian people. Instead, the government's narrative uses fear, rather than hope in order to bolster their power and this is what separates the Egyptian government's use of narrative from public narrative as a leadership art.

C. Civil Society

In the three+ years following the revolution that ended President Hosni Mubarak's 29-year rule, there have been many setbacks when it comes to building a civil society that can strengthen and advance human rights and democracy in Egypt. It is estimated that more than 2,500 Egyptians have been killed, 17,000 have been wounded, and 16,000 have been arrested in demonstrations and clashes since Morsi's ousting alone.⁶⁵ These statistics exceed Egypt's darkest days of the 1952 military-led revolution that brought Gamal Abdel Nasser to power and reflect an unprecedented use of violence.⁶⁶ When it comes to violence, Egypt is indeed worse off today than it was before the revolution. Furthermore, after a five percent GDP growth in 2010, Egypt's GDP has grown less than two percent following the revolution and large-scale economic

⁶⁴ William Barnes, "History, Narrative, and Revolution in Egypt," *Muftah*, February 13, 2014, accessed: <http://muftah.org/history-narrative-revolution-egypt/#.U4KX0lhdVGG>.

⁶⁵ Michele Dunne and Scott Williamson, "Egypt's Unprecedented Instability by the Numbers", *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 24, 2014, accessed June 6, 2014: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/24/egypt-s-unprecedented-instability-by-numbers/h5j3>.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

hardships and unemployment continue to plague the country.⁶⁷ In terms of freedom of expression, the government continues to solidify its control and silence the media and civil society by overhauling the constitution and “using tactics reminiscent of the Mubarak era.”⁶⁸

While the use of public narrative by the leaders of the April 6 Youth Movement cannot be hailed as bringing about a full and peaceful transition to democracy as it can in other social movements, such as Nelson Mandela’s South Africa or in Gandhi’s India, there have been positive changes when it comes to civil society. In terms of freedom of expression alone, the protests in Egypt gave way to such personalities as Bassem Youssef, the “Jon Stewart of Egypt.” Youssef is now using his own form of public narrative, largely told via humor and sarcasm, to unite Egyptian youth and moderates and expose the anti-democratic policies of the government both within Egypt and the international community. *Egypt Independent*, Egypt’s truly independent media establishment, has also emerged and such developments are inspiring other initiatives that promote the spirit of the protests and April 6 Youth Movement, something that would have been unfathomable under Mubarak’s Egypt just a few years ago.⁶⁹

In terms of civil society, the public narrative of the leaders of the April 6 movement left room for what narrative theorists call “narrativity,” that is, saying enough, but not too much about what comes next.⁷⁰ What is left out of the narrative is critical to success, as it lets the listener fill in the details and gives the youth movement in Egypt permission to unfold one chapter at a time. According to narrative theorists, “the ‘unwritten’ part of a well-told story stimulates the

⁶⁷ Michele Dunne and Scott Williamson, “Egypt’s Unprecedented Instability by the Numbers”, *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 24, 2014, accessed June 6, 2014: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/24/egypt-s-unprecedented-instability-by-numbers/h5j3>.

⁶⁸ Seth G. Jones, “The Mirage of the Arab Spring: Deal with the Region You Have, Not the Region You Want,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2013, accessed May 25, 2014: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138478/seth-g-jones/the-mirage-of-the-arab-spring>.

⁶⁹ H.A. Hellyer, “The Arab Spring Ain’t Over,” *The Atlantic*, April 1, 2013, accessed May 27, 2014: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/the-arab-spring-aint-over/274528/>.

⁷⁰ Joseph E. Davis, “Narrative and Social Movements: The Power of Stories,” in *Stories of Change, Narrative and Social Movements*, ed. Joseph E. Davis et al, (State University of New York Press, 2002), Page 16

audience's creative participation and identification and invites them to supply what is unspecified yet required."⁷¹ This is evident in Egypt today, especially in terms of civil society, where activists inspired by the initial April 6 movement and revolution are continuing to write the narrative about what comes next.

Noting that social movements unfold one chapter at a time, the public narratives told by Rashid and Maher reflect the small victories taking place in Egypt, and when acknowledged and celebrated as victories, can continue to inspire hope and unite actions that will chip away at the oppressive tactics of the Egyptian government. A key source of hope, after all, lies in the experience of a credible solution⁷², not just reports of success elsewhere, such as Tunisia, but in directly experiencing success and victories, no matter how small. In examining the civil society changes taking place in Egypt, while setbacks have occurred and the road has been slow, Rashid and Maher's use of public narrative was indeed a success, as demonstrated by the countless other young activists that continue to move forward in filling in the unwritten narrative of the next chapter of social change in Egypt.

D. Cultural Shifts

Perhaps the most significant achievement of Rashid and Maher's use of public narrative is evident in the cultural shifts taking place in Egypt in the time since the original April 6 protest, especially among young people. Here is where Rashid and Maher leave a legacy of hope to future generations within Egypt, and potentially outside of Egypt. There is little power in a movement of one and this is where public narrative, in particular the story of us, can have a

⁷¹ Joseph E. Davis, "Narrative and Social Movements: The Power of Stories," in *Stories of Change, Narrative and Social Movements*, ed. Joseph E. Davis et al, (State University of New York Press, 2002), Page 16

⁷² Marshall Ganz, "Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power," *Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*. Accessed April 16, 2014. <http://leadingchangenetwork.com/files/2012/05/Public-Narrative-Collective-Action-and-Power.pdf>.

profound effect in inspiring a social movement. Despite arrests, torture, detainment, censorship, and imprisonment, the leaders of the April 6 Youth Movement have reduced the fear and isolation shared by their generation before the protests. Their ability to leverage technology to tell a story, unite experiences, reduce isolation, and inspire a massive number of youth to come forward and participate in protests and demonstrations, both leading up to the revolution and since, is changing the face of Egypt.

