
A History of Two Political Activism Examples - the MTV Protest and Disneyland Gay Days

The twentieth century was riddled with large amounts of political activism and protests. There were countless numbers of political groups and organizations attempting to get their message accepted and goals completed. Two examples of political activism are the Disneyland Gay Days and the attempted MTV protest of the early 2000's. Although the MTV protest isn't technically in the twentieth century, it still draws several similarities and includes almost all of the same qualities of a protest during the previous century. The MTV protest had very little success by aggressively protesting against the power of MTV and the war in Afghanistan, while the groups involved in Gay Days were very successful in improving Disney's acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle.

Disney Gay Days is a few days in which advocates of gay rights gather at Disneyland in an attempt to gain equality. It started in 1978, when the Los Angeles Bar and Restaurant Association, consisting of solely gay bars and restaurants, decided to use Disneyland as the location for an event. However, Disney was unaware that these restaurants were gay and using the Disney platform to show how they are discriminated against and treated unfairly in not only Disneyland but all of America. Disney attempted to discourage the event by cancelling music and increasing security in order to keep up their reputation of representing conservative American cultural views and heterosexual families. This prejudice against gays continued for a few more years, and in 1980 "two gay male teenagers attended a Date Night at Disneyland and purposefully danced together...in order to challenge parks policy against same sex dancing...[This ended] with Disney security escorting the men off the floor and out of the park" (Griffin 129). However, this soon would all change. In the wake of the AIDS epidemic of the 1980's, Disney began supporting Gay Days and used it as a benefit for AIDS culture. Gay Days is now an annual event in which Disney supports fully. The gay community's persistence in infiltrating Disney proved to help them move closer to equality. Also, it didn't hurt that the gays were paying customers with a lot of potential revenue and public relations would improve with greater acceptance.

On the other hand, the MTV protests were much less successful in getting their message heard and acted upon. In the early 2000's a group of teenagers attempted to get on the cameras at MTV's Total Request Live in New York City and show their signs protesting the war in Afghanistan and corporate power. Sandra Garcia, a protestor, explained, "We are in so much pain, why would we want to inflict it on other countries? We are brainwashed by TV and brands: MTV and America are trying to overpower other countries" (Quart 198). MTV security escorted

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the protestors off the property, ultimately MTV was too powerful and wouldn't stand idle while protestors attempted to bring them down. The event had little to no success producing change.

Ultimately the Disney Days protests and the MTV protests differed in the fact that the Gay Days were attempting to join Disney and become equal, while the MTV protests tried to compete against MTV. Trying to fight any massively powerful corporation will not be an effective protest, like the MTV protest. For example if the Gay Days participants attempted to keep people out of the park, instead of paying and participating in park festivities, there is no doubt Disney would be powerful enough to shut down the political group. In conclusion, The Gay Days protests worked because they offered Disney a solution that would help their business by generating revenue and creating positive public relations, while the MTV protests were unsuccessful because their message was attempting to hurt MTV and MTV was powerful enough to ensure their viewers did not see the messages attempting to bring them down.

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