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# 20/20 InSight:

Posters from the 2017 Women's March

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October 17–February 10, 2020

The Women's March of January 21, 2017, held in cities across the United States, brought millions of people together for a demonstration in response to the election of Donald J. Trump.

Taking to the streets, protesters made posters addressing issues of immigration, environmentalism, and civil rights that tapped into an apprehension about the future of democracy in the United States and, in particular, the treatment of women.

The 2017 Women's March was a highwater mark of participation in recent memory, but it follows a tradition of protests and persistent action in the quest for equal rights. Equally enduring are the graphics and poster images that have carried through generations of marches, rallies, and grassroots action. Today's demonstrators arm themselves with symbols from poster history, borrowing the power of their ideology while crafting new meaning. *20/20 InSight* looks at the 2017 Women's March within this larger context to understand what has come before and to encourage participation in the future of this democracy.

#PH2020

# Fist



The raised fist, or “anti-Fascist salute,” has long been associated with leftist causes dating back to the 1910s, and then as a major symbol in the French student demonstrations of May 1968 and anti-Vietnam War posters. On a few of the surrounding posters, the fist appears within the female glyph, a symbol associated with the Greek goddess Venus. The female/fist symbol was made famous in posters created by the See Red Women’s Workshop, a British art collective formed in 1974 to respond to “images of women used by capitalist ideology to keep women from disputing their secondary status in a male-dominated society.”

# Rosie



Created in 1943 as a workplace incentive poster, Rosie the Riveter's message of increased production has been transformed into an icon of feminist solidarity. Rosie herself is a constant poster fixture. Her catchphrase adapts to include Beyonce lyrics and Hillary Clinton's campaign slogan, and Rosie even transforms into Michelle Obama.

# Reproductive Freedom



The National Organization for Women’s iconic round poster, still used in protests today, mimics the circular logo of NOW. Clothes hangers have been used to symbolize dangerous, illegal abortions that often ended in death. The words “Never Again” reference the striking image published in *Ms. magazine* in 1973 of Gerri Santoro, who died from a back-alley abortion. The Gadsden flag—a yellow field with a rattlesnake—dates back to the Revolutionary War and the rebellion of the 13 original colonies. It has been appropriated by both conservative groups and women’s rights protestors.

# Internet Influence



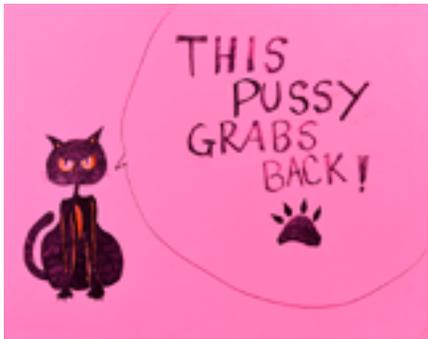
As social media sites like Reddit, Twitter, and Facebook are increasingly used as forums for protest and activism, memes have become a new source of visual connectivity. Likewise, hashtags have become popular ways of relating with like-minded individuals. Emojis, invented in 1998, have become shorthand for emotions which users may have trouble expressing with words.

# Professional Design



The “We the People” series by artist Shepard Fairey was published on inauguration day in the *Washington Post*, *the New York Times* and *USA Today* as paid advertising funded by a Kickstarter campaign. The images were also available for download to print at home. People were encouraged to use them as protest signs for the 2017 Women’s March. Fairey was also responsible for the iconic Obama *Hope* poster. Many professional designers and agencies created posters available for download and distribution on the day of the Women’s March, a growing trend in protests today.

# Pink Wall



A flood of voices made up the 2017 march, but a few unifying factors produced an interesting visual as well as civic consensus. Sifting through the more than 4,000 signs in Poster House's archive, a distinct size and color unified many of the signs in the march. 22x28 pink poster board is commercially available in almost the same hue in stores all over America. While not a formally organized part of the march, it represented a united front on the street.

# Past / Present

## The History of U.S. Actions for Change

The 2017 Women's March draws on a long and courageous history of action in the United States. Using the major subjects represented at the 2017 March, Poster House looks back at some of the protests, marches, and actions taken to encourage change in the U.S. legal system to address discrimination.



See Red Women's Workshop, 1978

## **Women's Rights Are Human Rights**

Mar 3, 1913

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### **Women's Suffrage March**



The first organized political march in Washington D.C. was planned by women fighting for the right to vote. They built floats, wore costumes,

and were led by activist Inez Milholland riding a white horse. U.S. conventions addressing women's rights date back to 1848, but this 1913 march set off a seven-year fight that resulted in the Nineteenth Amendment, prohibiting voter discrimination based on sex. 2020 marks the 100th year that women have had the right to vote. The United States is 243 years old.