Pro-democracy social movements spread across Eastern Europe, Latin America, South Africa, and East Asia over the last few decades, but these movements were not echoed in the Middle East until the Arab Spring. The April 6 Youth Movement was able to lead the way in giving young people a reason to push for the universal values of political freedom and economic opportunity and the time was ripe.⁷³ Egypt was suffering from wide spread unemployment and a “youth bulge,” both of which helped Rashid and Maher build a story of us and a story of now that expressed the shared values, experiences, and frustrations of their generation. Their story of self naturally reflected and tapped into the day-to-day hopes and fears of other youth. They were able to use their story to teach and inspire, as well as offer caution. Furthermore, their story of us demonstrated the capacity and resources their generation had, mainly power in numbers. This opportunity was noted by Foreign Policy magazine in their coverage of the Arab Spring, Egyptians “*did not need a ‘human development report’ to tell them of their desolation. Consent had drained out of public life; the only glue between ruler and ruled was suspicion and fear.*”

⁷³ Fouad Ajami, “The Arab Spring at One: A Year of Living Dangerously,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2012, accessed May 8, 2014: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137053/fouad-ajami/the-arab-spring-at-one>.

There was no public project to bequeath to a generation coming into its own -- and this the largest and youngest population yet."⁷⁴

Ahmad Maher is currently in prison, but much of the world knows his name and the United States Department of State, who prior to the Arab Spring was noted for ignoring many of the human rights violations taking place in Egypt, is asking for his release. Despite brutal police crackdowns, protesters, many of them students and young people, still continue to take to the street in opposition of human rights abuses. It is in these glimpses of progress and protest that Rashid and Maher's legacy and story of us still rings powerful and where their use of public narrative has had success despite the challenges and setbacks. As you may recall, both Rashid and Maher's story of us offered a credible path of "how to get from there to there."⁷⁵ Neither promised a quick and easy victory, but rather, used their story of us to convey a vision of hope and communicate the idea that change can evolve one small victory at a time. It was through offering a sense of hope that other youth believed change was possible and it is why, despite numerous setbacks, freedom of expression in Egypt is more alive today than it was prior to the April 6 Youth Movement and the world is more aware of the human rights abuses and censorship of pro-democracy activists. Democracy might not be fully realized, but the world is now paying attention. Rashid and Maher were both able to tell a story of us that simultaneously inspired hope, yet conveyed that the type of change their generation was seeking would likely take a long time, perhaps another generation, to realize. When it comes to cultural shifts in Egypt, their public narrative was indeed successful, largely because they were able to inspire others by

⁷⁴ Fouad Ajami, "The Arab Spring at One: A Year of Living Dangerously," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2012, accessed May 8, 2014: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137053/fouad-ajami/the-arab-spring-at-one>.

⁷⁵ Marshall Ganz, "What is Public Narrative," John F. Kennedy School for Government, Harvard University (2008).

framing their public narrative around what young people can do, rather than what they cannot do.⁷⁶

VI. CONCLUSION

When it comes to social movements, public narrative and strategy overlap to create a credible vision of how to get from here to there.⁷⁷ Public narrative effectively weaves together a concrete vision that can unfold one chapter at a time and is based on universal values.⁷⁸ Rashid and Maher's public narrative began by mobilizing over 70,000 people to join the call for strikes in support of textile workers in the city of al-Mahalla al-Kubra in 2008. By demonstrating that they could win a small victory and inspire people to action through the strategic use of public narrative, the April 6 Youth Movement leaders helped show that change was possible and allowed the leaders to begin to tell a new story that included the possibility of larger change, or a social movement, in Egypt.

While there have been many obstacles and setbacks in Egypt's struggle toward actualizing human rights and democracy, the use of public narrative stirred and inspired a generation of activists who were willing to face arrest, detainment, and torture to have their voices heard. This was a far cry from the generations of apathy and inertia that preceded the April 6 Youth Movement. As the analysis notes, other conditions, including the lack of political infrastructure and the often slow-moving evolution of democracy, contributed to the setbacks. Still other circumstances, including Tunisia's revolution, helped bring about Mubarak's fall. Regardless, public narrative strategically united youth behind a vision of change, reduced

⁷⁶ Marshall Ganz, "Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power," *Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*. Accessed April 16, 2014. <http://leadingchangenetwork.com/files/2012/05/Public-Narrative-Collective-Action-and-Power.pdf>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

isolation through sharing the narrative both on social media and in the streets, and inspired collective action, especially in the face of adversity and uncertainty. Public narrative helped frame a picture of what the future of Egypt could look like, and therefore, continues to prove it is a vital strategy in countering apathy, isolation, and cynicism and in inspiring action in the face of uncertainty and adversity.

Despite all of the setbacks, the fact that active protests led by young people are still taking place in Egypt today, three+ years after the fall of Mubarak, is evident that public narrative was successful in instilling a sense of hope in Egypt's young people that a new story is possible. Indeed, Rashid and Maher's legacy of leadership via public narrative, much like the public narrative leadership shared and studied by social movement leaders before them, including Gandhi, Churchill, and Mandela, will likely influence future generations and other cultures and communities to use their story of self, story of us, and story of now to inspire large scale change. Their ability to bridge the universal values of freedom and human rights, connect their story of self with a shared story of us, and lead through hope resonates across generations and geographical boundaries. These qualities are what makes public narrative a leadership art and distinguishes itself from the use of a fear-based narrative used by dictators.

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