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Back to LIVING in Historic Times, as SOME Would Suggest?

As protests erupt across America in 2025, echoes of the 1819 Peterloo Massacre in Manchester resurface, revealing unsettling parallels between past and present struggles for freedom and representation.



What Does 1819 Manchester, England and 2025 America Have in Common? More Than You Think!

History doesn't repeat—but it sure likes to rhyme. As protesters flood American streets in 2025, over the flip side of Trump and teams purported reforms, sanctions, traffics, executive order, with many raising their voices against what they perceive as being “creeping authoritarianism and economic injustice”, echoes from another uprising ring loud and clear—from Manchester England, 1819. Back then, ordinary people demanded a fairer future and met violence instead of reform.

Is this a spontaneous outpouring of protest, or the deep state reacting to a threat to its power?

Sound familiar?

In August 1819, tens of thousands of British citizens gathered peacefully at St Peter's Field in Manchester to demand political reform. Fed up with economic hardship and a lack of

representation, they called for universal suffrage and an end to corruption. The government responded with violence—sending in cavalry that killed 19 and injured hundreds more. History remembers it as the Peterloo Massacre.

More than two centuries later, and now throughout the month of April 2025, protesters again filled public squares—this time across the United States (This will include April 19 and any other protests that may happen this month).

While the specifics somewhat differed, the spirit was the same: outrage over perceived inequality and unchecked power. Demonstrators have accused the Trump-Vance administration, backed by Elon Musk, of authoritarian overreach and policies that favored the wealthy while seemingly undermining the rights of everyday average Americans.

The People’s Cry: Then and Now

In both 1819 and 2025, the people were fueled by a growing despair that their voices no longer mattered. The English working class in 1819 saw their livelihoods crushed by industrialization, war debt, and food shortages. The Corn Laws made bread unaffordable, and only the wealthy could vote. They believed the government no longer served them but ruled over them.

Similarly, in 2025, many **Americans feel locked out of their democracy**. Protesters argue that billionaires like Musk hold disproportionate power, that corporate interests override the public good, and that the Constitution’s promise of free speech is under attack. Dissent itself is becoming criminalized, as demonstrated when a Palestinian refugee and U.S. green card holder, Mahmoud Khalil, was arrested for participating in a peaceful protest at Columbia University; he was then illegally deported by ICE to an undisclosed federal detention facility. Of course, the irony is that those people protesting in favor of the Democrats seem willfully blind to the fact that the Democratic Party is also dominated by billionaires.

Government Power and Cavalry Responses

The **British Parliament of 1819**, dominated by landowners and aristocrats, feared revolution. Inspired by the then-recent memory of the French Revolution and domestic uprisings, they acted swiftly and brutally to suppress dissent. Their use of cavalry to violently disperse an unarmed crowd was not just a crackdown—it was a message: “We will maintain control.”

Now imagine this happening in 2025 America. Protesters have largely remained peaceful, but tensions have flared—such as in **Lafayette, Indiana**, where a man with a long gun escalated a confrontation with demonstrators. Police ultimately released him, but the incident highlighted the volatile mix of fear, mistrust, and potential for violence.

If the U.S. government were to send in the cavalry in its modern form, **militarized police**, armed to the teeth, to suppress protests—resulting in death and mass injury—it would echo Peterloo’s horror. But while 1819’s response was largely confined to print media and localized outrage, 2025’s citizens live in the age of mass communication.

Social media would broadcast images and videos worldwide within minutes. Public opinion would likely polarize dramatically—some demanding justice, others defending state authority—but the scale of mobilization and backlash could be unprecedented. However, only in places like the US, as the same is happening with the Genocide in Palestine and nobody seems to take notice.

Would Americans flee in terror or rise in greater numbers? The answer may lie in their reaction to recent governmental overreach. With tens of thousands already in the streets, **union leaders and veterans vowing not to be silenced**, and lawsuits filed against the administration’s policies, many seem unwilling to bow to authoritarianism. But they too have been silenced before, take for instance the Coal wars in West Virginia just over 100 years ago, the Battle of Blair Mountain, as it is not in the history books.

The Cost of Speaking Out

There is always a price to pay for trying to exercise one’s **freedom of speech**. In 1819, protesters faced physical injury, job loss, and imprisonment. The British government responded with the **Six Acts**, which limited public meetings and broadened censorship laws. Today, American protesters face **job insecurity, legal jeopardy, and threats of surveillance**. Arrests like that of Khalil speaking up send a chilling signal: that voicing dissent, even peacefully, can have life-altering consequences.

The 2025 administration has allegedly **fired over 121,000 federal employees**, dismantled labor rights, and targeted public servants, all in the name of efficiency. Critics argue that these are tactics of suppression, designed to disempower organized resistance.

Two Eras, One Struggle

Ultimately, both the citizens of Manchester in 1819 and American protesters in 2025 are driven by a shared sentiment: that power has slipped too far from the people’s hands. They marched not out of hatred for their nations, but love for the ideals their governments claim to represent—fairness, representation, and liberty.

The memory of Peterloo lives on as a symbol of democratic struggle. Whether the protests of 2025 will be remembered as a turning point or a warning will depend on how the government responds—and how courageously the people continue to rise.

This reminds me of something a friend from my university days shared. Shortly after the assassination of William McKinley, his great-grandfather wrote an article he called “Freedom of Speech”, drawing inspiration from the long poem “The Masque of Anarchy” by Percy Bysshe Shelley, which was a commentary on the aforesaid Peterloo Massacre of 1819.

In 1901, there were no protests after McKinley’s murder; however, there were discussions about the security of the President and the potential dangers of anarchism, leading to surveillance programs and anti-anarchist laws.

McKinley’s assassination also prompted increased security measures for the President, with Theodore Roosevelt becoming the first President to have full-time Secret Service protection. Over time, the security state that grew from the presidential assassination has grown into an all-encompassing force that dominates the Federal government, and has been suspected of a number of anti-democratic acts, from election interference to, it is believed by many, the assassination of JFK, and the overthrow of Nixon.

Freedom in the Balance

The biggest question I see, in light of these historic facts, is: “is this a spontaneous outpouring of protest, or the deep state reacting to a threat to its power?”

Looking at the “spontaneous” protests, I can’t help but feel that well-meaning individuals are being manipulated, as they were in Georgia in 2003, with the “Rose Revolution” through the “Orange” and “Maidan” revolutions in Ukraine, and the quite frankly disastrous, “Arab Spring” revolutions that have left Libya in a state of perpetual civil war, and western backed Islamic extremists in control in Syria.

The parallels are rather disturbing, and I am very concerned that the threat of violence might well be not from the current administration, but will be a false flag to push a large part of the public into violence, or even full-fledged revolution.

Those accusing Trump of “anti-democratic” behavior, seem to have turned a blind eye to the excesses of not only the previous administration, but the last 30 years of the erosion of freedom that has, in effect, stripped Americans of pretty much all their rights.

This is like a puss-filled boil that Trump seems to be lancing. Freedom is in the balance, but who exactly are on the side of freedom, and who can US citizens actually trust these days?

The answer is murky at best.

Henry Kamens, April 16, 2025

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