

ORGANIZE, MOBILIZE, AND EMPOWER THE PEACE MAJORITY
United for Peace and Justice Action Plan
June - December 2006

Opportunities and Challenges after April 29 and May 1

Three years into the Iraq war, the U.S. peace movement faces new opportunities to grow and wield influence. U.S. public opinion has shifted substantially against the war and this is beginning to have an impact in Congress. Divisions over the war have emerged within the right. The Bush administration has been placed on the political defensive, largely because of growing disillusion with the Iraq war.

The April 29 March for Peace, Justice and Democracy showed the antiwar movement's continuing capacity to bring hundreds of thousands into the streets. And the millions-strong May 1 actions not only sent a potent message for immigrant rights, but reminded everyone of the power and importance of mass mobilization and visible protest.

We still face huge challenges. Bush remains committed to "staying the course" in Iraq and is threatening new aggression against Iran. Anti-Arab racism and demonization of Muslims has become increasingly accepted both in policy and political discourse. Millions who now believe the war in Iraq was wrong do not yet support the demand for immediate and complete U.S. withdrawal. "War on terror" fear-mongering is still a powerful club battering progressive movements and vulnerable constituencies. The antiwar movement has much work to do in turning our expressed opposition to racism into effective practice, and in amplifying antiwar voices from people of color communities where opposition to the war is strongest.

Between now and November 7, the attention, time, and resources of many in the U.S. will be increasingly focused on the mid-term Congressional elections. There is a danger of the pivotal issue of war vs. peace getting lost amid the partisan frenzy of the money-driven U.S. electoral system. But the election season also gives us a chance to force the question of the Iraq war onto the agenda in places across the country.

In this context, the focus of UFPJ's work for the rest of 2006 will be to **organize, mobilize, and empower the peace majority**.

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Our aim is to bring active expression of antiwar sentiment into every possible arena of U.S. political life. We will seek to reach beyond the existing core of antiwar activists and move substantial numbers of new people from passive opposition into taking action. UFPJ will work to increase the visibility of the peace movement in the media and the streets, in electoral debates and the halls of Congress. One key goal will be to strengthen and expand alliances and relationships such as those between the nine organizations that initiated the April 29 National Mobilization for Peace, Justice and Democracy. Another priority is to do better at linking opposition to the war to other struggles underway for justice and democracy, most immediately the continuing fight for equitable rebuilding of the Gulf Coast and the battle for immigrant rights.

We also must work to develop the cohesion and outlook of the antiwar majority. A crucial task is to transform the current peace majority into a majority for "Out of Iraq NOW" and "No Attack on Iran."

In addition, we will support efforts to expand opposition to U.S. bullying in Latin America and elsewhere and U.S. backing for Israel's stonewalling of Palestinian self-determination. While recognizing that terrorism is a real threat to people in the U.S. and across the globe, we will re-emphasize UFPJ's viewpoint that Bush's "war on terrorism" framework is not a strategy to effectively combat terrorism. Rather, it is a recipe for implementing a reactionary, empire-building agenda abroad and stripping us of basic rights and liberties at home. We will also work to bring the day closer when consistent anti-racist practice is a hallmark, not a weak point, of the antiwar movement.

UFPJ PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR 2006

To pursue these objectives, after coordinating and promoting local actions on the third anniversary of the war, UFPJ's first major priority of 2006 was working in concert with eight other national organizations to build the **April 29 National Mobilization for Peace, Justice, & Democracy**. Building on the momentum of this successful action (see <http://www.april29.org>), UFPJ will work to continue and expand cooperation between the April 29 co-sponsoring groups.

We will prioritize three other areas of work for the remainder of 2006¹:

(1) LOCAL ORGANIZING MEETINGS: UFPJ, in collaboration with clusters of member groups, will organize a series of local antiwar activist meetings beginning in July. The general goal of these meetings is to strengthen movement-building capacity in each locality. We hope the gatherings contribute to developing organizers' skills; sharpening political perspectives; building unity among local activists; deepening local groups' connection to UFPJ's national network; involving local groups in national UFPJ campaigns over the summer and fall and testing for support for different activities; and developing a clearer picture of the state of local antiwar organizing and what strategies are needed to strengthen the movement as we prepare for our national assembly.

The specific agenda of each meeting will depend on the needs and desires of local organizers. But among the items tackled could be: how to expand anti-Iraq war activism to include opposition to a war with Iran; strategies for fighting racism, building multi-racial alliances and mobilizing antiwar constituencies to defend immigrant rights; effective methods of recruitment to member groups; how antiwar organizations can effectively interact with/intervene in the electoral process. The specific locations and timings for the meetings will be determined based on consultations between the UFPJ national office and local member groups.

