

VIDEO AVAILABLE: March 27: Rutgers Antiwar Walkout Promises To Be Bigger, Bolder, According to March 27 Walkout Coalition

Rally marking fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq will get underway at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial on Voorhees Mall, on the College Avenue Campus.

For Immediate Release

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J./EWorldWire/March 24, 2008 --- Last year on March 20, 500 Rutgers students walked out on their daily routine in protest to the occupation of Iraq, marched through downtown New Brunswick and onto Route 18, temporarily shutting down the major highway. Named the biggest action on the East Coast on the anniversary of the war last year, organizers for this year's Walkout Against the War expect an even larger, more spirited demonstration.

Timed to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, the Rutgers Walkout will begin at 1:23 p.m. on March 27 with a rally at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial on Voorhees Mall, on the College Avenue Campus.

There will be a number of speakers including veterans, students, professors, community activists and family members of military servicewomen and men. Attendees can expect musical performances and spoken word as well.

Organizers are expecting a march following the rally. "Last year hundreds of students marched into the heart of New Brunswick and received enthusiastic support from members of the community," says Sumia Ibrahim, a Walkout organizer. "As we walked along George Street, people were cheering, waving, throwing up peace signs, and joining in."

"One woman broke down crying when she saw us," recounts Jean-Pierre Mestanza, a participant in last year's action. "'God bless you,' she was saying. It turns out she had a brother in Iraq. It was intense."

The Walkout is being coordinated by a diverse array of student organizations under the banner of the Rutgers Walkout Coalition and has received broad support across Rutgers. Participating groups include:

- . The Arabic Cultural Club
- . BAKA - Students United for Middle Eastern Justice
- . The Central and South American Alliance
- . Fusion
- . Human Rights House
- . Lambda Theta Alpha
- . The Latino Student Council
- . LLEGO
- . Radigals
- . RU Choice
- . Rutgers Against the War
- . Tent State University-Students for a Democratic Society.

The Walkout has also been endorsed by several of the student governing association. Members of the faculty are signing petitions supporting students' right to walk out without fear of repercussion, and some will even be walking out with their students.

When asked why they are walking out, students offer a variety of explanations.

"Education is only meaningful if it translates into action," remarked Hoda Mitwally who plans to attend the rally. "Students feel that if we take what we're learning seriously, we have an obligation to speak out. These are our peers that are dying in this war. Just recently, 91 Rutgers Newark students were recalled to active duty from reservist status in the National Guard. They will be in our thoughts on March 27."

Adriel Bernal, a Walkout Coalition organizer agrees: "The Walkout shows that for one day we're willing to disrupt our everyday lives to show that there will be no business as usual until all the troops come home."

"I think it's great that they're protesting," says Rutgers student Rafay Siddiqui, an Iraq War veteran and member of Iraq Veterans Against the War who recently testified in the Winter Soldier Hearings. "A lot of Marines I know have serious doubts about why they're in Iraq. Most of them just want to be home with their families."

Overall, expectations on campus are high for a massive student turnout on March 27.

"Even though the Bush Administration is once again downplaying the precarious security situation in Iraq, people aren't stupid," says Walkout Coalition organizer Erik Straub. "Students in particular are still very upset that after five years our troops are still in Iraq. They're fed up."

"Last year the students decided to take the highway," Straub continues. "Who knows what they'll do this year!"

WHAT: Campus-wide walkout and demonstration against the Iraq War & Occupation, marking the fifth anniversary of the start of the war.

WHO: Rutgers Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, and Community Members.

WHERE: Rally and speakers on Voorhees Mall at the Vietnam Memorial behind Scott Hall-43 on College Avenue at Rutgers--New Brunswick, followed by a march in New Brunswick.

WHEN: March 27, 2008, beginning at 1:23 p.m.

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KEYWORDS: anti-war, Iraq, Iraq War, protest, walk out, walkout, demonstration, veterans, peace, occupation, students, student movement, Rutgers, university, direct action, civil disobedience, Gold Star Mothers, campus anti-war network, CAN, students for a democratic society, SDS

SOURCE: March 27 Walkout Coalition