Oct 1921–Present day

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### **Equal Rights Amendment**

Introduced for the first time in 1921, the Equal Rights Amendment was presented in every congressional session between then and 1972, when it finally passed the House and Senate. The Amendment served to guarantee equality between men and women, but it devolved into a debate about gender roles. Politicians scared women by telling them they would be drafted in times of war, or they might not receive alimony or gain custody of their children in a divorce. The deadline to be ratified by the remaining states has been extended several times, and as of today, only 37 states have approved the Amendment.

**Mar 21, 1969**

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## **Abortion Speak out**

Before *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973, each state had its own set of laws governing abortion. The Abortion Speak Out was organized to protest the male-only (and one nun) legislative hearing that was reviewing the state laws of New York. Twelve women spoke openly about their abortions in front of a crowd of hundreds, storming the hearing and demanding that real experts on the subject be heard. Abortion was made legal in the U.S. in 1973 after an all-male Supreme Court ruled that women had the right to choose.

**1986, 1989, 1992, & 2004**

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## **March for Women's Lives**

The March for Women's Lives has been an ongoing effort to bring attention to reproductive freedom. Held over many years with ever-increasing numbers of protesters, the demonstrations sought to fight off encroachments on a woman's right to choose. Organized by the National Organization for Women, an estimated 80,000 people participated in the first march.

**May 2014**

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## **#YesAllWomen**

*#YesAllWomen* became a popular Twitter hashtag in which users share stories of misogyny and violence against women. Twitter has become a popular place of protest, spawning other hashtags like: *#SayHerName* (2015) meant to raise awareness for black female victims of police brutality and anti-black violence in the United States, *#ShoutYourAbortion* (2015) tweets about experiences expressed without shame or regret to destigmatize abortion, *#MeToo* (2017) used to talk about sexual assault and harassment in the workplace, made more well known with support from the entertainment industry. Social media, in some cases, is a replacement for taking to the streets, but also a compelling way to organize physical protests.

## **Black Lives Matter**

**Jul 28, 1917**

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### **The Negro Silent Protest Parade**

As a reaction to a wave of violence against African Americans in the South, NAACP leaders James Weldon Johnson and W.E.B. DuBois created a committee for a protest parade in 1917. Eighty-five years earlier, freed black people were prohibited from congregating in large groups in the South after Nat Turner's Rebellion. But the Negro Silent Protest Parade gathered 10,000 African American women, children, and men who silently marched down 5th Avenue as a show of solidarity in support of racial reform.



Designer Unknown, 1968

**Dec 1, 1955–Dec 20, 1956**

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### **Montgomery Bus Boycott**

When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man, she was thrown in jail. Four days later, the black community organized a boycott of the bus system that would last for 381 days. Considered by many to be the start of the Civil Rights Movement, this boycott convinced the U.S. Supreme Court to order the integration of the bus system nationwide.

**Aug 28, 1963**

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### **March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom**

In 1941, A. Philip Randolph threatened a 50,000-person march on Washington to protest discriminatory hiring in war industries, resulting in the Fair employment Act. In 1963 he co-organized the march for Jobs and Freedom, attended by an estimated 250,000 people. Years in themaking, the timing of the march was escalated by a series of violent



clashes in the South between police, non-violent protestors, and other citizens. At the march, unions like the American Auto Workers provided posters to protestors, who listened to performances and speeches including MLK’s famous “I Have A Dream” speech.

**Feb 12–Apr 16, 1968**

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## **Memphis Sanitation Strike**

After two sanitation workers were killed due to a faulty garbage truck, workers fed up with a lack of safety measures created a labor union to strike for improved working conditions and wage increases. Using non-violent civil disobedience, the protesters found themselves in an increasingly volatile atmosphere. The violence culminated in the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., who had been in support of the strike and present at many gatherings. The protest continued after his death and gained recognition of the sanitation union, wage increases, and improved conditions.

**2013–Present Day**

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## **Black Lives Matter**



In response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s shooter, three women—Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi—

created a political movement using the Twitter hashtag *#BlackLivesMatter*. This hashtag turned into physical protest after Mike Brown was fatally shot while trying to surrender to the police in Ferguson, MO. Using the hashtag as an organizational tool, BLM was able to respond to the racially-motivated murder by coordinating a bus ride of protesters they called the Black Lives Matter Ride, echoing Freedom Rides of the Civil Rights Movement. With a global network of over 40 chapters, BLM continues to focus their efforts on speaking out against police killings of black people and broader issues such as racial profiling, police brutality, and racial inequality in the United States criminal justice system.

