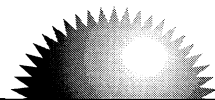


# Grand Rapids Peace Team News

Promoting Nonviolent Solutions to Conflict

[www.michiganpeaceteam.org/grandrapids](http://www.michiganpeaceteam.org/grandrapids)

An Affiliate of



MICHIGAN  
PEACE TEAM

## Another March on Washington, D.C.

Corinne Carey  
Grand Rapids, MI

The amazing momentum of the peace movement over the last year has been unprecedented. After major marches in Washington, D.C. in April and October of 2002, January 2003 saw a major march coinciding with Martin Luther King's birthday — the first of many impressive demonstrations in 2003.

“Peace to all on earth” was the focus for the more than half million people that flooded Washington, D.C. on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday. January 18 was a cold, sunny crisp day for celebration and dedication, but a warm event of community and determination in our nation's awesome capitol.

Grand Rapids people arrived — most of them after driving all night — in private vans and cars as well as group buses from Kalamazoo, Traverse City, Lansing, Ann Arbor, and Detroit.

Why? My video interviews, broadcast later on Public Access GRTV, show a range of reasons sharing many of the same feelings and thoughts as Michigan Peace Team — a strong consciousness of nonviolence and patriotism for the welfare of democracy and people world-wide, as well as the responsible decision-making for which our political leaders are elected.

Besides the all-day contacts with kindred participants, the discussions with an amazing diversity of people from limitless activities and cultures, we displayed our own colorful signs and appreciated other thought-provoking creations:

In Grand Rapids, Michigan, Peace is Patriotic  
(my sign)  
What is OUR oil doing under THEIR sand?  
SUVs — the Axles of Evil  
Christians for Peace  
No Blood for Oil  
Code Pink Womyn United Against War  
Waging Peace  
Peace to all MEN of Good Will  
Win Without War  
The People United Shall Never Be Defeated



Peace Team member Corinne Carey (right) in Washington, D.C. on January 18 with friend Deb Burcar (left)

Consequences of U.S. aggression in Iraq were addressed by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, actress Hope Lang, Rep. John Conyer, and many diverse speakers. Afterward, we marched about two miles through a needy D.C. neighborhood to ask the Naval Yard for an inspection for weapons of mass destruction.

It seemed nobody was there, or in the White House, of course.

But my own feeling is that we *were* heard, seriously, world-wide, and though we will never be thanked for our patriotism and wisdom, war could be delayed in some face-saving way — at least until another terrorist tragedy in our homeland could enrage those among us who believe that their fear entitles them / us to do mass violence, to others and to ourselves.

But not while we have something to say about it!●

*Grand Rapids Peace Team, an affiliate of Michigan Peace Team in Lansing, Michigan, is associated with the Institute for Global Education in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Editor: Mark M. Mattison.*

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# An Appeal to President Bush

Dave Blakeslee  
Wyoming, MI

The following appeal was published as a paid advertisement in *The Grand Rapids Press* on March 16, 2003.

In the months following September 11, 2001, America's citizens and the rest of the world have watched as your administration pursues a course of action that you've called the "war on terrorism." Now, at this critical moment, when our nation may be mere days away from initiating an invasion of Iraq, we appeal to you to reconsider whether this plan is going to be effective in establishing an enhanced sense of safety and security in our world.

**We believe that the best way to provide peace and security for Americans is to build upon the USA's reputation for promoting freedom and providing constructive humanitarian assistance.**

A security based on the goodwill of ordinary people, such as those who showed such valor and self-sacrifice on 9/11. These brave citizens represent America at its best. Gratitude and hope for the future motivated their deeds, not fear or suspicion of others. In recent months, our national mood has been overwhelmed by a relentless focus on threats, dangers, ominous warnings and mistrust. We reject any efforts to further polarize our relationships with our Muslim neighbors here in the USA, the Middle East, or anywhere else on the globe. The alienation and pessimism between the West and the Islamic world is already too severe. Our current situation calls for immediate assertive actions to mend that relationship — and a war with Iraq at this time would only make matters worse.

**In fact, an invasion of Iraq only plays further into the ambitions of Al Qaeda to escalate matters into a regional and perhaps global "holy war."** It's widely recognized that aggressive military action in the Middle East will strongly inflame efforts of extremist groups to recruit new members. Even a full dismantling of Al Qaeda, if it were possible, would not guarantee an end to terrorism. Again, we must pursue a more respectful

and dignified response to the grievances and issues raised by people in that region, rather than simply dismiss their cries as the ranting of "fanatics and terrorists."

**As a nation that has long been dedicated to promoting the benefits and virtues of democracy, it is essential that we not be hypocrites or manipulators.** The principles we hold dear and seek to live by work only when free citizens voluntarily adopt them. Democracy cannot be forced upon the people of any land through the barrel of a gun. As long as the appearance of unworthy motives lingers around this impending war with a sovereign nation, such actions must be avoided, even if we believe that we're pursuing a worthy cause. Though your spokespeople insist that "it's not about the oil," the connections are too obvious to deny.

