

High School Demonstrators: 1968 & 2018



In December 1965, 13-year-old Mary Beth Tinker and her 15-year-old brother John, were part of a group of five public school students in Des Moines, Iowa, who were suspended from school for wearing black armbands to protest the war in Vietnam. They weren't allowed to go back to school until they agreed to go without wearing the armbands, so the Tinkers stayed home for a week. Their case went to the US Supreme Court, which in 1969 ruled that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

In February 2018, a gunman entered Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and killed 17 people. A few days after the shooting, Emma Gonzalez, a senior at the school gave a gripping speech that was speech a gun control rally. Among other things, she said this:

We are going to be the kids you read about in textbooks. Not because we're going to be another statistic about mass shooting in America, but because, just as David said, we are going to be the last mass shooting. Just like Tinker v. Des Moines, we are going to change the law. That's going to be Marjory Stoneman Douglas in that textbook and it's going to be due to the tireless effort of the school board, the faculty members, the family members and most of all the students. The students who are dead, the students still in the hospital, the student now suffering PTSD, the students who had panic attacks during the vigil because the helicopters would not leave us alone, hovering over the school for 24 hours a day.

The Parkland students' activism has rallied supporters of gun control and led to rallies across the country, including the March for Our Lives. In one of these marches, students from the DC Metro area (including those in this photograph) gathered on the West lawn of the Capitol.