



Press Bulletin
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Mike Bonanno, one of the founders of The Yes Man and Hakan Bilginer, the founder of Zaytung got together at the Boğaziçi University

'The stronger the pressure, the stronger the satire'

Mike Bonanno, one of the founders of **The Yes Men**, which affected masses with its creative actions, and **Hakan Bilginer**, founder of **Zaytung**, which started a brand new journalistic language of humor, got together in a conversation titled **"Resisting 'Power' by Faking It"** moderated by **Ömer Madra** in the context of Boğaziçi Chronicles events. Both men shared how they impacted the audience by the humor they utilize.

Through humor we spread the virus of resistance

Bonanno, explained that The Yes Men does not do mere sarcasm, rather what they essentially want to do is to show that an alternative world is also possible from the stand point of power and authority. Bonanno defined what they do as "identity correction" and said: "We have fun being involved in politics because both comprise one another. What makes what we do ridiculous and fun is the political content...We love to laugh. We believe that humor is contagious and we're spreading the virus of resistance among people."

We want our actions to be sued

Bonanno also mentioned that they prefer to be sued by individuals and corporations they target during their actions and continued: "Lawsuits continue forever and thanks to this we are able carry the matters, to which we would like to attract attention, many times to the top of the agenda. World Trade Organization withdrew its lawsuit against us. If they hadn't done so, we would have made sure that the topic was discussed even more widely."

On the other hand, Hakan Bilginer, founder of Zaytung, stated that they were more careful about the content which could possibly result in legal problems and that they had never been a party to a lawsuit yet. He also supported the idea that such lawsuits always hurt the plaintiff as well.

Failure is just steps towards success

During the conversation Mike Bonanno said the following: "The Yes Men has a claim and that claim is to correct the world. By collaborating with organizations running certain campaigns, we are trying to change the things related to legislation and state policies when we believe they are not on the right track. We succeeded in creating an impact on the climate change policy of WTO. Large corporations started to leave WTO and at the end WTO was obliged to change its policies." Bonanno also added: "There's a good possibility that activist movements will fail for an extended period of time before they can actually succeed. For example, ending slavery and granting women the right to elect and be elected are some of the movements for which it was a matter of long years for change to happen."

Hakan Bilginer: Zaytung makes people feel like 'I'm not alone'

Hakan Bilginer, stating that it's not possible to say exactly what people find funny at Zaytung, said: "The feedback we get from many readers shows that people feel more comfortable when they read our news and become a part of a silent solidarity in the face of absurdity of what's going on around us. It's kind of saying "I'm not the

only one that finds this absurd, there are others in this country who believe something's not going right and they feel content when they think they're not alone. "

Mike Bonanno mentioned that such examples were more widespread in history, and that this solidarity was born as a result of ideas pushed underground by the authority's pressure. Bonanno went on saying: "For example, such solidarity was also born in Poland and Russia during the period of resistance. The common voice that rises when all other voices are suppressed, may only say things that no one else could say out loud, through humor. The stronger the pressure, the stronger the satire is."

Politics is not serious anymore

Bilginer commented that the absurdity of the daily news increases creativity and that they see themselves in competition with newspapers. He, then, continued to summarize his insights on the political agenda and the stance of political actors as follows: "There was politics and political leaders back in 90s as well. They used to do silly things from time to time too. At such times, bad things used to also happen in the country but everything was somewhat taken more seriously. All that absurdity used to stay within the boundaries of state seriousness. You would never dare to speak your own thoughts to even a politician that you strongly disagree with because the politician would suppress you with his knowledge and education even though you were right. Now you doubt whether these people are really serious in what they say, or what they do. Our generation is really surprised that state formality is so lost".

The Yes Men: The couple whose actions define public opinion

*Boğaziçi Chronicles's guests **Andy Bichlbaum** and **Mike Bonanno** managed to get the attention of the whole world as The Yes Men through some very innovative actions such as developing fake web sites, attending meetings disguised as politicians or high level representatives of significant institutions. The Yes Men has created a huge public interest with their actions targeting many renowned individuals and institutions such as World Trade Organization, George Bush, Heritage Foundation, Dow Chemicals and many more.*

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