## **No Human Is Illegal**

Oct 12, 1933

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### **ILGWU**

Working conditions for Los Angeles garment workers had gotten so appalling that Rose Pesotta, an immigrant from Ukraine, along with fellow union organizer Anita Andrade Castro led a successful strike for the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union. The strike led to increased wages and made working conditions better for the mostly undocumented Mexicans that staffed Los Angeles's garment factories.



Micha Bazant, 2007

**Sep 8, 1965–1970**

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## **United Farm Workers**

American growers have long used undocumented labor on U.S. farms. The 1942 Bracero program was a series of laws that guaranteed proper treatment and fair wages to workers brought in from other countries while the American workforce was depleted by war. However, the immigration system would catch and deport undocumented workers, but never sanction the farms that employed them. Workers were always at a disadvantage, and unions were needed. Co-founded by Dolores Huerta and Cesar



Chavez, the United Farm Workers Union formed as a result of the five year Delano Grape Strike, which merged the unions of Mexican and Filipino laborers.

Their assembled efforts over five years improved working conditions and wages for the largely immigrant worker community and created a longstanding union that continues to advocate for undocumented farm laborers today.

**May 1, 2006**

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## **Day Without an Immigrant**

Coinciding with May Day, this was a one-day boycott of schools and businesses by immigrants in the U.S. Participants were encouraged not to buy, sell, work, or attend school to illustrate how many undocumented workers are working in and necessary to the United States. The rallies called for general amnesty and legalization programs for undocumented workers.

Jan/Feb 2017

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## Muslim Ban Protest

On January 27, President Trump signed an executive order—nicknamed the Muslim Ban—which suspended the admission of all refugees entering the U.S. for 120 days, with an indefinite block for Syrian refugees. The order barred citizens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen from entering the U.S. for 90 days. Almost 2,000



protesters rushed to airports in New York City, with many other cities joining in throughout the coming months. The order sped through the judicial system, often receiving a stay of execution until it finally reached the Supreme Court, which upheld a slightly modified version of the ban.

Jun 30, 2018

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## Families Belong Together

Families Belong Together is a grassroots organization formed in response to increasing focus on immigration into the United States from its southern border, and the separation of children from their families. In 2018, Families Belong Together organized a series of protests that ended in a keynote event on June 30 that attracted tens of thousands of people to Washington D.C. and approximately 700 other U.S. cities. These protests brought attention to the systematic criminalization of immigrants and accelerated ICE raids by the Trump administration. The Washington D.C. protest saw demonstrators numbering 50,000, while other cities saw as few as 100.

## Science is Real

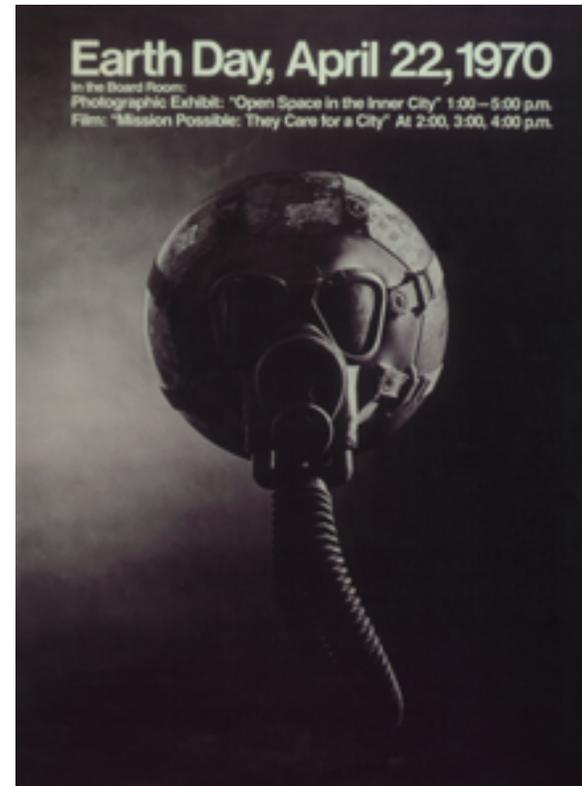
1917

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### Save the Redwoods League



Three conservationists on a road trip discovered 300-year-old Redwood trees being felled to create vineyard stakes, shingles, and railroad ties. To halt further destruction, they decided to purchase the land to preserve the ancient trees and created a network of 66 parks totaling more than 200,000 acres of Redwood forest.



