

Women march in London to call for gender equality

Thousands take to the streets to mark International Women's Day and celebrate suffrage centenary



Women march in central London, following in the footsteps of the suffragettes. Photograph: Ray Tang/Rex/Shutterstock

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Thousands of people joined a march in central London calling for gender equality and to celebrate the 100th anniversary of women getting the vote.

The event, organised by the charity Care, was the sixth annual #March4Women, which is held each year on or near International Women's Day on 8 March.

Organisers promised an “uplifting and inspiring” march, which aimed to shine a spotlight on the inequality women and girls face worldwide.

Politicians from different parties, as well as groups representing all religions stood shoulder to shoulder as they marched on the same historic route taken by the suffragettes last century.

Banners reading “Let’s finish what the suffragettes started” and “Close the pay gap” were held aloft during the rally in Trafalgar Square, which followed the march. Speeches were made by the London mayor, Sadiq Khan, and activists Bianca Jagger, Helen Pankhurst, Shola Mos-Shogbamimu and Faeza Vaid, with a video address by the singer Annie Lennox.

Sandi Toksvig, the broadcaster and co-founder of the Women’s Equality party, also appeared. Ahead of the march she said: “We’ve been marching for 100 years. Now’s the time to put our foot down.”



The March4Women march in central London to celebrate International Women’s Day. Photograph: Ray Tang/Rex/Shutterstock

Leading the march was Pankhurst, the great-granddaughter of suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, who said “right across the board in every sphere there’s work to be done” to ensure gender equality.

She said there was a “great energy” and that “day after day after day there’s a media story saying we are not going to tolerate this any more”.

Khan donned a “deeds not words” sash and said he was a “proud feminist”. He said there were too few women in parliament and boardrooms across the country, adding that a 50% gender balance should be a floor to aim towards, not a ceiling.

“I think if you’re in a position of power and influence and you think it’s wrong that women get paid less than men, you think it’s wrong there’s discrimination against women still, you think it’s wrong that simply by virtue of being born a boy you have more chances than a girl – you should be a feminist.”

He added: “And I can’t understand why anybody wouldn’t want to be a proud feminist.”

The Labour MP Dawn Butler was met with a loud cheer when she said she was marching for women whose stories had been ignored or overlooked.

She said: “I’m marching for the hidden history. I’m marching for the women nobody knows about. I’m marching for the women nobody speaks about. I’m marching for the women who suffer in silence. I’m marching to say we hear you.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/mar/04/women-march-in-london-gender-equality-international-womens-day>