(2) NON-PARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE CAMPAIGN: From May to November UFPJ will use the following two strategies to increase pressure on Congress, enlarge the organized base of the antiwar movement, and fight to make sure the issue of war vs. peace is prominent through the election season:

1. UFPJ's **Legislative Action Network (LAN)** will continue its pressure campaign aimed at getting Congress to stand up against the war. Elements of this campaign will include coordinated actions at local congressional offices (meetings with members and staff, demonstrations, vigils, nonviolent civil resistance), and actions for broader constituencies such as national call-in days. The UFPJ LAN Organizing Meeting and Congressional Education Day, held in Washington, DC on May 21-22, has set

¹ **Note:** While agreeing on these priority activities at this time, we recognize that the situation in Iraq and the "war on terror" generally is volatile and fluid. UFPJ will need to be flexible enough to alter our priorities if needed in response to changing developments.

the stage for the next phase of this work. Regular updates, monthly organizing conference calls, and trainings for participating groups and individuals are an ongoing part of LAN's program. (See <http://www.unitedforpeace.org/article.php?id=3116>)

2. A **Voters for Peace campaign** will be employed to force the Iraq war issue onto the agenda of electoral debate and pressure all Congressional candidates to take a public stance against the war. The campaign is simultaneously a tool for outreach, allowing us to build our contact lists and recruit new people to UFPJ member groups and ongoing antiwar activism.

UFPJ's Voters for Peace effort will center on issue advocacy and be conducted as a non-partisan effort. Issue advocacy allows groups legally barred from directly supporting/opposing candidates to intervene in electoral politics. It brings independent pressure on *all* candidates and *all* parties, pushing them to respond to our peace agenda. Groups that are constrained by 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) tax-exempt status will be able to participate in at least one component of this work.

One component of UFPJ's issue advocacy work will be asking hundreds of thousands of voters across the U.S. to sign a **Voter for Peace pledge**, which reads: "I will not vote for or support any candidate for national office who does not make **a speedy end to the war in Iraq, and preventing any future war of aggression** a public position in his or her campaign." The Voters for Peace Pledge is permissible activity for 501(c)(3) groups. (See <http://www.votersforpeace.us>)

A second component will involve organizing issue advocacy campaigns modeled on Peace Action's **Peace Voter campaign**, which Peace Action has been undertaking since 1996. We will encourage groups to use tactics like getting people to sign peace pledges, distributing voter guides, holding candidates' forums, and bird-dogging candidates. Our educational and advocacy work will emphasize preventing military aggression against Iran as well as withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Iraq. Groups limited by 501(c)(3) status will not be able to participate in all aspects of this work, but 501(c)(4) groups and others not constrained by tax-exempt status will. (See <http://www.peacevoter.org/>)

To develop member groups' issue advocacy skills, UFPJ will collaborate with Peace Action's national office and local affiliates to provide training to UFPJ member groups on developing voter guides, etc. in a way that avoids straining Peace Action's limited resources. Training could be conducted at Peace Action's national conference in mid-July as well as at the May 21-22 Congressional Education Day mentioned above.

(3) MAY-NOVEMBER VISIBILITY ACTIONS AND LINK-ISSUES: Throughout 2006, UFPJ will throw our weight behind actions of our member groups and other organizations that give visibility and depth to antiwar activism and/or spotlight the links between peace and social justice issues. What we can contribute in each case will be determined by our resources/capacity and by how closely an action fits into the general framework outlined above. But we know well that on many occasions – from Cindy Sheehan in Camp Crawford to the May 1 outpouring for immigrant rights – UFPJ member groups and/or other organizations take the lead and that the best way to advance the cause of peace and justice is to lend them all the support that we can.

On **July 4th** many cities and towns around the country have parades, picnics and other activities. This year we will urge our member groups and allies to bring our message to end the war in Iraq and no war on Iran to these events. This could include marching as a contingent in a local parade, setting up a table at a picnic or other outdoor activity, or organizing something else that highlights our efforts. In addition, UFPJ will call upon our allies in the global peace movement to take advantage of the often

public events held at U.S. embassies and consulates around the world on July 4th to bring this same message.