Robert Leydenfrost (design),  
Don Brewster (photography), 1970

**Apr 22, 1970**

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### **First Earth Day**

In 1969, a 4.2 million gallon oil spill off the coast of Santa Barbara became the most devastating environmental disaster in human history, destroying hundreds of miles of California coastline. This catastrophe sparked a teach-in on environmental subjects initiated by Gaylord Nelson (Democratic Senator from Wisconsin) and Paul McCloskey (Republican Congressman from California), which was the genesis of the first Earth Day. College campuses, local libraries, and other public forums hosted the teach-ins developed by residents, eventually spawning the catchphrase, “Think globally, act locally.”

**1995–99**

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### **Ward Valley Protest**

Native American lands have long been targeted as a dumping ground for nuclear waste as well as storage and testing of atomic weapons.

On a site slated for a nuclear waste dump, activists from the five Colorado River basin tribes—Fort Mojave, Chemehuevi, Cocopah, Quechan, and Colorado River Indians—built an encampment to prevent such detrimental action. The land was important for many reasons: it was the main water source for surrounding communities and was considered by many tribes to be central to their traditional creation narrative. The protest and occupation lasted for four years until they successfully thwarted the plans for the toxic site.

**Apr 2016**

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### **Dakota Access Pipeline protests**

The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) is a 1,172 mile oil pipe that runs from North Dakota to Illinois. The pipeline disturbs sacred, native burial grounds and poses tremendous environmental concerns. The pipeline runs alongside the Missouri River and is a threat to water sources. As a result, people from Indigenous nations all over the country began to protest the construction of the DAPL. The largest demonstration saw over 15,000 people from all over the world who held a sit-in for months along the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. Protests started in April 2016, but by February 2017 the number of demonstrators had dwindled due to arrests and harsh treatment. Under the Trump Administration, the pipeline was completed in April 2019.

**Apr 29, 2017**

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### **People's Climate March**

The People's Climate Movement announced the demonstration in January 2017 to protest the environmental policies of President Donald Trump, which included a campaign promise to dismantle the EPA and prioritize economic growth over the preservation of resources and the environment. The protests were held at the end of his first 100 days as president during stormy weather across the U.S. There were an estimated 200,000 participating in the D.C. march.



**Oct 14, 1979**

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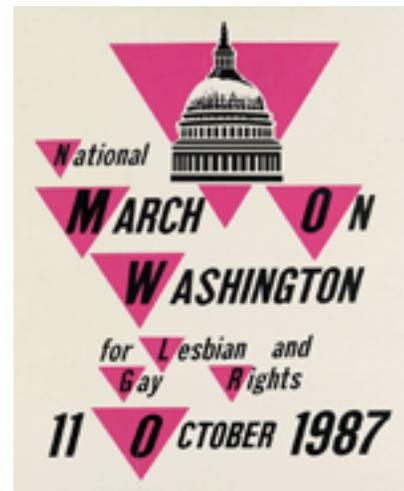
### **National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights**

One hundred twenty-five thousand gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people marched in Washington D.C. with five main goals: 1. pass a comprehensive LGBTQ+ rights bill in Congress, 2. issue a presidential executive order banning discrimination based on sexual orientation, 3. repeal all anti-lesbian/gay laws, 4. end discrimination in LGBTQ+ custody cases, and 5. protect lesbian and gay youth from any laws which are used to discriminate, oppress, and/or harass them in their homes, schools, jobs, and social environments. Almost all the goals of the march went unfulfilled.

**Oct 11, 1987**

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### **Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights**



The Reagan administration is often remembered for its inadequate response to the AIDS pandemic. In 1987, “The Great March” swelled to 750,000 in support of the same unfulfilled demands from a decade earlier, as well as an end to discrimination against people with AIDS, ARC, HIV-positive status, or those perceived to have AIDS.

**Oct 11, 2009**

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### **National Equality March**

The success of Proposition 8 in California, which repealed the right for same-sex couples to get married, sparked outrage in the LGBTQ+ community. Once again they marched for equal rights, with a particular eye toward openly serving in the military, encouraging the community to “out” themselves. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the fundamental right to be married is guaranteed to same-sex couples by the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, initially adopted in 1868.

**Jun 2019**

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### **World Pride/ StoneWall 50**

Held in NYC earlier this year, this massive celebration honored the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising and invited the global LGBTQ+ community to commemorate the neighborhood that is widely considered the origin of the modern Gay Rights Movement. More than 150,000 people attended, and it was billed as the largest Pride march in history. Pride is about amplifying voices and creating space for the intersectional communities encompassed within the LGBTQ+ movement.



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