



Progressive Action Alliance

<http://progressiveactionalliance.org/>

PAA's Event Summary for March 19, 2005

Theme for the Progressive Action Alliance's M19 event:

In their honor

Sing Peace

Images of Loss; Songs of Peace; Words of Reason

On the 2nd anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, honor the US and Iraqi victims with song, reflection, and candlelight.

Specifics:

- The PAA event will be at Houston City Hall, around the reflection pond, officially starting at sunset (6:30 pm) and ending about 8:30 pm. The first hour (tentatively) will be broadcast on KPFT-FM.
- We'll have recorded music of peace starting after 5:30 pm, with occasional announcements of what we're doing, and we'll start distributing literature as people arrive.
- We hope to have names of all US coalition and Iraqi casualties, for whom we can get the names, printed and displayed at our event.
- Names of US casualties (at least the ones from Texas) will be read. We also hope to be able to read names of Iraqi casualties, although many of the names are not available. Details are being worked out on this.
- About 75% of the time will be devoted to singing peace songs. Some will be sing-along songs. About 25% of the time will be for speakers, including religious leaders, those reading names, plus an MFSO member (who is the mother of a reservist, mother-in-law to an active soldier deployed to Iraq now, and wife of a disabled veteran). Speakers will give personal statements about the human cost of the invasion and occupation, & are being asked NOT to attack Bush and the current administration. The focus is on Iraq.
- The program will go on regardless of weather. With all the people being killed in Iraq each week, the least we can do is be willing to stand in the rain for two hours to remember and honor those who have fallen.
- + Speakers include:
 - Rabbi Saul Osadchey, of Congregation Or Ami
 - member of MFSO (Military Families Speak Out)
 - Hosam Aboul-Ela, University of Houston professor
 - Father David Wahl, of Pax Christi
- + Singers/Musicians/Sing-along song leaders include:
 - Anjali Natarajan, Dino Marcaccio, Gary Yokie, Bart Boyce, Tom Loud, Nelson Mills (tentative)
- We'll have hand-held candles (in clear cups to block the wind and catch melted wax drips) to help set the mood and provide light for reading song lyrics. Attendees will be invited to bring their own candles, but we'll also have some for those who don't bring them.
- We'll distribute literature to everyone present, which includes: words to some of the songs of peace that we want everyone to sing together, educational info about the costs of the war/casualties/etc. with short stories to illustrate the tragedy of the war. It will be in both Spanish and English.
- Lead-up event: Code Pink members will be reading names of US and Iraqi casualties in downtown Houston the day before the event, so there will be time to recognize the many Iraqi deaths, and to help publicize our event the next day and increase interest for it.

Primary goals:

- Honor the people (US, Iraqi, and others) who have died.
- Before Mar. 19, reach out beyond those who are already firmly opposed to the invasion, and make sure they will feel welcome at our event.
- Organize the PAA event and our publicity in a way that will encourage people to come who are having questions about why the US is in Iraq and what we are accomplishing accomplishing, and/or who have ethical objections to the US involvement there. We want everyone of all political parties to be welcome.
- Provide facts about what the Iraq invasion and occupation has and has not accomplished, about the tragedy of what is happening there, and what attendees can do to help end the war.
- Network and bring in new people and organizations into our movement for progressive change.

Volunteer Opportunities:

All the above will require help from numerous people, so please volunteer to help with something you'd like to do. We especially need help with promotion, publicity, and outreach.

Guidelines include:

- We want it to be somber, peaceful, and respectful of all those who have died (both military and civilian), while giving attendees opportunities to think about aspects of the war that they haven't seen on TV.
- We do NOT want this event to be an anti-Bush event.
- Bashing George W. Bush or militant protest activities would make it difficult to achieve our primary goals for this event, which are noted above. The event will focus on Iraq, not Bush or the US elections. We want to discourage anyone who wants to bring anti-Bush signs to this event. If such signs or protesters are there, the news media is likely to emphasize them even if they are few in number (as they did for 1000th Soldier Memorial last fall), rather than the main message we want to bring (that the occupation of Iraq is causing more harm than good, that there are serious human costs that aren't getting enough attention, and that we should withdraw before we make things worse).
- We want to encourage religious groups and other organizations to join us as long as they are in agreement with these goals and guidelines. Some will not want to come if they think we're going to be attacking Bush.

For those who want to do something else, other groups are also planning events for Mar. 19, including:

- PWOC (Progressive Workers Organizing Committee, pwoc.org) is planning a march and rally against the war and occupation, starting at Dunlavy Park at 12:30 pm, then will march to Bell Park.
 - The Houston area Department of Peace group is planning a walking meditation , 2-3 pm, at Rothko Chapel.
 - Guerilla Theater Brigade is having an event at another Houston park at the same time as our event, with speaker Robin Faisano to talk about Iraq. They will also show a film.
 - Some other groups are also making plans for M19. Check our web site, and the Houston area online event calendars, especially HPJC's and Houston Indymedia (see the Other Calendars link on our web site) for details and updates on all these events.
- + For events that groups in other parts of the country are planning for the 2nd anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, see the following web sites:
- American Friends Service Committee: <http://afsc.org/standforpeace/>
 - Sojourners: <http://www.sojournal.net/>
 - United for Peace and Justice: <http://www.unitedforpeace.org/>

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For updates, please check <http://progressiveactionalliance.org/>