

190 March Through the Streets of Akron Against Iraq War, Repression, & Recruiting
by Andy, Cleveland IndyMedia
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A good crowd for a good cause. One of about 800 actions nationwide this weekend. We will be back again and again until this evil war of imperialism and aggression in Iraq is stopped.

One Hundred and Ninety people (by actual count) marched from historic Grace Park through the streets of Akron today, stopping at the Recruiting Center and the FBI offices before ending at the Federal Building at Main and Market.

Marchers carried signs and banners, two black 'coffins' and a symbolic 'barrel of oil' to remind of one of the causes of the war.

The event ended with the simultaneous reading of the names of hundreds of fatal casualties of the US instigated war.

The crowd gathered at Grace Park, where in 1912 or so striking Rubber Workers organized by the IWW had rallied. Our assembly was a good mix of ages. We proceeded over to East Market Street and around the corner to the Recruiting Center, which was closed for the day. Speakers got up on the barrel and spoke of our movement as a movement of love, compared to the death machine the recruiters promote. They spoke of counter-recruiting and counseling for Conscientious Objectors from within the military. The police were prominent by their absence, as they were all day.

Next the crowd marched with some chanting down to the doors of the FBI offices on Main Street. An attorney who specializes in representing immigrants got up on the barrel spoke, waving little book containing the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, from which he quoted. He emphasized that the rights purportedly granted were supposed to apply to "people", not just "citizens". It was a stop most needed in this climate of repression, deportation, and fear which the government has created to feed their drive for war and conformity. The crowd did not seem at all intimidated in their responses. People driving by on Main Street were honking their horns and waving peace signs.

Then we marched to the Federal Building at Main and Market, traditional site of anti-war protests. Debra Calhoun from AFSC gave a rousing speech about the war, recruiting of young people, especially African-American youth, and what could be done with all those Billions going down the Iraq War rathole. Sue Jeffers sang a song of hers, "Foreign Fighters", who turned out to be Americans. Dana Williams spoke about what this movement needs to do, the presence of Lockheed Martin, the world's largest 'defense' contractor in Akron, and the bias of the local TV outlet, Pax 23.

After Sue Jeffers sang another song, lists of hundreds of names of the dead – both Iraqi and GI – were handed out to all the participants, who simultaneously read them sending up a loud din. It was in a way quite impressive. That concluded, the lists were placed into the 'coffins' for delivery to Ohio's Senators, red 'blood' was poured from the 'barrel of oil', and the rally ended.

The event was a fitting successor to last year's Iraq Invasion event, which was also large and successful, and drew good coverage. It was sharper in its focus and better balanced in its treatment of both Iraqi and US invader casualties.

The group will refresh itself and return again and again until the war is stopped.