

Facts about the Anti-war Movement

- Also known as the peace movement, the anti-war movement began with small groups of left-leaning students on U.S. college campuses.
- In 1967, as American troop numbers reached 500,000, with 15,000 U.S. soldiers dead and nearly 110,000 wounded, more and more average citizens became disillusioned. More than 40,000 young men were drafted into service each month, adding fuel to the fire of the anti-war movement.
- With the public's increasing discontent, demonstrations skyrocketed, including people from all parts of life, housewives, students, men and women alike.
- Along with demonstrations grew confrontations between protestors and police, leading to arrests and killings, even on college campuses.
- Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. spoke publicly about his opposition.

“If America’s soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read ‘Vietnam.’” —
Martin Luther King Jr., 1967

- Heavy-weight boxer Muhammad Ali refused the draft and received a prison-term (later overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court) and a three-year ban from boxing
- By 1968 thirty-five percent of the population approved and fifty percent opposed President Johnson’s handling of the war. Vietnam vets began to join anti-war demonstrations. Costing more than \$25 billion a year, many tax payers no longer saw the viability of the war.
- In 1968, newly elected President Nixon promised to snuff out protests and rioting, stating that the “silent” majority of citizens was in favour of the war.
- This he followed with the instatement of the draft lottery in December 1969. Tensions escalated, men fled to Canada as the country divided itself further.
- Reasons for the mounting opposition included moral, economical and legal arguments.
- After 1969, the second largest demonstration took place in April 1971 when Vietnam Veterans threw away several hundred medals.
- In April and May 1971 more than twenty hearings were conducted to discuss how to end the war in Vietnam.
- Mass demonstrations with hundreds of thousands became common, so did violence against demonstrators.
- In 1971 details of U.S. involvement and misconduct in the war came to light through the “Pentagon Papers,” a 7,000-page compendium of historical analysis and original government

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documents, causing even more people to question the government and military establishment.

- Pressured by antiwar sentiment, Nixon finally announced the end of U.S. involvement in Vietnam in January 1973.

Final comment: Historians agree that the anti-war movement led to the end of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. It is the only time in U.S. history that the people effected change on the political direction of the country, albeit taking many years and enormous effort to do it.