**We are dismayed by the toll that this threat of war has taken on our alliances with Europe, NATO and the United Nations.** Rather than giving serious consideration to the reasons why our allies object to war at this time, American officials have made public mockery of certain governments and this has fostered an immature, jingoistic mentality that has degraded public discourse. This is foolish and inexcusable. Our world is too interdependent for any nation, even a superpower, to "go it alone." Partnership backed by a broad consensus of our allies ought to be a prerequisite to the use of force. Especially when it's destructive force on the scale described in various battle scenarios, involving thousands of cruise missiles and the recently tested "MOAB" bomb that's considered comparable in power to a nuclear weapon.

**Mr. President, we urgently request that you reconsider your plans to initiate a preemptive war.** The protests of millions of ordinary citizens and the pleas of respected heads-of-state and diplomats will be in vain if you proceed with this war. As we've seen in recent weeks, many obstacles have unexpectedly risen to make the undertaking even more treacherous. We find ourselves increasingly isolated and at odds from the currents

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of world opinion, and even our strongest long-time allies are showing signs of balking as the timetable shortens. We are confident that the standoff with Saddam Hussein can be worked out over the course of time, through strong international cooperation. We are dismayed to think that political and economic considerations may be dictating your decisions rather than a more fundamental concern for human life and the well-being of society in a very tense region. We also regret the cost and impact that a war will have on American society. Already we see a growing acceptance of restrictions on free speech and other civil liberties, and the war climate will almost certainly erode conditions even further.

**A sustainable peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved until a successful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is reached.** We're especially disappointed when we see your administration's lack of involvement in this major issue. It is crucial that the USA uses its influence to promote true justice and reconciliation in the disputes that divide these peoples. Yet the campaign against Saddam Hussein once again sends the signal to Muslims and Arabs that their concerns are of secondary importance to the perspectives embraced by those who see a "divine mandate" in modern-day Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands. We request that your administration clarify its priorities by a more vigorous pursuit of peace negotiations that hold both sides accountable, rather than setting forth terms that are so clearly biased in favor of Israel and against the Palestinian Authority. New Israeli settlements must be halted, and a dismantling of illegal settlements must be insisted upon, in order to demonstrate our honest commitment to promoting a lasting solution to this conflict.

**Finally, in pursuit of economic stability necessary for peace and security, we look for a more constructive approach to resolving the**

*This war threatens to produce a very deep and painful rift in American society, because it does not have our support!*

**problems with our economy and our quality of life.** At a time when budget surpluses have become deficits, as states are beleaguered and millions are dealing with unemployment, we ask, "Where is the wealth going?" This nation continues to be very productive and blessed with abundant resources, yet it seems as if the gap between the rich, the poor and the "just getting by" continues to grow ever wider. This is not the time to be going to war. This is not the time to be deepening our deficits and laying debt on future generations. This is not the time to create unease and anxiety in the markets or elsewhere. This is the time to be more forthright and equitable in letting the public know exactly what the costs of a war will be, and how much sacrifice will be required. Too often we get euphemisms and vagueness when we need facts. Avoiding war does not equal "doing nothing!" We have an inspection regime in Iraq. Saddam Hussein is under intense scrutiny.

**Our request is that you, as President, serve the needs and interests of all the people, not a narrow minority of ideologues and influence peddlers.** Your mandate in the 2000 election was exceedingly narrow and controversial, and the Republican majorities in Congress are small. In your campaign for office, you spoke of being a "uniter, not a divider." But this war threatens to produce a very deep and painful rift in American society, because it does not have our support! The injustice of an invasion of Iraq is painfully apparent to many of us and will not be forgotten by our allies and the world. The time for diplomacy and statesmanship is not over — indeed, it can be seen as just beginning. We ask that you find a more constructive, collaborative and morally defensible method of disarming Iraq and genuinely promoting the cause of peace in the Middle East and in our world.

**We continue to pray for peace, wisdom and compassion as you tend to your enormous responsibilities. •**

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## **Grand Rapid's Peace Presence is now on the web!**

First we took it to the streets. Now, we're taking it to cyberspace.

Peace Presence, which has been meeting at the Federal building every Monday from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., now has its own web site:

[www.peacepresence.org](http://www.peacepresence.org)

Usually those who drive by have only a split second to notice our message, splashed across signs and placards. Now, as they drive by and see our new domain name prominently displayed, they can log on to our web site and read about our concerns in more detail.

We are also publishing photographs of Monday demonstrators with their signs, so that their message can be read and appreciated not just once a week but 24/7. Join us, and bring a camera!

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