

5,000 march in downtown Pittsburgh—dozens arrested

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More than 5,000 people took to the streets of downtown Pittsburgh to protest the launching of the war against Iraq. Carrying signs that read, “Iraq children want to grow up too” and “How many lives per gallon?” and chanting “no blood for oil” and “money for jobs, not for war,” people from all walks of life weaved their way through downtown Pittsburgh to let their opposition to the war be known.

The protesters began gathering at 5:00 p.m. at the federal building, which had been closed in anticipation of the demonstration and was heavily guarded by police in full riot gear. As the crowd became too large for the sidewalk, the organizers decided to begin the march.

As the march started, people began to join the demonstration and it quickly grew. While predominantly youthful, people came from all walks of life. Families came with their children, elderly couples walked hand in hand. I overheard many high school students talking on the phone, presumably with their parents, telling them where they were. Many office workers who were still in their high heels and suits joined the march. Some carried their young children whom they had obviously just picked up from day care.

Police went ahead of the marchers to try and block traffic, but many times the marchers just swarmed past cars and buses as people were on their way home. Most people waited patiently and others showed their active support for the marchers, blasting their horns and waving out windows.

By the time the march reached the other end of town, it had grown to nearly half a mile long, taking up both sides of the wide boulevards that crisscross Pittsburgh. As the march weaved its way through the streets, workers in stores, office buildings and training colleges looked on and many waved in support.

“I am against the war,” said Mary, a mail room clerk.

“I don’t want anyone innocent to get killed and a lot of people are going to be killed. Everything they have been telling us, everything is lies. The whole reason they are going to war is because of the oil and revenge.

“He wants to deflect the people from the economic state that the country is in. He wants people to worry about the war and not see what is happening to us.”

Maria, who was brought to America at age five in 1970 from Vietnam, came with her two young boys. “I came here for my children. I don’t want them growing up in a war. I want them to know that it is wrong and that when something is wrong that they have to stand up and fight against it.

“Bush must be stopped. I want the whole world to know that he is not doing this in my name as an American citizen. I am Vietnamese by birth and I would do anything in my power to stop anything like what happened in my country from ever happening again to anyone.”

The police made no attempt to stop the march as it circled the downtown area twice, clearly frustrated by both its size and broad support. More than 100 were arrested at the end of nearly three hours of marching and after most people had already left. The police ordered the remaining protesters, who had returned to the federal building, to disperse and when they refused began arresting them and herding them onto awaiting port authority buses.



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