



2018

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Recommended Citation

Dillon, Jayden (2018) "Protest in Every Form," *SWOSU Sayre Student Anthology*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 8 , Article 32.
Available at: https://dc.swosu.edu/sayre_student_anthology/vol1/iss8/32

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Protest in Every Form

By Jayden Dillon

Staring into the face of tyranny, the crowd of troops and revolutionaries storm the Bastille. Colonial men, covered in darkness, empty hundreds of crates of tea into the now brown-tinted Northeastern harbor. Prohibited from the selling of, and then heavily taxed by the British in the buying of salt, one of the staples of their diet, 2,500 Indians led by Mohandas Gandhi march some 240 miles. Gathered in Washington D.C., thousands of supporters of all backgrounds turn a hopeful ear as Martin Luther King Jr. steps up to the podium. These people wanted a change. They wanted justice and so they fought for it by taking up arms, by taking to foot, by raising up their voice. They fought for justice by protesting.

A protest is defined by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as “a complaint, objection, or display of unwillingness usually to an idea or a course of action.” Originally when the word “protest” became popular to use, the adage of the word “against” was next to imperative which almost softened the words meaning. As the social scene around the world began to change, so did the word’s usage. During the turn of the twentieth century, the use of prepositions with “protest” made the word into something more rebellious. When “protest” was used, people likely thought of acts of civil disobedience such as a protest march or a protest strike. The word eventually evolved into what we know it as today. When we hear the word “protest” in America, most of us would be quick to think of more of a riotous scene than what the word denoted at its origin.

When examining the results that emerge under a search of the word “protest,” such as the storming of the Bastille, the Salt March, or the March on Washington, there is a direct correlation to the metamorphosis of the words usage, with a few exceptions. While in earlier years someone may protest their treatment by simply saying, “I protest my treatment!” followed by little or no action, later generations began to take a more boisterous approach. Some marched in protest while others may have held up a fist or taken a knee to show their disdain. In conclusion, the word “protest” can be interpreted in many different ways, and each way is accurate within its own social and historical setting.