Recognizing that the urgency of the Iraq war crisis also requires increased use of **nonviolent civil resistance** as a tactic, UFPJ will call for **decentralized actions on the anniversaries of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Aug. 6 & Aug 9)**. Following the lead of the Livermore Conversion Project, the UFPJ Nuclear Disarmament/Redefining Security Working Group, and Global Call Iraq, UFPJ will call for actions that focus on the hypocrisy of U.S. threats against Iran as well as the role of U.S. corporations in fomenting a global nuclear crisis and leading us to war in Iraq. Primary targets for these actions will be Bechtel's corporate offices and nuclear weapons facilities, as Bechtel is probably the world's largest nuclear profiteer (including weapons facilities and power plants) and a leading beneficiary of the Iraq war and corporate globalization. (See <http://www.august6.org/>)

In addition, UFPJ will help promote the **Declaration of Peace Pledge**, which aspires to build support for mass action in Washington, DC, Congressional offices, and other sites throughout the nation on September 21-28, and related nonviolent action campaigns. We will publicize and help promote nonviolent action trainings and "road shows" coordinated by Declaration of Peace, Global Call Iraq and the War Resisters League. As opportunities arise, UFPJ will lend its support to other counter-recruitment, GI-resistance, anti-torture, anti-profiteer and anti-nuclear direct action campaigns and actions. (See <http://declarationofpeace.org/>)

In the early months of 2006, UFPJ encouraged support for "Walkin' to New Orleans: Veterans and Survivors March for Peace and Justice" and "Peregrinacion por la Paz: Latino Peace March from Tijuana to San Francisco."² Follow-up actions by the veterans and Latino groups who lead these may be priorities for UFPJ attention in the future.

We anticipate that in the final weeks before November 7 one or another visible antiwar protest will galvanize support from large numbers wanting to send an antiwar message in the streets and not only via the ballot. Depending on concrete conditions in Iraq, in relationship to Washington's threats against Iran, and in U.S. politics at the time, such a protest may well become a high priority for our coalition.

The **counter-recruitment** movement is one of the most vibrant fronts of antiwar organizing right now. It is rooted among youth and in communities of color and is making a real dent in the military's capacity to wage war. Many UFPJ member groups are involved in counter-recruitment efforts; a conversation about how UFPJ as a nationwide coalition can best lend its support must take place in the next few months, resulting in concrete action. (Resources: <http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/default.htm>, <http://www.youthandthemilitary.org/>)

As the upsurge for **immigrant rights** gathered steam from late March through May 1, supporting and building connections with the immigrant rights movement came to the fore on our agenda. Finding ways to continue and intensify the work of UFPJ and member groups on immigrant rights is an immediate priority. (Resources: <http://www.nnirr.org/>, <http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/>, http://todayweact.org/en/We_Are_America)

² Peace Action <http://www.peace-action.org/>, Veterans for Peace <http://www.veteransforpeace.org/>, and Guerrero Azteca Project <http://guerreroazteca.org/>, the initiator of the Latino Peace March, are member groups of United for Peace and Justice and hold seats on UFPJ's leadership bodies.

The ongoing campaign for **justice for Katrina victims** will also remain a UFPJ priority, with the possibility of more focused work around the first anniversary of Hurricane Katrina at the end of August. (Resources: <http://www.katrinaaction.org/>)

To generate anti-war activity and deepen public understanding of the links between war abroad and injustice at home, UFPJ will promote **coordinated educational efforts** organized by UFPJ member groups and encourage its member groups to connect with university-based educators and youth and student groups. This summer and fall the Institute for Policy Studies and the American Friends Service Committee will be coordinating an educational tour to discuss and educate communities on the interconnections between U.S. foreign and domestic policies, e.g. the Iraq war, Katrina, racial and economic injustice, etc. Historians Against the War will organize coordinated educational and teach-ins on campuses this fall. (Information forthcoming at <http://www.ips-dc.org/>, <http://www.afsc.org/iraq/>, and <http://www.historiansagainstawar.org/>)

UFPJ Organizational Goals and Our Next National Assembly

UFPJ also sets the goal of coming out of this period as a stronger coalition, prepared to work even more effectively for peace and justice in 2007 and beyond. Specifically, we will aim to:

- *expand our current membership of roughly 1400 organizations by at least another 100 or more, with an emphasis on recruiting more organizations of people of color and youth/students;
- *strengthen the capacity of our member groups to recruit members, build alliances, fight racism and develop their media and public presence, as well as increase their involvement in and ownership of UFPJ;
- * build on our working relationship with other national co-sponsors of the April 29 march and expand our coalition ties with other national organizations and coalitions;
- * increase the national visibility of UFPJ and the antiwar movement by expanding our media efforts and by working with UFPJ member groups to more publicly affirm their participation in the coalition.
- * strengthen and expand UFPJ's Legislative Action Network;
- *expand and cohere a stronger, more representative UFPJ leadership core;
- *hit the ground running in 2007 with a new Action Plan and leadership body.

The key gathering for taking stock of our work in 2006, making plans for 2007, and electing new UFPJ leadership will be the UFPJ Third National Assembly. This gathering will be held some time between early December 2006 and late January 2007 at a location still to be determined, though we will start by exploring the possibility of holding the gathering in the Gulf Coast/Texas area. Preparations for the Assembly will begin in summer and will be the top priority of the national staff for the final two months before the gathering.