

6th Anniversary Call from UFPJ

Adopted by the 4th UFPJ National Assembly – 12/13/08

Each March, the anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq has been marked by massive numbers of people all over the country visibly calling for an end to the war and to bring all of the troops home now! As we have done in the past, we must again highlight the tremendous and ongoing human and economic costs of the war and occupation.

The 6 anniversary proposal from the UFPJ Steering Committee is for our coalition to issue a call for local actions on Thursday, March 19, that are focused on the theme of the economic and domestic costs of the war, while also reminding people of the tremendous human costs.

This year we will mark the anniversary in a new context: the ever-deepening economic crisis and the presidency of Barack Obama. Neither of these realities means we change our demands, but both require us to re-think how we do this work.

Background

In Sept. 2008, the UFPJ Steering Committee put out a call for a national mobilization in Washington DC around the 6th anniversary. Since then, the country has been plunged into a massive economic crisis and voters came out in huge numbers to elect Barack Obama.

Given this new political climate, the Steering Committee feels that we need to change gears. We do not believe that the anti-war movement alone will, in this climate, be able to bring out massive numbers for a national mobilization on the 6th anniversary. While **we** know that we cannot stop our work, there are some who will take a wait-and-see attitude and others who will not want to be viewed as protesting against Obama, the first African-American president, just 2 months after he takes office.

After much discussion within the Steering Committee and with the organizations we represent, we feel that the most effective actions would take place at a local level where people in hundreds of towns and cities have been demonstrating for the last 6 years. We want to encourage groups to adopt a theme that will tie our actions together in a way that we have not always done before.

We also recognize, though, the continued need for mass national action. In order to bring massive numbers into the streets, we think a march needs to be planned in conjunction with our allies in other social and economic justice movements. Consequently, we have included a second part to the proposal that will explore the idea of a mass march in NYC on April 4th (see explanation below).

Proposal

Part I

The UFPJ Steering Committee proposes that our coalition issue a call for local actions on Thursday, March 19, the day of the invasion of Iraq, to mark the 6th anniversary of the war. The unifying focus of the actions will be to make visible the connections between military spending on the war in Iraq, the current global economic crisis, the lack of resources for human needs here in the U.S. and around the world, and the soaring federal deficit and national debt. In addition, we will remind people of the tremendous human costs of the war and occupation. We suggest the following as ideas for local actions: actions at financial institutions or war profiteer's offices, actions at Congressional offices or lobby visits to pressure your local Congressperson, and/or a march to sites that highlight the lack of resources to meet the needs of our communities :schools, hospitals, closing businesses, bridges in disrepair, etc. UFPJ will support the local events by developing a media plan that links all of these actions nationwide. We will offer organizing materials and other resources also designed to project this as unified, national day of action to end the war and bring all the troops home.

Part II

Recognizing the need to bring large numbers of people into the street, UFPJ will engage in a process to reach out to our allies in various movements (healthcare, education, housing, immigrant rights, women, environmental, economic and environmental justice, etc.) as well as allies in the African-American community to explore the idea of a mass march in New York City on April 4th.

April 4th is the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech (4/4/67) given at Riverside Church in NYC and the anniversary of his assassination in Memphis (4/4/68). King's speech brilliantly made the link between war, poverty, and racism. The proposed new Strategic Framework of UFPJ that will be voted upon at this National Assembly posits that our work in the coming year and in this new political climate must link ending the war to the economic and domestic crises. Joining together with our allies on the anniversary of King's speech has the potential to inspire many people from different movements and those who have voted for change to be make a strong statement about the future that we want to see.

An important reason to do this in NYC is that we could easily make the link to the financial center by bringing our protest to Wall Street.

April 4th is also the 60th anniversary of NATO and there will be demonstrations all over Europe making this an international day of action. This will be an important opportunity to highlight the war in Afghanistan as well.

Having this march on April 4th would be contingent upon setting up the collaboration with our allies.

A proposal is also being presented to the Assembly for a national campaign that would include this idea of a demonstration on April 4th. If that proposal is adopted this proposal can easily be incorporated into that campaign.