

**Program Script for Rodin Alper Bingöl (Aired on 7 March 2010)**

**Category: Civic Participation**

**Location: İstanbul**

This is not a joke. Who would like to take a seat?

One day you are walking down the street, maybe coming home from work or seeing a friend. You have so many things on your mind.

You wonder how your favorite team will play this week, or where you would like to go on your next vacation. Then suddenly you see a wheelchair in the middle of the street. All of a sudden you are in a different dimension, and you see the following sign:

This is not a joke. Who would like to take a seat?

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**Interview with Erkan Akyalçın:**

**Reporter:** Have you ever heard the Removing Barriers Movement?

**Erkan Akyalçın:** I just found out about it, I’m reading about it now. I didn’t know that there were 8.5 million people with disabilities in Turkey.

I had seen the engellerikaldir.com site once on the net; I had found it an amazing site. After reading this, I can only tell you this much about what I am feeling right now:

I see how wrong we are. I think we are the real blind ones.

I realized that they are not the one with disabilities, we are. Actually we are blind to realize that we have not accepted that there are 8.5 million people with disabilities in Turkey.

We go to movies, theatres without any problems.

But it is so difficult for them to go see a movie or play. I think we have to really support this project.

We have to be able to think and do better things for them.

Because there is no difference between us. The only difference is that we are the one with disabilities, not them.

Because we are blind to see that we aren’t helping them.

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You freeze when you start to think about it. Your mind starts to think proactively, all of a sudden you start to think of the persons with disabilities.

This wheelchair is placed in different parts of the city at different hours with the same sign on it. This campaign makes you take notice.

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Rodin Alper Bingöl is a young man in the advertising sector. When he was studying at Bilgi University, he completed his thesis on the disabled.

Our objective is to present a more dramatic project this time. And one morning, I woke up with an idea in mind.

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### **Interview with Rodin Alper:**

The project actually started as my thesis project and I realized that the disability issue is perceived within the context of human rights, not as a specific problem.

I decided to focus on this. I had the idea of a website way in the beginning, a site about removing barriers.

People think that the biggest problem of people with disabilities in Turkey is that they cannot be integrated into social life.

I thought the same way. I had met up with many persons with disabilities and talked about the problems they faced.

They want to go to movie theatres, to plays, to be able to continue their education, to have job opportunities. But the social barriers that they face prevent them to do these activities.

A website to present the removing barriers movement was necessary. Then, a commercial, billboards and posters.

But then I realized that we had to do something that would really catch people’s attention.

So we designed the “This is not a joke” campaign and launched it on 1 April (April Fools’ Day). I began to model the design of the campaign right away.

I liked the idea even more when I saw it on computer screen myself. I instantly got in touch with a few people because this was not a project that I could do on my own.

With the help of a few friends, on April 1st we started the first awareness campaign.

It’s as if no one finds it strange when you make a joke on April 1st because it is April Fools’ Day. But when you say “this is not a joke”, you were able to attract the attention of many more people.

We don’t necessarily want people to do something about disability per se; we just want them to be aware of it. There are 8.5 million people with disabilities in Turkey and they are constantly facing challenges in daily life.

Some daily activities you do without even thinking about it, But these may be a big deal for persons with disabilities.

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Rodin Alper Bingöl’s goal is to do something for those who DO NOT have disabilities: To make them more aware.

He wanted to shake people up; give them a shocking reality check. And he also wanted to make use of this generation’s most critical tool; the internet.

And having shared the same passions about this issue, in a short time we realised we were not alone in this pursuit.

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#### **Interview with Tuğba Şafak:**

One morning I read something in the newspaper. I read that someone tried to stop a person with disabilities who was at a concert and was trying to sell items in return for a donation to a Foundation for people with disabilities.

They physically removed this person from the concert area.

There was a picture of that person crying. The district governor tried to get involved and resolve the situation.

But unfortunately the damage had been done. This really affected me deeply.

Especially since it was clear they just did not want to see this person around.

I wanted to be able to do something for that person. Internet was an accessible source for me at that moment. I looked into organizations that worked for people with disabilities.

At the top of the search list was “Removing Barriers Movement”. There was an application form. I filled in the form and sent my CV and waited. I was quite eager during the waiting period, the news I had seen in the paper had really upset me and I really wanted to do something.

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### **Interview with Tuğba Şirin:**

The best part is this: the objective of this NGO is not to help the people with disabilities but to remove the barriers in society’s mind. It portrays a totally positive attitude towards removing the barriers, to raise awareness.

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Till this day, Removing Barriers Movement has reached about 300 thousand people.

The movement constantly informs its followers about what is happening with the people with disabilities in Turkey. They also try to raise awareness through newspaper and billboard advertisements.

When doing this, they use real facts and figures with messages that are very effective.

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Did you know?

Only 1.49% of people with disabilities have the opportunity to use social and cultural services.

Did you know?

