

Eleven other times Americans marched on the National Mall in D.C.

By Smithsonian.com, adapted by Newsela staff on 01.25.17

Word Count **1,026**

Level **1020L**



TOP: With the U.S. Capitol in the background, anti-Vietnam War demonstrators march toward the White House during the Moratorium Day March on Washington, D.C., November 15, 1969. AP Photo. BOTTOM: Crowds surrounding the Reflecting Pool during the 1963 March on Washington. Photo by Warren K. Leffler, courtesy of Library of Congress.

Throughout the country's history, many people have marched on the nation's capital to express their fears and frustrations.

Before the next big march on Washington, explore 11 of the largest marches on Washington. From the Ku Klux Klan to the People's Anti-War Mobilization, Washington's history of marches shows the social, cultural and political life of America.

Suffrage March – March 3, 1913

One day before Woodrow Wilson's presidential inauguration, 5,000 women paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue to demand the right to vote. It was the first civil rights parade in the capital, and it drew plenty of attention. About 500,000 people watched the procession.

Ku Klux Klan March – August 8, 1925

The Ku Klux Klan had an astounding 3 million members in the 1920s. They were brought together by hatred of European Catholics, Jewish immigrants and African-Americans. At the time, the U.S. population was just 106.5 million people. Between 50,000 and 60,000 Klansmen participated in the march. Despite fears that the march would lead to violence, it was mainly peaceful. Plenty of newspapers cheered on the Klan. A Maryland newspaper described its readers as "quivering in excited anticipation" of the march.

Bonus Army March – June 17, 1932

After the end of World War I, Congress rewarded American veterans with certificates worth \$1,000. The veterans were not allowed to cash it in for the full amount for more than 20 years. But when the Great Depression led to mass unemployment and hunger, desperate vets hoped to get the money early.

The "Bonus Expeditionary Forces" were a group of 20,000 vets who came to Washington, some with their families. When lawmakers defeated a bill that would have let them collect the money early, the crowd became desperate. Army troops chased the veterans out with gas, bayonets and sabers. Many were injured.

March On Washington For Jobs And Freedom – August 28, 1963

The demonstration is best remembered for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. It called for fighting injustice and inequalities against African-Americans. The march brought together 160,000 black people and 60,000 white people. The march, along with many other civil rights protests, led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

Moratorium To End The War In Vietnam – October 15, 1969

More than a decade into the Vietnam War, the public was increasingly desperate for an end. To show opposition to the war, Americans across the U.S. participated in street rallies, school programs and religious services. The Peace Moratorium is believed to be the biggest demonstration in U.S. history. Two million people participated, and 200,000 of them marched across Washington. A month later, a follow-up rally brought 500,000 anti-war protesters to Washington, making it the largest political rally in the nation's history.



Kent State Protest – May 9, 1970

Americans across the country organized protests against the Vietnam War, especially at universities. At Kent State in Ohio, the rallies turned into rioting in town and on the campus. The National Guard was called in. While overseeing a daytime campus demonstration, students

confronted the guardsmen, who fired into the crowd of students. Four students were killed and nine were seriously wounded.

The shootings sparked protests across the country, with nearly 500 colleges shut down or disrupted due to rioting. Eight of the guardsmen who fired on the students were indicted, or charged, but the case was dismissed because there was not enough evidence. The Kent State shooting also spurred another anti-war protest in Washington, with 100,000 participants voicing their fears and frustrations.

Anti-Nuclear March – May 6, 1979

On March 28, 1979, the U.S. had its most serious nuclear accident. A reactor in Middletown, Pennsylvania, at the Three Mile Island plant, experienced a severe core meltdown. Some nuclear material escaped, but it did not affect the surrounding people or environment. However, the accident terrified people across the country.

The incident tapped into larger fears over nuclear war and weapons. Following the Three Mile Island meltdown, 125,000 protesters gathered in Washington on May 6.

National March for Lesbian and Gay Rights – October 14, 1979

About 100,000 protesters marched on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) rights.

A decade later, more than 500,000 people gathered for another march. They were angry that the government wasn't really responding to the AIDS crisis. AIDS is a deadly disease caused by the HIV virus, which is spread through certain bodily fluids. Many gay people became sick with AIDS and died, but now there are many medications to control it.

The LGBTQ movement had a major victory in June 2015, when the Supreme Court ruled that states must allow gay people to get married.

People's Anti-War Mobilization – May 3, 1981

The crowd came together to protest President Ronald Reagan in 1981. The demonstration was co-sponsored by over 1,000 individuals and organizations across the country. They marched for many different causes, ranging from Palestinian rights in the Middle East to U.S. involvement in the El Salvador civil war.

Million Man March - October 16, 1995

The Million Man March in 1995 was for African-American unity. The march was organized by the Nation of Islam and led by Louis Farrakhan, the controversial leader of the organization.

At the 1995 rally, Farrakhan and others told African-American men to be responsible for themselves, their families and their communities. The march brought together hundreds of thousands of people and helped encourage African-American men to join together to become politically involved.

Protest Against The Iraq War – October 26, 2002

"If we act out of fear and not hope, we get bitter and not better," civil rights activist Reverend Jesse Jackson told a crowd of 100,000. The protest was against the war in Iraq. It was Washington's largest anti-war demonstration since the Vietnam War. There were similar demonstrations in Berlin, Rome, Tokyo, Copenhagen, Mexico City and in other cities around the world.

In 2003, the U.S. invasion of Iraq began and continued until 2011. It is estimated more than 165,000 Iraqi civilians and close to 7,000 American soldiers died in the war.