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1979 National March On Washington For Lesbian & Gay Rights - ©

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1979 March On Washington

Sunday October 14, 1979



The National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights was a large [Political Rally](#) that took place in [Washington, D.C.](#) on Sunday October 14, 1979.

It was the first of its kind march on Washington drawing upwards of 125,000 Gay Men, Lesbians, Bisexual and Transgender People and Straight Allies from all over the United States demanding their Equal Civil Rights and urging the passage of Protective Civil Rights Legislation.

The following Five Demands, were Drafted by delegate Joe Smenyak and then amended by the Gay Lesbian Conference Delegates:

1. Pass a comprehensive Lesbian/Gay Rights Bill in Congress
2. Issue a Presidential Executive Order banning discrimination based on Sexual Orientation in the Federal Government, the Military, and Federally Contracted private employment
3. Repeal all Anti-Lesbian/Gay Laws
4. End discrimination in Lesbian-Mother and Gay-Father custody cases
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

The March served to start nationalizing the Gay Movement, which had previously been focused primarily on Local Struggles. That spirit was invoked in the closing paragraph of the Welcome Program of the March, written by the writer [Allen Young](#) :

*"Today in the Capital of America, we are all here,
 the almost liberated and the slightly repressed;
 the Butch, the Femme and Everything In-Between;
 the Androgynous; the Monogamous and the Promiscuous;
 the Masturbators and the Fellators and the Tribadists;
 Men in Dresses and Women in Neckties;
 those who Bite and those who Cuddle;
 Celibates and Pederasts; Diesel Dykes and Nelly Queens;
 Amazons and Size Queens, Yellow, Black,
 Brown, White, and Red; the Shorthaired and the Long,
 the Fat and the Thin; the Nude and the Prude;
 the Beauties and the Beasts; the Studs and the Duds;
 the Communes, the Couples, and the Singles;
 Pubescent's and the Octogenarians.
 Yes, We Are All Here!
 We Are Everywhere!*

Welcome to the 1979 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights!"

The March that morning began at 4th Street and the [National Mall](#),
 turned left onto [Pennsylvania Avenue](#),
 proceeded northwest towards [the White House](#),
 turned left onto 15th Street,
 right onto E Street,

left onto 17th Street,
ending in a huge Rally between
the [Washington Monument](#)
and the National Reflecting Pool.

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The March was led by the [Salsa Soul Sisters](#), carrying the official march banner.

Speakers and artists who spoke at the main rally included [Harry Britt](#), [Charlotte Bunch](#), [writer Allen Ginsberg](#) and [Peter Orlovsky](#), [Flo Kennedy](#), [Morris Kight](#), [Audre Lorde](#), [former Air Force Sergeant Leonard Matlovich](#), [Kate Millett](#), [Reverend Troy Perry](#), [Eleanor Smeal](#), First [PFLAG](#) President Adele Starr, and [Congressman Ted Weiss](#). [Washington D.C. Mayor Marion Barry](#), gave a welcome to the Marchers on behalf of the City of Washington, D.C.

In addition to the Civil Rights March itself, the organizers arranged three days of workshops featuring artistic events, strategy sessions, focus groups on specific issues of women and minorities within the LGBT community, consciousness raising, local organization, religion and other issues.

The Monday after the March was organized as a "Constituent Lobbying Day" in which over 500 participants attempted to contact every member of Congress to express support for Gay-Rights legislation.

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The participants successfully met with Fifty Senators and more than 150 House Members.

Organizations supporting the March included [Lambda Legal Defense Fund](#), the [National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays](#), the [National Gay Task Force](#) *

[* An organization that had ironically withheld their endorsement of the march until only 30 days before it started], and the [National Organization for Women](#).