%42.8 percent of the people with orthopedically disabilities cannot use public transportation.

Did you know?

Only %9.63 of people with disabilities has access to rehabilitation and support centers.

Did you know?

Only %16.53 of women with disabilities have access to education.

Did you know?

Only 13.71% of people with disabilities are able to attend vocational courses.

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But the movement is not only on the internet and media. It is also on the streets where people with disabilities cannot go to. With one simple wheelchair all by itself, they try to show the public the problems people with disabilities are facing.

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**Interview with a person with disability:**

What you are talking about really excites me because even if they distribute these wheelchairs, people still stay indoors and look out their windows.

You have to actively be involved. You have to go shopping for groceries, go to the hairdresser.

People need to see us so that they can understand what the problem is. It is very important that you are out and about. I have been doing so for 14 years.

This is not a sentence; this is a way of life. This can be learned but it is not enough just for us to learn; our family, those around us, and society also have to learn. This won’t change in one night.

I pursue my struggle in a different way. If I can’t enter a restaurant, I get a ramp made.

Sometimes you just have to be tough, be persistent.

**Rodin Alper Bingöl:** You don’t give up, do you?

**Person with disability:** Well this won’t be easy but it’s not impossible...

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**Interview with Rodin Alper Bingöl**

This was a thesis project; it was not an official project. I had nothing other than this to show as reference.

However, wherever we visited, they said yes. We visited Microsoft with our project and they accepted. It’s not official but they give us some advertising rights.

We go to Ströer and want billboards, they give us support, too. After some time, I started wondering why these companies were helping us out so much because we don’t have official status.

But all the companies we visited, the 160 people we talked to, all of them took part in the campaign...

Because they all wanted to be part of a change but they could not find the right people and project to support.

We realized that people really do want to help, to do things; but they cannot find an organization to work with.

It’s really hard to find this kind of work in this field. So every company we approached looked upon us very favorably.

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### **An interview with a person on the street:**

There are elevators for the people with disabilities but other people use them- This is so thoughtless and rude.

That has been reserved for these people- but while that person waits for the elevator, others are violating his/her rights.

That is horrible, we have to pay attention to these issues. These are very small examples perhaps but we have to be more aware.

We have to protect their rights so of course we have to support them. For them to live better lives, we have to work hand in hand to make sure that they live easier lives and help remove the barriers.

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### **Interview with Rodin Alper Bingöl:**

I have only one thing to say to everyone. To just your average person, anything as simple as washing your face or eating dinner could be a regular thing.

But just think that even these tasks are difficult.

If it’s not a matter of choice- we have to secure equality. We are all human and share the same right to life and right to live.

As time goes by, 5 years later on you attend school, they can’t. 10 years later you start to have friends, they start to loosed friends (as a result of isolation).

15 years down the line you go to university, you get praise from your family, awards from school. They get put in the room next door when a guest comes to the home...

They move on with their lives and because of these injustices, some never get to share in the joys of life.

In reality they really do not benefit from the same right to life and living as others do.

I just want people to think about this, be aware, be sensitive to this topic and to live their daily lives being more aware of what they have and what they don’t.

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When Rodin Alper Bingöl was a young university student, he started with a thesis project.

He learned about the conditions that people with disabilities live with and he decided to continue with his project. He turned his ideas into a project.

He tried to create awareness in everyone’s minds. He created a tremendous difference with the projects he brought to life, by showing there is no difference between people who have disabilities and who do not.

Rodin Alper Bingöl’s story is not, like his campaign suggests, “a joke”. Thankfully it isn’t “a joke”. Thankfully there are people like him.

Thankfully there are people who make differences in other people’s lives.

And on behalf of the Turkey’s Changemakers program, we are thankful to have the chance to share stories like that of Rodin Alp.

How lucky we are. Dear viewers, after a short break we will be ending our show.

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**(Commercial about people with visual disabilities from the Six Points Foundation of the Blind, in a project funded by Sabancı Foundation)**

I can use the computer with my eyes closed

I can massage with my eyes closed

I can cook with my eyes closed

I can dance with my eyes closed

I can defend my client with my eyes closed

I can drive with my eyes closed

People with disabilities can do everything that they are trained for. For more information visit Six Dots Foundation for the Blind.

You can trust us in the workplace but please, for your safety, don’t drive with your eyes closed.

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We have come to the end of another Turkey’s Changemakers program. We came today with a very different story. We will continue to tell you about different stories like this.

If you want to participate in Turkey’s Changemakers, you can call us at 0212 249 23 14.

Or go onto our website [www.farkyaranlar.org](http://www.farkyaranlar.org) and fill out the form. You can also watch the previous episodes of Turkey’s Changemakers on our site.

You can watch it in Turkish or English. We come to you from the Seed Conference Center. You have been watching Turkey’s Changemakers which is being sponsored by the Sabancı Foundation.

Until we meet again on a new program, we wish you well.