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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Youth March for Integrated Schools (25 October 1958 and 18 April 1959) |  | |
| In 1958 and 1959, Martin Luther King, Jr., served as an honorary chairman of two youth marches for integrated schools, large demonstrations that took place in Washington, D.C., aimed at expressing support for the elimination of school segregation from American public schools.  In August 1958 a small committee headed by labor leader [**A. Philip Randolph**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_randolph_a_philip_1889_1979/) began organizing the first Youth March for Integrated Schools, to take place on 25 October 1958. Born out of the ‘‘need for a project that would combine a moral appeal, reveal the support of liberal white people and Negroes together, and generally to give people in the North an opportunity to show their solidarity with Negro children in the South who have become the first line of defense in the struggle for integrated schools,’’ the march represented a convergence of organizations and individuals interested in a common cause (*Papers* 4:484). A diverse group of leaders planned the march; the six honorary chairmen involved in the marches both years were King, Randolph, [**Roy Wilkins**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_wilkins_roy_ottaway_1901_1981/), Ruth Bunche, [**Jackie Robinson**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_robinson_jackie_1919_1972/), and [**Daisy Bates**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_bates_daisy_1914_1999/).  On the day of the 1958 march, an integrated crowd of 10,000 marched down Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C., to the Lincoln Memorial. There, [**Coretta Scott King**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_king_coretta_scott_1927_2006/) delivered a speech on behalf of her husband, who was recovering from being stabbed by [**Izola Curry**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_curry_izola_ware_1916/) while in New York. Although King could not attend the march, he was enthusiastic about its possibilities, saying that ‘‘such a project will do much to give courage, support, and encouragement to our [beleaguered] children and adults in the south. Simultaneously it will have a profound moral effect upon the nation and world opinion’’ (*Papers* 4:484–485). During the march, [**Harry Belafonte**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_belafonte_harry_1927/) led a small, integrated group of students to the White House to meet President [**Dwight D. Eisenhower**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_eisenhower_dwight_david_1890_1969/), but was unable to meet with the president or any of his assistants. After staging a half-hour picket, the students left a list of demands to be forwarded to the president.  The second youth march was intended to build upon the efforts of 1958 by holding a large event and circulating a petition to urge ‘‘the President and Congress of the United States to put into effect an executive and legislative program which will insure the orderly and speedy integration of schools throughout the United States’’ (Youth March for Integrated Schools, January 1959). On 18 April 1959, an estimated 26,000 participants marched down the National Mall to a program at the Sylvan Theatre, where speeches were given by King, Randolph, Wilkins, and Charles Zimmerman, chairman of the [**American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_afl_cio/) (AFL-CIO) Civil Rights Committee. A delegation of students again went to the White House to present their demands to Eisenhower, but this time they met with his deputy assistant, Gerald D. Morgan, who reportedly said that ‘‘the president is just as anxious as they are to see an America where discrimination does not exist, where equality of opportunity is available to all’’ (Report on the Youth March on Washington, 18 April 1959).  The 1959 march was marred by accusations of Communist infiltration. The day before the march was to take place, Randolph, Wilkins, and King released a statement denying such involvement: ‘‘The sponsors of the March have not invited Communists or communist organizations. Nor have they invited members of the Ku Klux Klan or the [White Citizens’ Council](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_white_citizens_councils_wcc/). We do not want the participation of these groups, nor of individuals or other organizations holding similar views’’ (Youth March for Integrated Schools, 17 April 1959).  While Eisenhower and Congress failed to pass additional legislation that would have enhanced the 1957 Civil Rights Act and speeded up school integration, the two marches had symbolic power. King told the 1959 marchers that the events’ successful outcomes were a sign of how, ‘‘in your great movement to organize a march for integrated schools, … you have awakened on hundreds of campuses throughout the land a new spirit of social inquiry to the benefit of all Americans’’ (*Papers* 5:188).  **Sources**  Introduction, in *Papers* 5:**14–15**.  King, Address at the Youth March for Integrated Schools, 18 April 1959, in *Papers* 5:**186–188**.  King to Gardner C. Taylor, 2 September 1958, in *Papers* 4:**483–485**.  (Scott) King, Address at Youth March for Integrated Schools in Washington, D.C., 25 October 1958, in *Papers* 4:**514–515**.    Report on the Youth March on Washington, 20 April 1959, WONS-KAbE.  Youth March for Integrated Schools, ‘‘Anti-American Groups Not Invited to Youth March for Integrated Schools,’’ 17 April 1959, NAACPP-DLC.  Youth March for Integrated Schools, ‘‘A Petition for Integrated Schools,’’ January 1959, GMFDAFL. |